

COVID-19 Community Foundations in Action

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UK - Maintaining relationships with new donors



*Victoria Miles DL CEO
Northamptonshire Community
Foundation*

While talking to Victoria Miles in early July, the UK is getting settled in “recovery mode”, as the CEO of Northamptonshire Community Foundation (NCF) describes it. The team of NCF also needs some recovery since it has performed quite a marathon during the time of the pandemic: “We raised nearly 2 million pounds since March”, Victoria announces proudly. The community foundation never received as many donations as in the last months. “The circle of donors has increased substantially: so many different kinds of donations.” From small amounts such as ten pounds to thousands, Victoria was particularly touched by the donation of an elderly couple: “They had planned a big holiday worth 10,000 pounds, but because of Covid it was cancelled. So instead of investing it in their next journey, they decided to donate the whole amount.”

The Coronavirus Response and Recovery Fund has awarded some €700,000 to local organisations reaching 52,889 residents and supported by 6,314 volunteers. Money stimulating activity that was desperately needed in the community. “We supported so many organisations and projects, some of them big, some of them small.” Also, there was a wide range of topics: “Of course, the pandemic aggravated the problems that already existed before, such as the housing situation - a lot of people in the community have a very crowded living situation.” NCF supported organisations that were already working in this field before. The same applied for the field of mental health: specialised organisations provided online counseling services instead of in-person meetings. “We provided a lot of IT support,” Victoria recalls. But there were also the very basic aids, such as food banks: “One was set up in a pub that had to close because of Covid. The food bank served such a huge area of the community that we supported it several times. It is still in operation today.” While providing emergency support, the NCF is working strategically as well: “While in emergency mode, all of us were losing sight of some other essential needs that are important for our well-being: Arts, culture, heritage. Needs in those areas are badly neglected during the pandemic. We want to support work that is trying to bring back arts and culture to people’s lives.” Also, Victoria is certain, that the economic consequences of the pandemic are not foreseeable - that is why the NCF

is already giving quite large amounts of money to support the core costs of organisations, to pay for rent and staff.

For the community foundation, the pandemic has been and still is a time to prove and present what they were doing all along: “People that were affected mostly by the crisis have already been our main focus groups before. That made it possible to react quickly and really lifted our profile: it provided visibility,” Victoria recalls. “Because of our speed, our knowledge, because we’re agile, we were the perfect partner to get through the crisis. People realised that in the last months. We got a lot of coverage in the media, and people suddenly realised what we are doing, what ‘Community Foundation’ means.” This really motivated the NCF team, affirming for the staff that their work has real purpose. Now, the NCF team is trying to share their work with the community and keep in touch with all of the new donors: “We share our stories on social media, write Newsletters, have published a 100-days-report. And we found a way to keep in touch with all the new donors.” The team is sending out nice postcards as a thank you - and to stay in the public’s memory, even when the most urgent part of the pandemic is over. “That is our biggest task at the moment: We are trying to keep the momentum.”



[Northamptonshire Community Foundation \(NCF\)](#) was established in 2002. It delivers a variety of funding for the local voluntary and community sector normally awarding grants of c €1.5 m annually. NCF has a staff of 9, a board of 12 trustees and a

further 25 volunteer grants advisers and assessors.

Northamptonshire Community Foundation is one of 46 community foundations in the UK which are playing a leading role in the development of community philanthropy and resources to sustain communities. For information and contact details of all community foundations more information is available from the UK community foundation membership organisation [UKCF](#).