

CONTEXT

In March 2020 RPLC launched the Covid19 fund to support charitable organisations and schools in Richmond through the pandemic. Immediate and ongoing support, both through grants and non-financial assistance, was provided within one week of lockdown.

The purpose of the funding was:

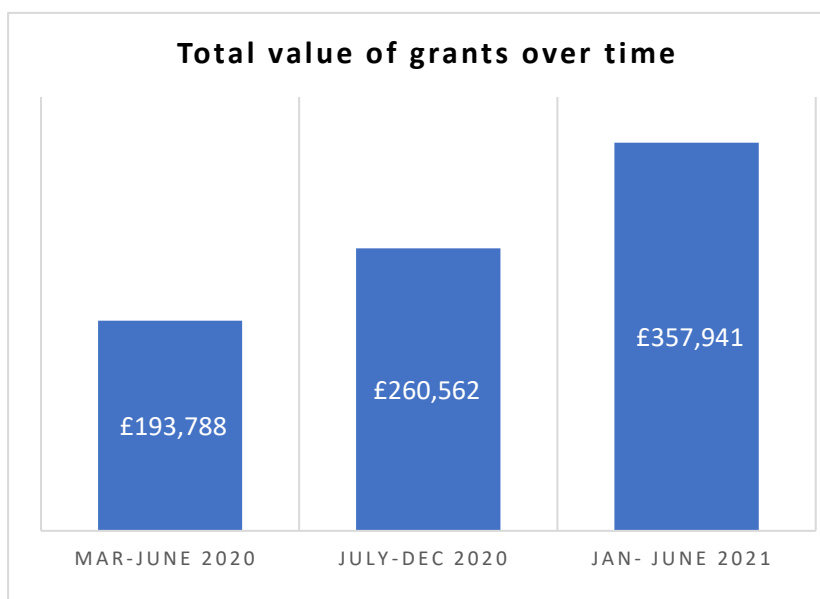
1. To provide help to key front line local organisations impacted by Covid 19 to enable remote working, service delivery and the provision of essentials to the most vulnerable.
2. To enable longer-term sustainability of local voluntary sector organisations affected by Covid 19.

INPUTS

- Over £800,000 of additional funds were made available over two financial years.
- The grants process was swiftly adapted to simplify requirements for applications, conditions, and reporting.
- A newly formed Liaison Committee approved applications by email - initially weekly, then monthly - to allow speedier distribution.
- Staff liaised with the Council, London Funders, local funders, and RCVS to provide a coordinated response.
- Communications were prepared and circulated using a variety of channels.
- Alongside the Covid fund, the funding limits for Crisis Grants were increased and where possible agreement was given for funds that were already paid could be reassigned to C-19 related activities.

OUTPUTS

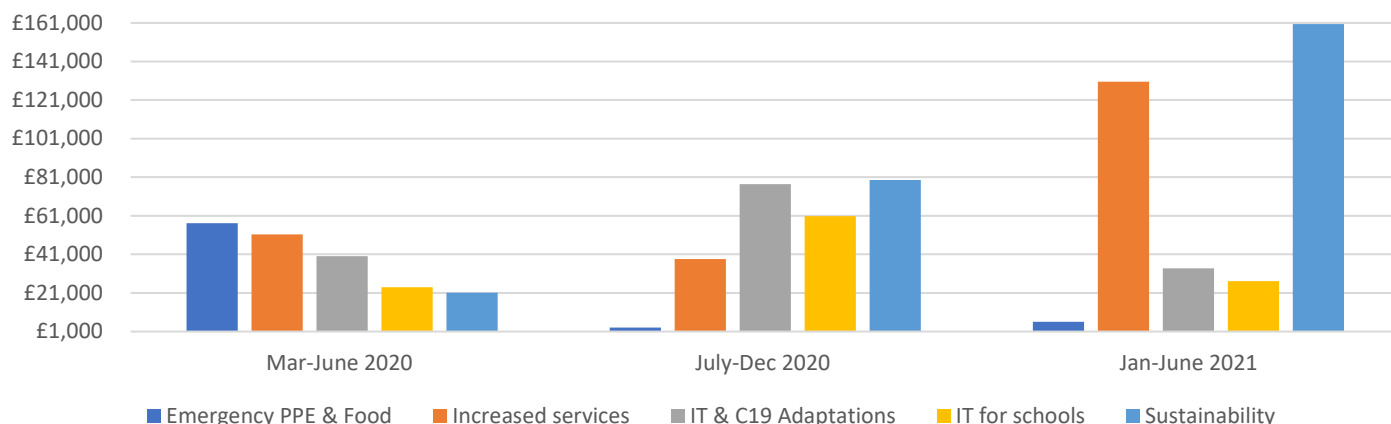
- £812,291 was distributed in total.
- In the first three months of the lockdown over £200k was distributed to organisations and individuals.
- Eighty-two grants were made to 62 organisations.
- Average grant £9,906.
- Largest grant £45,000
- Smallest grant £500



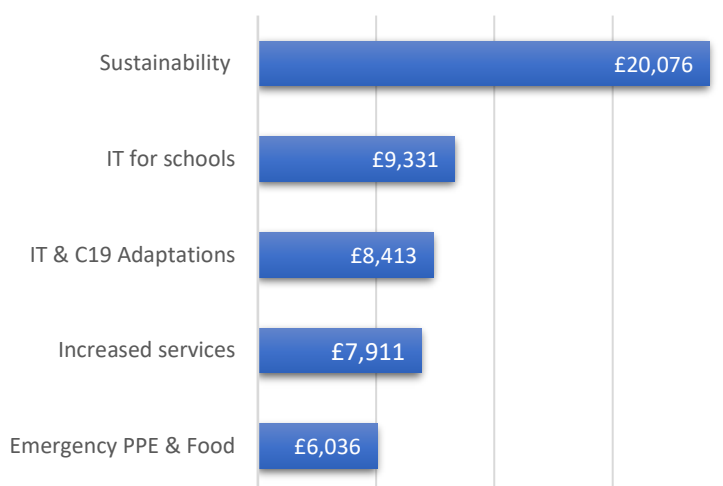
A SPEAR client receives a doorstep care package.

“As bleak and precarious as these times are, they also present the opportunity for reflection and growth. Our understanding of what is possible has been radically altered – resettlement routes that previously ‘didn’t exist’ have been created, clients that were deemed ‘impossible to accommodate’ slumber in one-bed apartments, and we are presented with an early model for what ending rough sleeping could look like.” SPEAR Housing

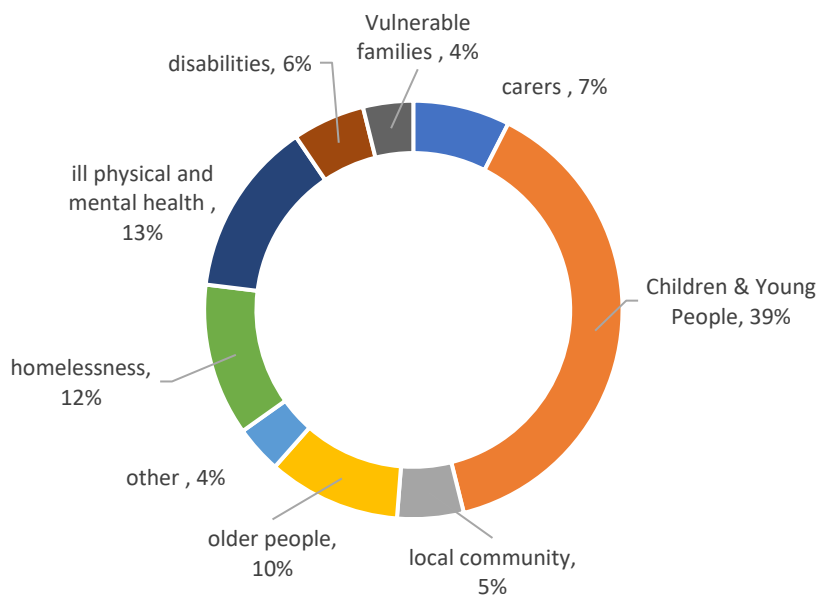
total grant value by category in each time period



average grant amount by category



“He has attended our clubs for a few years, he prefers to observe what's going on and likes to take part in quieter activities, but he can show challenging behaviour. We have noticed that he loves taking part in the online activities and really gives his all to the activities including the physical ones. Mum has reported that she has seen a change in him at home and has noticed him engaging with people and taking part in activities that he would not normally do.” TAG Youth Club



OUTCOMES

Organisations' learnings during the pandemic

1. **Collaboration** - appetite and willingness of organisations to collaborate with existing and new partners in the borough; recognition of the value this adds to their activity and the beneficiaries they support.
2. **Remote working** – challenging to set up; needed to equip and train staff appropriately and recognise that people's experience of remote working differs from person to person; new policies and procedures required and measures to make it sustainable; infrastructure for a new model of working.
3. **Hybrid service delivery** - ongoing demand to offer online and face to face activities to broaden access; additional administrative support needed to facilitate both offerings; limitations of online delivery to fully meet client needs, particularly the most vulnerable.
4. **Digital inclusion** – exclusion was more widespread than previously understood; new processes and initiatives established to find and support those without digital equipment or skills.
5. **Community** – isolation and lack of connectivity during lockdown and restrictions was a reminder of the value of creating a community and fostering relationships.

“As a small team it has been challenging to adapt all our services at once to a different delivery model entirely, all of which have required new systems and procedures. The health and safety of our volunteers, clients and staff is our main priority and we must ensure our services are safe as we move through the different stages of the pandemic.” LEAH

“The staff learnt so much; so much has actually come out of it and has taken the staff forward” Beautifully Made

“We learnt the importance of flexibility and communication. There is a need to continue to offer hybrid support.” Dose of Nature



A Dose of Nature poetry group meet outside

ONGOING ISSUES HIGHLIGHTED

- Social anxiety and isolation
- Deterioration of mental and physical health
- Increasingly complex and multifaceted needs
- Delays to children's social and learning development
- Continued financial impact on households.



St Richard's pupils use the chrome books bought with a RPLC grant

“The lack of in-person meetings with our online participants and with our team mean that we are losing the continuity and sense of connection that results from face-to-face personal interaction. Our people have zoom fatigue!” Room for Work

“Digital exclusion equates to learning exclusion. Home technology is essential for pupil integration, interaction, and teacher feedback. In-person peer learning and interaction are vital aspects of learning and development.” Grey Court School

“Young people need support to process their experience of lockdown. There is ongoing emotional turmoil resulting from the pandemic and restrictions.” LVA Trust

RPLC LEARNINGS FROM PREPARING THIS REVIEW

1. **Richmond’s voluntary sector is resilient and strong, not only surviving the pandemic but stepping up to provide the support communities needed.** We recognise our place within this and the importance of communication, collaborative working and connectivity and aim to continue to champion this way of working.
2. **We can be agile and operate effectively with streamlined processes,** as a result we have adapted and expanded our core funding programme, streamlined our processes where possible, and focused our monitoring & evaluation requirements.
3. **Understanding our impact will be built on outcome measurement.** We recognise the value of the content organisations provide us and the responsibility to use this to learn from and share insights. Going forward we are incorporating learning into our grant cycle and hope to produce more reports for trustees and to share.
4. **RPLC’s exceptional spend and the designated C19 fund were a worthwhile and much-appreciated response in the borough.** But the challenges remain, and we will continue to provide an exceptional spend through our regular grant streams to help combat the challenges.



“Anna was one of our first clients to be supported via Zoom. By the end of the course she was no longer depressed, anxious or experiencing suicidal thoughts.”*

Crossway Pregnancy

**not their real name*

“Tablets provided a vital lifeline to connect residents to the outside world. Some staff needed more support than others in using the tablets but are now confident in enabling residents to video chat with their loved ones, social workers, advocates, GPs and children at a local nursery.” Embracing Age

“Our community is rich in individuals who will happily volunteer when they have the time.” Ham & Petersham SOS

IN CONCLUSION

The response from the voluntary sector in Richmond to support the community and the most vulnerable was commendable. Not only did organisations weather the storm, but many reacted immediately to help the neediest, launched new projects to respond to new issues and have since integrated learnings into their core activity. RPLC has similarly learnt from the pandemic about the power of flexible funding, the importance of working in partnership and the value of simplifying and consolidating processes and procedures which are being incorporated into our ways of working going forward. We want to thank all our partners for your response and your on-going commitment to the residents of Richmond.

