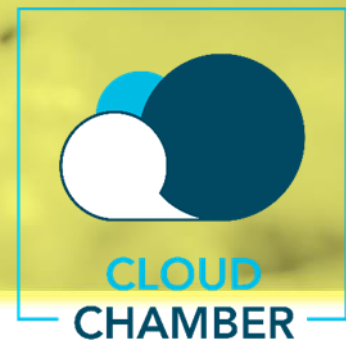# Executive Summary and Swansea Case Paper

Year 1 of the CCS programme: Evaluation and learning

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CLOUD
CHAMBER

The Children's Society is proud to be working in partnership with the following organisations to deliver the Coordinated Commuity Support Programme

The Children's Society

BBC Children in Need

Coordinated Community Support.

LLOYDS BANK FOUNDATION
England & Wales

Local Government Association

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

the trussell trust
Stop UK Hunger

Trust for London
Tackling poverty and inequality

chancesFOR CHiLDREN
BUTTLEuk

SMALLWOODTRUST

StepChange
Debt Charity

Year 1 of the Coordinated Community Support Programme, Evaluation Executive Summary

About the Coordinated Community Support Programme

The Children's Society (TCS), in partnership with several organisations including Buttle UK, the Lloyds Bank Foundation, Children in Need, The Church of England, The Legal Education Foundation, The Local Government Association (LGA), Trust for London, Smallwood Trust, Stepchange and Trussell Trust are delivering the Coordinated Community Support (CCS) Programme.

The initial aims of the programme were twofold. Firstly, to address the gap in emergency support provision left following the elimination of Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants through better networking of different local agencies (including the Local Authority) involved in the provision of emergency assistance. Secondly, to reduce repeat instances of financial crisis by addressing underlying causes of crises, as well as the immediate emergency.

Five themes - the programme aims to improve outcomes including:

- Improving **access** to crisis support schemes
- A simpler, supported, **application process**
- Addressing **underlying needs** to prevent the recurrence of crisis
- Providing **aftercare**
- A commitment to ongoing **learning**

Four Pilot Sites selected as the focus

- Norfolk
- Oldham
- Swansea
- Tower Hamlets

Three Theories of Change were developed in the early stages of the programme

- Tier 1 – Impact on people accessing services
- Tier 2 – Impact on local systems
- Tier 3 – Impact on national systems

The CCS Programme works within four different local authority areas to setup pilot projects providing support, guidance and resources to local community organisations to better coordinate crisis provision. The programme invites organisations in each local pilot site to develop workstreams to contribute to the five thematic areas with an overarching coordination objective. A central CCS team, hosted by the Children's Society, provides programme management support.

In addition to the funded workstreams, the programme has delivered facilitation of meetings between organisations and supporting them with responses to Covid-19. Taking a collaborative approach, the programme seeks to develop new ways of supporting people facing financial crisis through the sharing of ideas, direct funding and supporting applications to welfare support. The programme also seeks to influence national systems by bringing policy makers and funders closer to the experiences of local people.

About the evaluation

Cloud Chamber were invited by TCS and partners to conduct an independent formative and summative evaluation of the programme. This report is an account of Year 1 of the programme. The main data sources for this report include workstream case studies, monitoring data, interviews with the CCS Programme team, observation of partnership meetings and facilitation of pilot-site outcome-setting sessions.

A responsive programme: Covid-19

Implementation plans were drafted in each Local Authority in early 2020. However, due Covid-19, many of the workstreams were adapted to respond to the challenges arising within communities. The overall objective of 'access to crisis support' has remained constant for the programme while priorities around 'access' have changed and workstreams have adapted accordingly:

- Pre-pandemic workstreams had a focus on **improving access** to support and appointments through funding translation, transport and some co-designed services. These workstreams were paused or reconfigured.

- Covid-19 workstreams have a focus on **timely access** through provision of food, furniture and advice in a timely and Covid-safe setting via trusted agencies.

A summary of workstreams in shown in the table below:

Swansea	Oldham	Norfolk	Tower Hamlets
Citizen's Advice Swansea Food Parcel Leaflet (£110)	Ancora KeyRing food parcel leaflet (£55)	Leeway: Smallwood funding for homestart packs (£4,500)	Island Advice / Tower Hamlets Community Advice Network (THCAN): School referral project (£5,000)
Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team (EYST) Centralised Hardship fund (£9,000)*	Ancora Keyring Emergency hardship fund (£3,125)	Norfolk Citizen's Advice: Grant Awareness project (£7,600)	**Mulberry School food and advice service (£20,000)***
Housing Justice Cymru, Citadel (£12,883)	REEL clothing bank (£3,200)	Norfolk Citizen's Advice: Digital Inclusion project (£1,200)	RSS Training session with Northgate and Tower Hamlets local authority (no cost)
The Wallich Home Starter packs (£2,625)	**SAWN Furniture and Extended services (£9,650)***	Norfolk Community Law Service: Family Solicitor Expansion (£5,000)	
		Norwich Integration Partnership: joint project (£16,298)* Norfolk Community Advice Network: Development and staffing resource for NCAN system (£6,552)	

Note: Workstreams in **bold fon**t are case studies in this evaluation. Those marked with an * have additional resource funding from leveraged sources explained in more detail in the full report.

The programme actively brought organisations responding to the Covid-19 crisis together and offered a chance to exchange experiences and understanding the emerging needs resulting from lockdown. Cloud Chamber observed these sessions, and the ways in which Covid-19 prompted rapid adaptation for organisations to able to help people in financial crisis. While coordination remains the primary objective of the programme, there has been acknowledgement that Covid-19 has had a double-edged impact on this objective:

- Firstly, Covid-19 has catalysed rapid adaptation and relationship building between VCS organisations to identify and implement solutions quickly.

- Secondly, Covid-19 has left some organisations with little time, space or resource to codesign long-term sustainable coordinated projects.

It is possible that the relationships forged between organisations during the Covid-19 pandemic will be sustained.

- *"We forged a relationship with [another VCS org] and I'm hoping it will continue."* (partner during a partnership call during lockdown Spring 2020)

CCS adding value and capacity

The CCS team has contributed local provision of crisis support and local systems change in the following ways:

- **CCS as a broker**: organisations in the pilot sites, especially VCS organisations, value the brokerage role that the CCS team have played. This has taken place both through facilitating CCS-programme meetings and through direct contact between organisations.

- **CCS as an asset-identifier**: since the 'bringing together' of organisations through the programme, further catalysed through the needs arising because of Covid-19, organisations report an improved awareness and understanding of the strengths of other organisations in their local areas.

- **CCS workstreams welcomed as a non-target driven space**: some organisations funded to deliver workstreams report that the CCS programme is a space to 'try' new things and is refreshing when compared to the target-driven requirements from other funders. Organisations welcome the spirit of the programme.

- **CCS as a platform, boosting credibility**: there is some early evidence of VCS organisations feeling 'seen and heard' because of the facilitation of the CCS programme. Being involved in the programme has raised their profile in their localities and boosted their credibility. This is particularly the case for small, volunteer-led organisations.

- **Flexible, warm and responsive central CCS team is valued**: consulted stakeholders have really welcomed the relationships built with the CCS team and value their flexibility, especially in relation to Covid-19. Partners welcome the collaborative approach the team have taken. The team are increasingly being approached by local authorities for advice.

- **A blended approach of workstream funding and facilitation has been welcome:** The value of workstream funding combined with facilitation has been valued by partners.

Activity and output summary

Much of the energy of the programme in Year 1 has been focused on local systems change. At the time of writing, the programme is working with the four pilot sites to identify the steps needed to make 'good' coordination happen.

The CCS programme has delivered the following activities in Year 1 and distributed just over £100,000 of workstream funding:

- Promotion, engagement and partnership development

- Pilot site partnership meetings (26 meetings)

- Online grant awareness training (31 attendees)

- Development of the CCS Charter (26 organisations have signed up to the charter)
- Cross-pilot site partnership learning meetings (three meetings)
- Commissioned research on analysing different perspectives of crisis provision (ongoing)
- Support to develop 17 workstreams funded directly by CCS funding
- Leveraged £68,000 from additional sources to complement and add value

The CCS Team have engaged 368 professionals during Year 1 of the Programme; representing approximately 139 organisations across the four pilot sites. Further statistics demonstrating the level of engagement are shown in the table below.

	Norfolk	Oldham	Swansea	Tower Hamlets	Total
Number of people	142	78	76	72	**368**
Number VCS organisations	24	35	31	31	**121**
Number local authority, county council or other statutory	8	3	3	1	**15**
Number of schools	0	1	0	2	**3**

Workstream case studies

The key lessons from four workstream case studies across each of the pilot sites are summarised in the table below. This research formed a principal input to the evaluation.

Workstream	Summary	Learning emerging from case study
Norwich Integration Partnership (Norfolk)	Norwich Integration Partnership (NIP) is a pre-existing partnership of three organisations (Bridge Plus, New Routes Integration & English+) supporting individuals with NRPF, migrants and asylum-seekers. With an expected reach of 250 clients CCS funding was provided to support a collaborative response to Covid-19. The funding helped proactively and collaboratively identify and support vulnerable clients through information sharing, supermarket vouchers, IT top-ups and other support.	o The case study highlights the important role of trust, and wider (non-crisis) related provision, in developing relationships and providing crisis support o A wide range of outcomes were seen, linked both to the response to Covid-19, and often in addition to the outcomes outlined in the CCS theory of change o *"We came closer together as a team of three organisations, with fewer overlaps in delivery; and much closer working – it really enhanced that." (NIP Staff member)*
SAWN Furniture Packs and Additional Support (Oldham)	Funding for SAWN to resume safe supply of furniture packs to vulnerable clients illegible for support via the Oldham LWAS (i.e. people with NRPF). SAWN also offer wider holistic and ongoing support, information and guidance. Some funding for fuel top-ups and other emergency costs.	o The service is providing so much more than providing furniture to vulnerable residents; it is building trusted relationships with people, signposting to other services, helping with applications and informal aftercare. o The time taken to provide this service is not something SAWN are renumerated for directly although stakeholders in the borough, including the local authority and other VCS organizations, recognise and value this support.

		o	*"If we hadn't had that time with her, those cups of tea, I don't know what would have happened to her. She's still alive. That's an outcome. It's a soft outcome. She's come to understand what has happened to her, the trauma she's experienced. We ask her what she wants. She finds her own solutions."* *(SAWN)*
Centralised Hardship Fund, EYST (Swansea)	The project managed by Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team (EYST) is a centralised hardship fund accessible to local organisations to improve the access to crisis support of asylum seekers, refugees and those with no recourse to public funds. The fund focuses on IT equipment, data and phone top-ups, children's needs (e.g. baby food) and other emergency costs.	o o o o o	The need to respond in a focused and rapid way to the Covid-19 crisis has led to stronger working relationships between organisations. While the Covid-19 pandemic has increased the difficulty of offering face-to-face support, organisations successfully shifted delivery aspects to a remote model. It was felt that remote approaches developed during the pandemic could be used in the future and would help to reduce, for example, unnecessary client expenditure on bus fares to attend appointments. Recognising the value of face-to-face contact in building trust and understanding underlying needs, a balanced approach has the potential to improve both co-ordination between organisations and client outcomes in the longer-term. *"I think the project has allowed us and our partners to develop our relationship with each other and more importantly with our clients." (EYST team member)*
Mulberry Food and Advice Service, (Tower Hamlets)	At the beginning of lockdown, staff at Mulberry School identified that certain products were disappearing from shops due to stockpiling – nappies, sanitary towels, lentils and flour for example. The service provided food parcels, household necessities, toiletries, and sanitary hygiene kits. The service included welfare referrals to the school social worker and local advice agency, Island Advice.	o o o	The service was successful due to the commitment and dedication of teachers who volunteered their time and the funding leveraged by the CCS programme. Referring families to Island Advice was new for the school and a successful example of coordination. Need for food and advice remains high in the borough although teachers are back to their "day job" and capacity is low. *"[CCS team member] introduced us to Island Advice. As I understand it, the [CCS] programme brings together organisations that are struggling but all trying to achieve the same thing" (Mulberry School employee)*

Impact on people accessing services

Monitoring data from the programme shows at least 2,000 individuals have been supported directly through the programmes workstreams in 2020. The importance of trust between people who access services and organisations is frequently mentioned during our case study work and our evaluation encourages the programme to identify ways to support the VCS to harness and build upon these trusted relationships. Outcomes for people accessing services in Year 1 for those who have accessed a workstream include:

- More likely to access support from the right place, quickly (access theme)
- Access to a wider range of support services (underlying need theme)

- More dignified experience of accessing crisis support and systems (cross cutting theme)
- More able to trust someone who can help me
- Wellbeing is maintained or prevented from entering crisis
- More likely to have had support with additional needs (beyond immediate crisis)
- Mental and/or physical health is maintained
- Children are more likely to be able to engage with education

Impact on local systems

Much of the work in Year 1 of the CCS programme has been focused on building the foundations - the networks and relationships of organisations working at local, pilot site level. The CCS programme has offered a unique opportunity for organisations to communicate with each other in their localities, albeit virtually. In some cases, the CCS-facilitated meetings were the first time that organisations were made aware of one another.

Consulted stakeholders in the pilot sites have welcomed the relationships built with the CCS team and value their flexibility, especially in relation to Covid-19. Partners welcome the collaborative approach that the CCS team have taken. The team are increasingly being approached by local authorities for advice indicating that they have gained trust and credibility in the four pilot sites and have laid a good foundation for improving systems in Years 2 and 3. Outcomes for pilot sites in Year 1 include:

- Increasing levels of communication between organisations
- Increasing levels of trust between organisations
- Increased clarity of responsibilities and strengths of voluntary community sector (VCS) provision
- Agility of VCS is better understood
- Shared vision of the centrality of client journey
- Joint understanding of the importance of referral systems
- Building upon learning within the programme

The CCS programme seeks to influence local eco-systems i.e. relationships between organisations. This model assumes a set of preconditions or assumptions amongst practitioner and organisations for enabling this. These preconditions include willingness, skills and capacity of practitioners and organisations. It also assumes that the pathway to collaboration is inclusive for all organisation types (size, sector, subsector)

Impact on national systems

Much of the impact on national systems has been in direct response to Covid-19, bringing policy makers closer to the experiences of communities with regards to challenges around digital exclusion and access to Free School Meals. It was noted that many of the smaller organisations did not have other routes in to influence policy and practice, so this was an empowering part of the programme for them. TCS, together with others in the sector, have directly influenced some operational systems change at national level in response to Covid-19. Examples include:

- **MHCLG and the Treasury funding:** The Children's Society was active in engaging with Central Government regarding financial hardship and Covid-19. An additional £63 million was provided by central government in June to be distributed to local authorities in England

- **Discretionary Assistance Fund (Welsh Government**): contribution of evidence to decision regarding provision of additional support to this fund. Subsequently, a further £11 million was allocated in May to the fund which supports individuals and families facing extreme financial hardship.

Looking forward

This full evaluation report invites the CCS Team and partners to ensure that Years 2 and 3 of the programme put emphasis on:

- **Responding to 'additional' needs:** we have seen how services have been supported beyond the immediate crisis presented – for example, brokering conversations with housing teams or helping register with a GP. While this does not go so far as addressing an *underlying* need it does address additional, sometimes multifaceted need. At present, this is not represented in the programme Theory of Change and we invite the CCS team to consider it as a valid objective of the programme.

- **Building trusted relationships:** some of the support provided by organisations is informal, relationship building. It shares some characteristics with aftercare although the term does not always resonate with delivery organisations. As a result, some organisations are not requesting funds (both within the CCS programme and beyond) for this work. We recommend shifting the discourse from aftercare to 'building trusted relationships' in an attempt to support organisations to do this work. Building these trusted relationships is critical to helping identify and respond to identifying need.

- **Consider where on the 'ownership continuum' the project wants to be:** An early aspiration of the programme was for local organisations to own the direction of the programme and come forward with workstream ideas. Evidence suggests that the open nature (i.e., a sense of freedom for organisations to design their own projects without a pre-determined set of outcomes) of the workstreams has been challenging to engage with. We invite the team to consider how realistic true ownership of the programme at pilot site level is likely to be and recognise that full co-production may not be possible. Steps towards ownership (such as local organisations calling meetings, offering to lead on workstreams etc.) should still be regarded as a success especially given the organisational pressures due to Covid-19.

It is also recommended that the programme considers how best to:

- Ensure that system pathways allow space for practitioners to build trust with people accessing services.

- Consider how the programme can improve the ability and confidence of organisations to place value on building trusted relationships.

- Consider ways to better engage smaller, voluntary led organisations in the programme.

- Consider the role of schools in the programme and beyond.

Year 1 of the CCS Programme in Swansea

Key learning

- The need to respond in a focused and rapid way to the Covid-19 crisis has led to stronger working relationships between organisations.

- While the Covid-19 pandemic has increased the difficulty of offering face-to-face support, organisations successfully shifted delivery aspects to a remote model.

- It was felt that remote approaches developed during the pandemic could be used in the future and would help to reduce, for example, unnecessary client expenditure on bus fares to attend appointments.

- Recognising the value of face-to-face contact in building trust and understanding underlying needs, a balanced approach has the potential to improve both co-ordination between organisations and client outcomes in the longer-term.

CCS activity in Swansea

Summary of funded workstreams in Swansea

- **Centralised Hardship Fund:** the project managed by EYST is a centralized hardship fund accessible to local organisations to improve the access to crisis support of asylum seekers, refugees and those with no recourse to public funds. The fund focuses on IT equipment, data and phone top-ups, children's needs (e.g. baby food) and other emergency costs. The project has a value of £9,000 and ran for 12 weeks.

  - **Primary target outcome theme: access to crisis support.**

- **HJC Citadel:** the HJC Citadel project is a one-year scheme which will pair 12 volunteers with 15 people moving into permanent accommodation who do not have very complex needs and therefore do not qualify for more intensive support from Swansea Council's Housing Support Team (who provide referrals to the service). Improving economic and mental wellbeing are the priorities for the project which has a value of £12,883.

  - **Primary target outcome theme: providing aftercare/addressing underlying needs.**

- **Wallich Starter Pack:** the Wallich Starter Pack Project administered and coordinated the distribution of 75 starter packs for people leaving temporary B&B accommodation provided during the Covid-19 pandemic. The project has a value of £2,625 and ran for eight weeks.

  - **Primary target outcome theme: access to crisis support.**

- **Food Parcel Leaflet:** the Food Parcel leaflet project was run by Citizens Advice Swansea Neath Port Talbot and enabled a basic description of the CAB services to be included in all food parcels in the area to raise awareness of the support available. The project ran for eight weeks and had a value of £150.

  - **Primary target outcomes theme: access to crisis support.**

About this paper

In consultation with the TCS team, it was agreed that a useful lens for the Year 1 evaluation would be for Cloud Chamber to conduct workstream case studies in each of the four pilot sites. The questions that workstream case studies aim to answer include:

- What happened in the workstream?
- How did the workstream adapt / respond to Covid-19?
- What have we learned as a result of this workstream?
- What was the impact of the workstream on service users? How many service users were reached?
- What was the impact of the workstream on local systems change?
- How did CCS Programme add value to this area of work?
- To what extent did the workstream contribute to the initial five themes (access, simplified application, underlying need, aftercare, learning)

For this case study we conducted interviews with representatives from EYST, who administered the fund, as well as the Latin American and Iberian Association, who were members of the Steering Group, and Swansea Council for Voluntary Service (SCVS), who referred a number of clients to the fund. Our survey about the programme conducted in Summer 2020 received ten responses, with one from the local authority and remainder from VCS organisations. These VCS organisations represented a broad range of service types and size (as determined by annual income).

The remainder of this paper focusses primarily on learning and reflections from the Centralised Hardship Fund project which was managed by EYST and took referrals from several different organisations. We have identified the key themes arising from our interviews with participating organisations and sought to highlight key lessons that may be relevant in Swansea and for the wider CCS programme.

About the EYST workstream

EYST

Formed in 2005, EYST was initially founded to support the needs of young Black and Minority Ethic (BME) people (11-25 years) in Swansea. Since that time, the organisation's role and mission has expanded across more areas of Wales to include families and individuals including refugees and asylum seekers. Much of EYSTs growth has occurred in the last few years; in 2015/16 it had income of £345k which rose to over £1m for the 2018/19 financial year. The organisation currently has five areas of work:

- BME Young People
- BME Families
- refugees & asylum seekers
- supporting BME Groups
- challenging racism in the wider community

EYST works with several partners across Wales and seeks to influence government and policy through its work. The organisation adapts its approach in different parts of Wales to reflect both the challenges and the work undertaken by others, for example EYST runs a youth centre in Swansea but does not do so in Cardiff where

there is more of a focus on support for asylum seekers. The types of project funded by EYST fall into five categories:

- o   Building skills, confidence & participation

- o   Improving health, wellbeing and resilience

- o   Providing support & advocacy, accessing rights & entitlements

- o   Promoting safety, diversity & welcome

- o   Increasing representation

Need and rationale

The Centralised Hardship fund (funded by CCS) arose when the needs of asylum seekers, refugees, and people with NRPF were identified as a priority during the early stages of the Covid-19 outbreak by a number of organisations working in this area. Due to capacity constraints of some of these smaller organisations, it was agreed that EYST would take responsibility for managing the fund and a Steering Group was formed comprising some of those bodies (specifically African Community Centre, Swansea Asylum Seeker Support and Latin American and Iberian Association of Wales).

The purpose of the fund is to support people financially to address an immediate and urgent need and to leverage this to provide further support regarding broader underlying needs such as legal advice and educational needs for children and young people. Clients are referred to the fund from organisations within the Steering Group and EYST assumes responsibility for processing the application. The relationship with the client is maintained by the referring organisation which ensures that there is a continuity of support from the people who best understand the client needs and who are able to help shape and inform the broader package of support accordingly.

The project is a £9,000 fund to support people with funding in addition to ten hours of EYST staff time to manage and administer the fund. The project had four workstreams:

- o   **Children's fund:** clients supported up to a maximum of £30 each.

- o   **Phone and data top-up**: clients supported up to a maximum value of £10 each.

- o   **IT equipment (laptops and tablets):** clients supported up to a maximum of £200 for a laptop.

- o   **Discretionary fund:** clients supported up to a maximum of £20 each.

Statistics regarding reach are shown in the table below. Overall, there were 180 referrals and 144 awards which represents an 80% award rate.

Figure: Referrals and awards by type

Fund	Referrals	Awards	Total spend
Children's fund	51	36	£1,500
Phone and data top-up	57	45	£1,000
IT equipment	58	38	£4,000
Discretionary fund	14	25	£1,000
Total	**180**	**144**	**£7,500**

Source: CCS monitoring data

Outcomes for people

- **Minimising the need for people to repeat their experiences contributes to a dignified experience**: maintaining of the client relationship with the referral organisation means that the persons' needs are understood and that they do not have to present at multiple agencies in order to secure funding.

  - *"The application was successful, and the family received the laptop, the lady was overjoyed to receive it and she now had the ability to support her children's schoolwork. The lady is very shy and didn't feel confidence to seek support on school issues but through the relationship with the support worker these needs were identified and through the funding we have been able to support the family with an immediate need which will have a lot of long-lasting benefits." (EYST team member)*

- **Working towards a streamlined referral process**: referrals are based on the relationships between the client and the support worker with clear responsibilities throughout the process.

  - *"The initial feedback we have had from our clients who have benefited from the fund is very positive ….. Many did not expect this support to be available and were amazed when their referral led to crisis support." (EYST team member)*

- **Underlying need**: the aim of the fund and the participating organisations is to address both the immediate crisis need and to understand more broadly the range of needs faced by the client more holistically. The funding has been able to support the most vulnerable in the community including a wide range of clients from within the asylum and refugee community.

  - *"The model of support we provide alongside our partners is not simply to support clients with their immediate need (which is vitally important) but we offer holistic support where it is possible. A lot of the underlying need will be wrapped in their asylum claim but we aim to support them along their journey." (EYST team member)*

Local systems outcomes

- **Simplified reporting requirements have been very helpful**: the team observed that simplified reporting during the pandemic has and allowed them to focus on establishing and maintaining key relationships.[1]

  - *"The main thing for us was that it gave access to funds in a streamlined way to address need. This is what ground level means. Aftercare is for the organisation who has the client relationship, that's not really anything new or different. "(EYST team member)*

- **Client focus is key:** having clarity on the needs of clients was felt to lead to high levels of trust between organisations and allowed them to work more informally together in support of that. However, it was also noted that having experienced team members in terms of client skills and knowledge of the local context was also important to this.

- **Clear responsibilities between organisations are important**: regarding the hardship fund, it was felt that there was clear responsibility with referring organisations managing the client relationships and EYST able to make clear and quick decisions regarding the fund if they felt this was necessary. In cases

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[1] However, a concern was raised that these would revert to more standard ways of working in the future and even that some funders might start to ask for retrospective details expenditure during the pandemic which would create a lot of paperwork and challenges

where multiple organisations provided support to the same client, the relationship was handled by the organisation that was felt to be most appropriate (i.e., had the strongest links with the person's background or were best able to meet their wider needs). This was felt to work well by all our interviewees and reduced duplication in terms of effort and resource.

o **Existing relationships between organisations were crucial**: asylum organisations in Swansea were well known to each other and it was on this basis that they were invited to participate. This existing knowledge and trust was felt to be important in ensuring responsibilities were clearly allocated and that client needs were being addressed appropriately.

Workstream learning

o **Coordination is time consuming**: EYST reported that the ten hours a week allocated to the project was insufficient due to the need to make sure that everything was managed appropriately and joined-up between the various supporting organisations.

o **Improved working relationships can be fostered in a crisis:** the need to respond in a focused and rapid way to the Covid-19 crisis has led to stronger working relationships between organisations.

  ▪ *"I think the project has allowed us and our partners to develop our relationship with each other and more importantly with our clients." (EYST team member)*

o **Administration and project management can be improved once a project is live**: the application forms and questionnaires were adapted over time based on the feedback of users and the relevant organisations to ensure that processes were both efficient and sensitive to client needs. For example, the applicant questionnaire was changed and simplified to reduce the need to go back to clients for further information.

o **Remote support has been very effective but has limitations:** the Covid-19 pandemic has meant that many face-to-face support channels could not be used to help clients, but organisations reported that some aspects were able to be delivered remotely. It was felt that remote approaches developed during the pandemic could be used in the future and would help to reduce, for example, unnecessary client expenditure on bus fares to attend appointments. Nevertheless, there was also recognition that face-to-face contact remains the best way to both build trust and understand people's underlying needs. Balancing these newly developed remote approaches and more traditional in-person support therefore has the potential to improve both coordination between organisations and client outcomes in the longer-term.

Learning to inform the CCS programme

o **Maintaining a consistent client relationship has multiple benefits:** as well as meaning a more dignified experience for the client, ensuring that one organisation has responsibility for the relationship means that knowledge and insight into that person's needs and requirements can be communicated effectively. This encourages both good coordination and efficient delivery of meaningful support.

o **Handling client relationships requires experience:** SCVS noted that while volunteer mentors could provide significant support to clients and help understand their immediate needs, processing applications required someone with experience who could also assess underlying needs and understand the context of locally available support in both the short and longer term. An example of this was following up with people who had received data top-ups to ensure that they were able to access further support appropriately and support them in that if necessary.

- Some support organisations face significant logistical hurdles: while small and newly formed organisations can operate flexibly and with a clear focus on specific needs or audiences, they can face challenges in terms of having detailed organisational policies/accreditations, or a financial track record that satisfies the needs of funders. A key success of the Hardship Fund was that it partnered smaller and larger organisations in a way that overcame such barriers while leveraging the network and skills of a broad system of support providers.