

# Evidence Pack

## Background to grant objectives

In setting the objectives for the one-off Community Recovery Grant Scheme, multiple sources of local evidence have been used:

- Residents Survey (July 2020)
- Community Impact Assessment (Sept 2020)
- Overview and Scrutiny Report (Loneliness and Social Isolation; April 2021)

This has been considered alongside the budget approval and led to the recommendation for the following two objectives for the grant:

- Improving wellbeing and mental health of residents
- Boosting the sustainability of the Community and Voluntary Sector

Within each of these objectives, a more detailed set of focus areas are recommended, based on evidence to indicate the local need and priorities for additional resources.

Any grant application should be able to demonstrate how it addresses one of more of the focus areas, and **both** of the objectives. Applications for larger amounts of funding may be expected to demonstrate that their work will address multiple focus areas.

There are already many community projects that are well placed to understand the needs and best solutions for these challenges. And so a key foundation of this grant will be to offer the financial support to groups who have the autonomy to progress these objectives in the way they can demonstrate will add the most value to the community.

### CIA Extract: BFC Renewal Principles

Recovery and renewal priorities	
 <p><b>Mental health</b> The restrictions caused many to experience more negative mental health. Whilst the local green spaces helped mitigate this, there is growing pressure on mental health services, with more complex presentations and notably more young people seeking support. Residents who had been shielding also, on average, reported worse mental health than the wider community. Therefore priorities will focus on reintegration and confidence accessing the community and providing more early help and prevention support.</p>	 <p><b>Voluntary and community sector (VCS)</b> A significant part of the support system through the pandemic has been provided through the voluntary and community sector. There was an increase in community engagement across the borough and it is a renewal priority to maintain this and maximise the potential for partnership working. However many VCS groups are also under significant pressure now due to the loss of volunteers (many were shielding) and loss of income streams. Therefore priorities will support the VCS in their recovery.</p>
 <p><b>Physical health</b> Work will aim to sustain where there has been increases in physical activity. One barrier to address is the more limited environments for physical activity, such as gyms and leisure centres, therefore in the short term, alternative methods should be promoted. The physical health of shielding residents was particularly affected, linking to the restrictions and confidence. This has led to reduced healthy lifestyles and in some cases deteriorating health conditions. Therefore more targeted support should be considered for these individuals. Work will also continue with health partners to address the wider health impacts from the pandemic.</p>	 <p><b>Carbon reducing activity</b> Many positive changes to the environment occurred during the restrictions, notably the reduced use of vehicles and increased cycling and walking. These changes are now returning to pre-pandemic behaviours and so work will focus on sustaining positive changes for the environment.</p>
 <p><b>Business and employment</b> There are clear impacts emerging linked to the national economy. Some industries are being particularly affected and the evidence shows that young people are being most affected by the rising unemployment. Therefore the council are working closely with the Local Enterprise Partnership to address these issues. This will also include supporting skills development for industries in demand. Actions to mitigate financial hardship and the wider effects of unemployment are also being developed for example in preventing homelessness.</p>	 <p><b>Financial principles</b> The council continues to face increasing financial pressures, in line with local authorities across the country. The emerging trends indicate there is likely to be increasing need for support from the council and pressure on services. This increases the financial challenges and so it will be a priority to continue maximising the resources available.</p>

## Community driving locally focused recovery

**Goal:** Residents are better supported to improve their wellbeing and mental health as part of recovery from the pandemic.

### Focus areas

Isolation and COVID reintegration

Digital inclusion (skills and assets)

Employment and skills support

Early action/intervention for wellbeing

Sustaining positive wellbeing changes

**Goal:** The sustainability of the Community and Voluntary Sector is improved to help the community longer term.

### Focus areas

Reinvigorating VCS groups/projects

Adapting to meet emerging needs

**A bid must demonstrate how it will support the progress of both goals.**

# Evidence Pack

## Objective one: Wellbeing and Mental Health

### What is affecting residents' wellbeing?

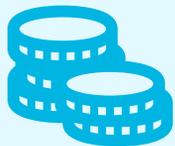
The local information shows that for many residents, their wellbeing has been negatively affected. There was a more salient negative impact for mental health than for physical health. There is also evidence of specific factors increasing the negative impact for mental health, including:



Increased **isolation and shielding**, including a lack of confidence re-accessing the community.



Remaining **digital exclusion** for specific groups.

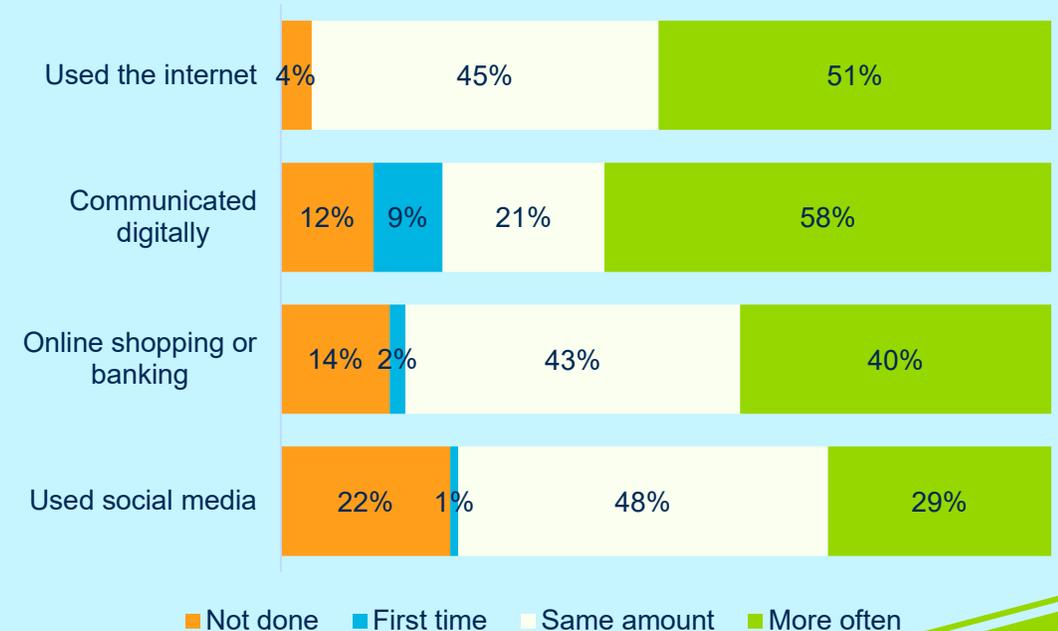


Increasingly negative **change in employment or financial circumstances**.

Mental Health Impact (%): Residents Survey



Online activity during the pandemic: Residents Survey



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## Objective one: Wellbeing and Mental Health

### Who is being most affected?

Some groups appear to be more negatively affected by these factors than others and therefore should be prioritised for support and funding:



**Older adults:** more likely to have experienced isolation and now less confident accessing the community, including due to shielding. Also more likely to be digitally excluded due to skills and access to technology.

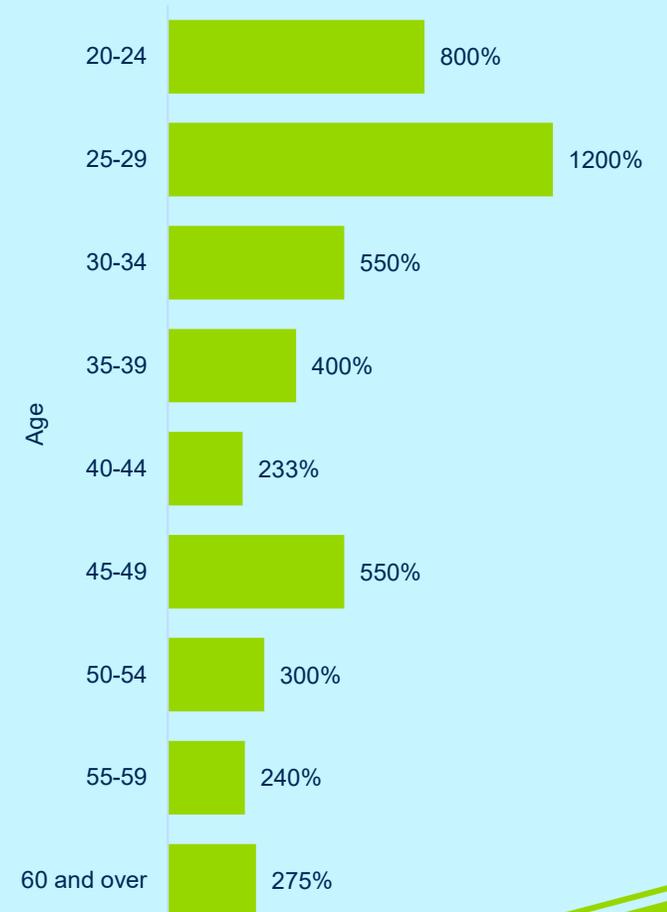


**Low income families:** more likely to be digitally excluded due to access to technology. Also more likely to be negatively affected linked to employment changes and their financial situation.



**Younger people:** more likely to report negative mental health and wellbeing. Group also more affected by employment changes and their financial situation.

Change in Bracknell Forest Job Seekers Allowance claimants Feb '20 to Aug '20



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## Objective one: Wellbeing and Mental Health

### Sustaining positive changes

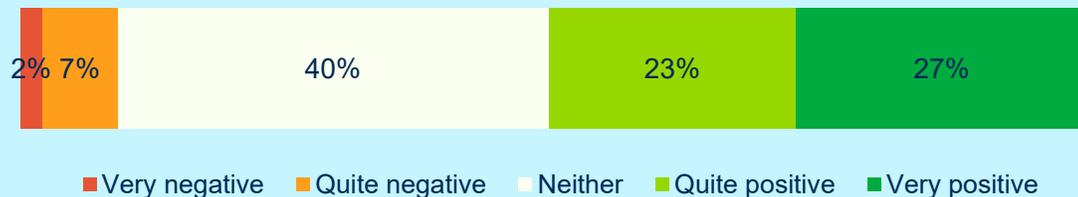
As well as the priority for addressing the negative impacts on mental health, there are also a number of **positive changes** that this grant may be used to maximise and sustain.

Visiting open spaces (%): Residents Survey



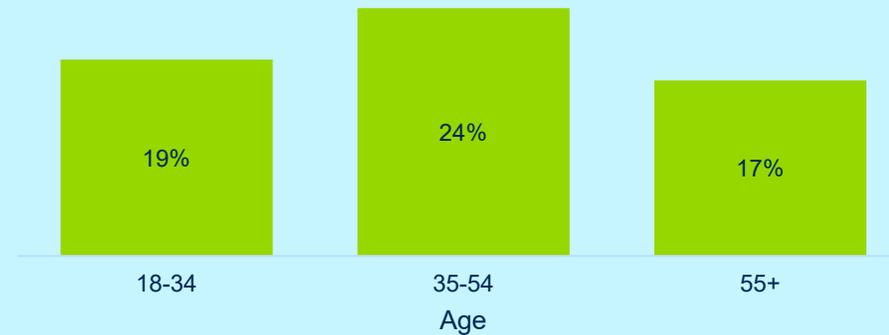
**More people are visiting outdoor spaces and parks.**

Impact on household relationships: Residents Survey



**Relationships at home have improved for many.**

Volunteering during the pandemic: Residents Survey



**More residents are more engaged with the community.**

Self-employed people, parents and middle-aged residents were more likely to volunteer during the pandemic and those living in more deprived areas, lower income families and students/young people were least likely to volunteer.

### How has the Community and Voluntary Sector been affected?

Many community and voluntary organisations were negatively affected by the pandemic, particularly financially as fundraising opportunities were more limited. The availability of volunteers has also significantly changed, in part due to shielding of older people.

**50%**

Organisations reported there would be a significant **negative financial impact** due to reduced fundraising income.

**40-70%**

Forecast reduction in annual income from organisations who sell services.



involve  
MAKING A DIFFERENCE LOCALLY

It is clear there has been a significant impact from the pandemic for the community, some of which will require long term changes and therefore the CVS will need to adapt to this. Where this needs additional resources, the recovery grant may be able to provide support to ensure that the CVS is sustainable in the new post-pandemic environment.