

Meeting	Trustee Board meeting
Date	15 th October 2020
Title	Director's Report
Agenda item	12
Paper by	Victoria Southwell

- The day to day impact of Covid-19 continues to have an effect on the way that we work. Since mid-June I have been coming into the office three days a week. The building lends itself well to being able to safely socially distance from other people using the space but should restrictions be tightened then I can easily work from home again. Annie has continued to work from home and we have a weekly Zoom call to formally catch up.

- Our grant assessment visits have taken place via Zoom and on the whole this has been successful. Whilst not fully replacing the benefit of meeting people face to face it has been preferable to doing it over the phone. It has been a real pleasure to meet the projects that were shortlisted and I was impressed with the quality of all of those that I assessed. It was also incredibly interesting to find out more about some quite niche issues in the criminal justice sector which will provide some useful learning to take forward as we develop our new strategy.

- Several useful networking and launch events have also taken place virtually over the past few months. These include the ACF Annual General Meeting, a Small Funders Network meeting, an event on the impact of unhealthy relationships on vulnerable women (including those in the criminal justice system) and a webinar of Foundation Collaboration in response to Covid-19. The ACF annual conference will be taking place in November this year as an online event with the theme of Stronger Foundations: Reflect. Recover. Renew.

- We are starting to get some really strong reports back about the impact our first round of emergency funding has made to carer organisations. Annie is currently compiling these reports and some of the quantitative information that we requested so that we can demonstrate the impact as a whole. We'll be bringing this to the December meeting in what we plan to make a visual document that can be uploaded to our website. In the meantime I have included a few case studies provided by a couple of grantees to highlight the kind of difference our support has made. You'll find these in **Appendix 1**.

- I have been looking at what the next phase of our response should be as our original intention had been to launch wave two in the autumn. However, the ever changing picture with Covid-19 and lack of any certainty about what is going to happen next has made establishing a clear focus difficult. We surveyed the successful grantees from wave one and they were tremendously helpful in highlighting the key challenges they currently face.

However, many of the things they said they needed help with, such as being able to re-institute safe group meetings for carers, are no longer possible due to tightened restrictions. Support with core operating costs is probably the area where support would make the most difference but we need a little more time to think about the best way of offering this and what kind of criteria to apply. Therefore I will be bringing a paper to the December meeting outlining a proposed way forward.

- As you will see from the agenda I have also been working on identifying the proposed focus for the 2021 one year strategy and the focus of the two strategic grants that are part of the 2020 strategy.

- You will also see from the agenda that the Trustees Annual Report and Accounts have been produced. Working with Katy from Begbies auditors was an interesting and useful exercise for both Annie and myself. I am starting to pull together some thoughts and ideas about how we might produce a document with a slightly different style next year.

- Annie and I have spent some time drawing up the brief for the new website design and had some interesting and useful discussions with a number of designers. Consistently we have heard that our budget of £3,000 is not enough to produce the kind of website that we are looking for, mostly due to the need for it to interact with our CRM systems. Therefore, I would ask that Trustees agree to increase the budget to £5,500 which is more in line with the estimates that we have received. The current budget is likely to see significantly reduced expenditure in a number of budget lines related to Support Costs so I do not believe that this increase will impact expenditure. We have identified a preferred designer and are keen to start the project once approval of the budget increase has been received.

Appendix 1

Hopelinks – funding provided to increase helpline hours

On August 14th, 2020, we were contacted by a gentleman called Paul who was referred from the Local Authority Wellbeing Team. In the Coordinator's initial conversation Paul identified himself as a 'self-carer'. Paul is a widower but when his wife was alive, he was her carer. Since her death he seemed to have lost his way, but he was conscious he needed to keep himself well to look after his son, who he said was 'hibernating in his room on his Xbox'.

The initial conversation was quite long but there was uncertainty about what Paul was looking for, so another call was booked before potentially matching him with a 'MATE'.

Paul rang the freephone line early the next morning to say thank you and how much he had enjoyed the conversation and realised he had missed female company. Paul reflected on the fact that the conversation the day before had made him think that he should do something meaningful with his life. A call was booked for the following week.

In the third call the discussion was about the up and coming anniversary of his wife's death and her birthday and how he could face these "sad events, yet move on" It was suggested he could reflect on his past and capture the most beautiful characteristics of his wife, the restaurant they went to for her birthdays, for example, and he could maybe find a way to celebrate that with his son before moving on. It was discussed that once he had formulated these ideas, he may want to begin building and bonding with his son by putting together a family memory book. Paul found these discussions liberating and the process of putting the book together somewhat cathartic.

Paul stated, these three conversations have changed his life.

Lagans Foundation – funding enabled purchase of 25 tablets and keyboards

We have continued to provide support, respite and home care to families of complex health children during the current pandemic. We have been able to do this via moving all our services for our support workers online, this includes holding fortnightly team meetings as well as monthly supervisions via Microsoft Teams Video call. This has ensured that all Support Workers feel supported and have plenty of opportunity to raise any issues they may have. Everyone has felt connected and cared for, easing the impact of being isolated at home. We have also been able to continue our visits and record them swiftly and accurately, this has filled the family with confidence as they too receive copies of the visit records online. This allows them to review and add their own feedback.

Also due to the fantastic tablets we have been able to provide we have managed to book our Support Workers on a Level 3 Paediatric First aid course which is now delivered as blended learning. This course is delivered via six hours e-learning from home (which they are doing via their tablets), followed by six hours practical training in a Covid-19 secure site using social distancing.

Promas – funding enabled a telephone helpline to be set up

The grant has impacted in a variety of ways. We have offered ongoing support to carers who have called us on the helpline. Most carers who have contacted us have not had a single solvable issue, but rather a combination of many stresses (financial, practical,

relationships, emotional, grief) so working through all these aspects has required several weekly calls. Calls typically last from between 45 minutes to one hour. Some carers have contacted us at crisis point. Some have even fed back to us that the advice given has been life-changing and our helpline has saved their life.

Carers have been able to get support from our experienced team, which has reduced their stress, directed them towards the appropriate organisations/bodies, and overall helped them greatly. We have contacted professionals for carers who have felt unable to do so themselves. The grant has provided a purpose for the Promas team while we aren't able to run our normal face-to-face services.

A quote from a carer who used the service: *"My recent telephone conversations with Bernie have been unbelievably helpful. I would not even be in this position with mum without your guidance. Your input has been invaluable. I am truly grateful to you."*

It has highlighted the need for the helpline specifically for carers, managed by people who are aware of carers issues and experienced in navigating the complex care systems that currently exist. We plan to continue with the helpline service in some capacity as Covid-19 is still very much present and affecting carer's lives. It has been hugely beneficial for those who do not have access to or are unexperienced with computers/internet and do not have the confidence or knowledge to find the support and help they desperately need.