## Wessex Water Community Fund
**Impact report for Round 3 (grants made December 2021)**

### Summary of funded projects and impact on beneficiaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grant recipient</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Amount Awarded</th>
<th>Number of beneficiaries</th>
<th>Number of volunteers involved</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acts 4 Sharing</td>
<td>Six months costs of using our van to provide free collections and deliveries</td>
<td>2600</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Poverty &amp; disadvantage</td>
<td>Vulnerable people supported to achieve independent living or have improved quality of life at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ Church</td>
<td>Contribution to Operations Manager role to ensure the Hub in Creekmoor continues to run smoothly &amp; new activities respond to local needs</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>3876</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Stronger communities</td>
<td>Residents accessed various activities, leading to improved mental health &amp; wellbeing, reduced loneliness &amp; isolation, increased access to support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens Advice Central</td>
<td>Contribution to an advice service through a dedicated caseworker on Portland to support people in financial difficulty</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Poverty &amp; disadvantage</td>
<td>People supported to reduce debts, receive additional benefits, and gain an increased understanding of money management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorset Mind</td>
<td>New ecotherapy group in Weymouth to support people with inhibiting mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression, through therapeutic gardening</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>Participants report improved mental health &amp; wellbeing and reduced loneliness &amp; isolation. Children &amp; young people report improved skills &amp; confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorset Parent Infant Partnership</td>
<td>Connection in the Community Groups provide a space for families to meet on a weekly basis offering specialist support and advice to improve infants development</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>New parents report improved mental health &amp; wellbeing, reduced loneliness &amp; isolation and increased confidence to look after their baby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>Beneficiaries</td>
<td>Additional Information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faithworks Wessex</td>
<td>To pilot a new programme of debt management, education and support to individuals in financial difficulty and for young people (students)</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Poverty &amp; disadvantage</td>
<td>Children &amp; young people and those escaping homelessness, report an increased understanding of money management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gillingham Community Church</td>
<td>To expand the number of days Open Door is open from two to five days per week including a Saturday – supporting vulnerable residents</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Poverty &amp; disadvantage</td>
<td>Gillingham residents have increased access to community services including food provision, debt/benefits advice, counselling service, employment support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home-Start North Dorset</td>
<td>Core funding for volunteer led service supporting vulnerable families in crisis, where there is at least 1 child under age 5</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Families in crisis</td>
<td>Parents report improved mental health &amp; wellbeing, improved skills (e.g. cooking/nutrition), increased social connections, increased confidence as parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope Housing, Training and Support</td>
<td>Weekly cooking activities for residents in sheltered accommodation, and an opportunity to eat together</td>
<td>2920</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Homelessness</td>
<td>Residents report improved social skills, cooking skills and budgeting skills as well as improved relationships with other residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poole Communities Trust</td>
<td>Folding partition to enable a range of simultaneously activities for residents who are isolated &amp; travel costs are high</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Stronger Communities</td>
<td>Bourne residents have access to an improved community facility offering a range of activities and services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somerford youth &amp; Community Centre</td>
<td>Supporting the Community Pantry with the purchase of non-food items such as household cleaning items</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Poverty and disadvantage</td>
<td>People experiencing poverty have improved access to essential items leading to reducing anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vale Charitable Trust</td>
<td>Contribution to food costs for social supermarket</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Poverty and disadvantage</td>
<td>People experiencing food poverty were able to access low cost food and other items e.g. clothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Resource Services (The Rendezvous, Sherborne)</td>
<td>Targeted advice, information and help for vulnerable young parents in referred by Health Visitor Teams</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Families in crisis</td>
<td>Young parents report improved mental health &amp; wellbeing, improved money management skills, increased access to grants &amp; essential household items, access to housing support/advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>£38,520</strong></td>
<td><strong>7688</strong></td>
<td><strong>178</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How the grants benefitted the groups

- 4 groups report that the grant helped them to raise funds from other sources – a total of £33,050
- 9 groups report that the grant helped them to develop new links or partnerships with other groups
- 4 groups report that the grant helped them to improve the future planning, management or governance of their group
- 5 groups report that the grant helped them to consult with your beneficiaries/service users

Thanks to Wessex Water and Dorset Community Foundation

“We are so grateful to Dorset Community Foundation for making this grant available to us – it has enabled us to provide a service to vulnerable people who sometimes found to challenging to access our help. We feel our relationship with DCF has always been positive and constructive and the grant application and end of grant process straight forward and appropriate. We look forward to continuing our relationship with the Foundation.”

“Thank you so much for your support. It has made a real difference to so many lives. Thank you for helping us get this off the ground”

“We can not thank you enough for letting us imbed this service back into our facility and seeing the joy and laughter it has brought at these events as people have learned together and eaten together can not be under estimated.”

“Always a pleasure! Thank you.”

“Just a big thank you for the grant that you gave us, which enabled us to assist many people over the course of this last year.”

Reports and case studies submitted by the groups

1) Acts 4 Sharing

We were able to put the grant towards the costs we incur in keeping a van available and safely on the road. This enabled us to collect donated items of furniture, white goods and other household items. By referral, we deliver items needed by people who are struggling. Many of the people we help have been homeless and therefore need an entire home to be furnished. Without the van we would be unable to provide the free service to the people we help.

“My circumstances were dire and I wasn’t in a good place; you made a world of difference... furnished my flat and I’ve got somewhere to call my own.”

“The table and chairs have made a lot of difference; we can sit and have a meal together and we talk a lot more; a big step for my son who has autism.”

“I’d been homeless and then I was given an empty flat to move into; I felt uncertain and apprehensive about the future...but then you were brilliant and made a huge difference – I feel settled at last.”

Case study

D became blind following a bout of covid. His partner couldn’t cope with this, so the relationship broke down. With help from a local authority he was able to find a temporary accommodation, which we were able to furnish and help to make it into a home. D visited us at Hope HQ and with support, chose his own kitchen items and bedding. During this visit he met and chatted with various members of our team, who encouraged him greatly going forward. A few months later he was able to secure permanent housing; we then provided additional beds for the children to enable them to visit him on a regular basis.
2) **Christ Church**

Christ Church, founded in 1985, is a community focused church set at the heart of the Creekmoor Estate, Poole. It exists to serve those who live and work in the local Community and beyond, regardless of their beliefs. As a result of community consultation we recently doubled the floor space of our Church building to provide ‘The Hub’ enabling improved access to community resources and facilities.

- Daily Community Café with small children’s play area providing light meals plus Thursday ‘Hot meal deal’. Incorporates community volunteers
- Creative Expressions Craft group; older people becoming more active
- Support group for those living with dementia in partnership with Pramalife and The Leonardo Trust
- Parent & toddler groups; Under 1s group; After school club; Youth group
- Room hire for the Community and local businesses.
- Collection point for Poole Foodbank
- Ad hoc community events e.g. community tea for the Platinum Jubilee

We estimate nearly 4000 visitors to the different activities, over 5500 transactions in the café, and over 200 bookings throughout 2022. The grant funded Operations Manager is responsible for managing The Hub diary & generating income via Room Hire bookings, preparing and opening up the spaces & provision of equipment and hospitality resources, overseeing site management including maintenance, managing the review of policies, starting new community activities. We have recently been able to distribute 24 Christmas Goodie bags to local families and individuals who need a little extra help. This was as a result of a partnership with the Creekmoor Lane Co-op and the Birchwood Medical Centre.

The recent advent of the Warm Space @ The Hub @ Christ Church Creekmoor is having a beneficial effect on local residents in need. Warm Space @ The Hub is open 9.30 am to 2pm on weekdays offering a safe, warm and welcoming space with access to charge phones and basic devices, a place where individuals can find heating and a safe space for children to play. This has been advertised to local GP’s, Libraries and community associations. Members of the Creekmoor Community are getting behind with a pay it forward scheme for Cafe which we hope to continue long term and the provision of warming items such as slow cookers, hot water bottles, blankets, gloves etc.

"The Hub has been there to support The Birchwood Practice staff and our patients. We hold invaluable, strong relationships with the staff at Christ Church, Creekmoor and regularly use their facilities to host large and small scale events to support local residents"

"The Hub has been a big reason in the success of my new business. They allow me to hire out a clean and welcoming space so I can run my toddler dance classes. The parents and children love The Hub and often they will stay for a lovely coffee and treat from the cafe which allows children and carers to make friends and form a little community. I can’t thank the staff and volunteers enough for the past 10 months."

**Case study**

A new mum had been suffering from post-natal depression since the birth of her baby and her psychiatrist suggested setting a goal of going to a baby group. She finally plucked up the courage and brought her son, who is now six months old, to Under Ones. She wasn’t sure if she would make it through the door, but she did because she said she was made to feel so welcomed by us. She has built trust with us and really values the support and care she receives from us.
3) **Citizens Advice Central**

With the funding from yourselves and from NHS Charities Together, Portland Town Council, Portland foodbank and Westham foodbank, we were able to employ a dedicated caseworker to work one day a week at the two foodbanks to provide outreach on Portland to vulnerable clients who would find it difficult to access our main office in Weymouth. The caseworker supported clients to maximise their income - applying for welfare benefits and charitable grants and managing their debts. It has been notable for this project just quite how much support each individual client has needed and this reflects the lower than expected number of individuals seen overall. Clients each have a number of interlinked issues that take more time to resolve and require multiple appointments.

This funding has enabled our caseworker to spend much needed time with clients who have traditionally been excluded from advice. This grant has enabled us to provide advice and support to local people who are facing financial difficulties, particularly those who were severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and then disproportionately affected by the cost of living crisis. For those living in poverty, even a small increase in their income can make a significant difference, meaning they can afford to pay their rent or heat their homes. By accessing our support, their mental wellbeing is also significantly improved leading to improved confidence and reduced social isolation.

**Case study**

‘Elizabeth’ is transgender and had previously been a client with Citizens Advice but had disengaged for a long period as she found it difficult to travel to our Weymouth office. Elizabeth is not IT literate and struggles with mental health issues. When our caseworker met with Elizabeth, she quick discovered that she was not in receipt of all the benefits to which she was entitled, she was dealing with multiple debts, and struggling to complete her Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) application which was impacting her mental health. During the early stages of our work, Elizabeth was supported to make an application for Personal Independence Payment and her State Retirement Pension. We helped her to access local grants totalling over £1,000 over a period of 10 months and also to apply for the Wessex Water social tariff. We also supported her to complete her GRC application and referred her to our debt specialists for help with her debts. Elizabeth moved towards having a resolution to her debts and a mandatory reconsideration for a PIP decision is ongoing. Elizabeth has received the grants she applied for and is now able to support herself with food and energy costs during the crisis. During the period of support, Elizabeth was helped by over 20 interventions by the caseworker and other members of staff, and was also advised on various local support & warm spaces. In December, Elizabeth was finally given a date for her Gender Recognition hearing and is now considering doing a course at College to improve her IT skills.

4) **Dorset Mind**

The funding was used to pay for a project coordinator to provide an ecotherapy gardening and mental health support group in Weymouth. We have a plot 20m by 10m which we have used to install a number of fruit and vegetable plots. We have made a raised planter out of recycled materials to assist those with difficulty getting down to the ground. We have a nature based creative arts and crafts area. We have a bird feeding station. We have also made our own compost bin out of recycled pallets. Almost all of our produce has gone to the local foodbank in Dorchester.

Our participants have been involved in all of this - helping to construct beds, lay paths, put together garden furniture, grow fruit and vegetables and lots of arts and crafts. The students who came especially enjoyed learning about different vegetables, painting stones and pictures, learning about composting and the importance of nutrients in soil and where they come from (such as encouraging worms, compostable
materials etc). The students who prefer the practical side of the sessions have learnt how to use hand and power tools and how best to construct things, such as the compost bin, garden furniture and the raised planter. Our students also have their own murals which have been painted on recycled kitchen worktop. Students also made fat balls for the birds and learnt the importance of providing additional sources of food for wild birds in the winter months. There are also beehives on site which the students have learnt about. In addition, a number of students have taken fresh fruit and vegetables back to school for snacks or back home and learnt about the importance of eating healthily, where in some cases these students may come from poor backgrounds and don’t regularly have access to fresh vegetables.

On average the WEMWBS scores our Adult participants at Eco-in-Mind Weymouth show a four point improvement in mental wellbeing and our Children participants have shown a six point increase in mental wellbeing. One of our participants has OCD and struggles with the thought of germs but has been able to do some sowing. His Mum told us:

"It was a big step for him today. I know it’s given him a boost. He said he felt really anxious before he started but it went away and he’s really proud of himself. Small steps. You are all brilliant doing what you do."

Our ecotherapy team won ‘Community Action Group of the Year’ in the Dorset Volunteer Centre Awards. We have two small grants from Asda and EG Foundation. We have a £10k grant application pending with the National Lottery.

Case study
A twelve-year-old initially presented with social anxiety and was very quiet. After a few sessions he became more engaged and really enjoyed harvesting and taking some produce home to eat as well as providing food to the foodbank. He was very positive about the practical work he has done over the last few weeks, helping to lay new paths and constructing a raised bed. Both his mum and his family social worker who have attended with him have said that he has come out of his shell whilst attending the service and he would really like to come back. We are liaising with his school to organise for him to attend further sessions.

5) Dorset Parent Infant Partnership
We ran three weekly groups supporting parents and their babies. Activities vary including facilitated peer support sessions, attachment-led infant massage, developmental play, learning and sensory activities. The aim is to help bring a sense of connection between parents and babies as well as between the individual families. We have rooms in Tesco Community Stores and other locations in Bournemouth and Poole. The sessions aim to be productive, yet informal, baby and parent led, providing space to actively engage in weekly themes and discussions. Discussion topics include parent and baby wellbeing and development, relationship building, self-care, baby play with a focus on early language, interactive communication skills and emotional intelligence. Members of the peer support groups can become peer supporters within the groups enabling a culture of shared learning and experience.

Infant massage instructors and peer group facilitators report they see a vast increase in frequency of positive interactions with infants. Parents/carerers show increased confidence in interactions with infants and an increased understanding and efficacy for their infant. Improvements experienced include speech and language development through verbal and non-verbal communication. Parents commented that the groups give them confidence in trying out new activities with their babies and ‘how simple it could actually be’ and how it often surprises them that their young babies. Many parents share the opinion that it helps them to feel ‘less alone’ and gives them confidence in their parenting as they realised that ‘they are doing ok’ and that other parents often have the similar worries or anxieties. Clients attending previous Infant Massage classes and Peer Support groups report 100% reduction in isolation and loneliness, 100% improved wellbeing, 100% feel their relationship with their baby has improved since attending classes, 98% report an increase in positive mood.
**Case study**

"This group was fantastic, I learnt a lot about calming my baby boy through massage. Also, how to support his indigestion by using different massage techniques. It allowed me to bond with my baby in a very special way, and he now loves a massage after his bath, before bed, when we are at home. The class instructor was amazing. She put all the mums, and babies, at ease. She was kind and caring and very supportive throughout the sessions."

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6) **Faithworks Wessex**

Our Faithworks financial wellbeing lead has developed a programme of financial well-being courses during 2022. The programme has 3 elements:

1. CAP kids money course for Junior schools (years 6/7) – this is the only such provision of thinking about handling money in the area. During the year he has worked in 5 schools and with 150 children. He has been accompanied by a local foodbank lead who wants to volunteer as his deputy
   - Children were asked to identify the elements they liked most: over 50% said The Holiday Game. (With a fixed budget they have to decide travel arrangements, accommodation options, food choices and activities all with different costs. As the game progresses they have to make cost changes and financial adjustments.) The top 3 things they identified as most beneficial were understanding budgeting, how to keep out of debt, and knowing the difference between needs & wants.

2. Session for years 12/13 in Senior schools and groups at B&P College to help them get ready for further education or starting to live independently. Course incorporates elements such as budgeting and credit, buying decisions and getting good at shopping. During the year he has worked in 4 schools with 95 students. He has also run 4 sessions at the College with the General education group and the Catering group - total students = 128
   - College students were asked to say what the talk helped them with. Here are some of the most popular answers: “How to deal with money effectively”, “Helped with learning how to budget”, “Good to make aware of debt and the risks involved”, “Awareness of priorities and spending habits”.

   "Students enjoyed the setting out a budget and they did not realise that so many university students blow their grant for the whole year in just a couple of months. Really good that they know this now and not when they get to University, as it will be too late. They liked the one on how long do you reckon it would take to clear a credit card if you only paid off the minimum amount each month? They were shocked!"

3. Sessions targeted at specific groups. 4 sessions with the Arch programme at Faithworks for those escaping homelessness and addiction included tools to ensure benefits money doesn’t get spent in one go. Meetings with students at Bournemouth University during their “talking money” week (600 students come forward with debt problems each year – this is preventative work). An online session for the army at Andover – 68 attended.
   - For the sessions for those escaping homelessness, the feedback was slightly different:

   "If you don’t budget you will be in debt. Don’t buy things you don’t need. Either cut back or cut out. Keep to your means and don’t overspend"
A contact at one of the foodbanks fell in love with this work and is being trained so that she can extend the capacity to deliver in more schools (if new funding can be found). The University link in particular shows a huge need that is not being addressed as yet. It has also shown us that some of the existing courses (even those produced by banks) are not very accessible for many of our clients: people like doing real life exercises such as shopping or the holiday example.

**Case study**

“Derek has provided a couple of fantastic financial awareness sessions with our student groups at Bournemouth University. One of the groups were from Care Experienced backgrounds, which do not have the support of parents to help them financially or navigate their finances. The materials Derek presented were relevant and topical, covering a breadth of financial information, clearly drawing on his years of experience and expertise. Derek’s delivery is engaging and kept the student’s attention throughout the sessions. On the second session, staff members were keen to talk with Derek about other initiatives going forward, for example a peer to peer (student to student) programme delivering financial awareness. Feedback from students has all been positive, with many commenting on how useful and informative the sessions were and certainly needed in the current cost of living crisis climate.”

7) **Gillingham Community Church**

Our Open Door drop-in centre operates through a refurbished and modernised café area at the front of the building, which is directly on the High Street in Gillingham. Our purpose in offering the drop-in centre to the community is to reach out to and help those affected by poverty and those that are disadvantaged and vulnerable. With this support we have been able to expand our Open Door drop-in service for the local community to 4 days a week with a paid supervisor available throughout all the sessions along with a team of supporting volunteers. Our expansion to 4 days per week has incorporated: - Foodbank distribution on two of those days - Professional debt counselling on two of those days - Professional support with benefits claims on two of those days - Professional counselling support (for mental health issues) on two of those days - Partnering with Wise Ability on one of those days to help develop employment skills. The community are definitely aware of us and know where to come when needed. We have encouraged the Foodbank to invite people to join us when they are no longer needing food but still need support.

**Case study**

One lady who was always very anxious and worried about most things in life has found a place of security. She regularly tells us how much we mean to her and how her life has changed. We have helped her with computer skills which have reduced her anxiety to the point she felt confident to apply for Universal Credit. She did this some months ago and has managed really well with her journal and talking to her Job Coach with more confidence. There has been a major Change for this lady and she seems much happier and although she still has her anxieties, they are short lived as she always has someone to talk to and give her a bit of guidance through her issues as they arise rather than them building to breaking point.

8) **Home Start North Dorset**

We support families on a one to one basis via volunteer home visits. As a result of our bespoke support parents are able to adopt the skills and confidence they need to manage on their own. We provide a listening ear and encourage/empower families to find their own way, but provide the safety and support to allow them to do this. Many of our families report feeling less isolated, better connected to their communities, improved family relationships and confidence in their parenting. Many of our families continue on a positive path and do not end up with intervention from statutory services.

“I knew I could do this but always said next week. I am still anxious but now enjoy my days. My world goes around my boy”
**Case study**

Anna was referred to our service by her Health Visitor in March 2022. She was a lone parent with her 8 month old daughter, recently separated from her partner (father to their daughter). Their relationship was very stressful and had stripped her of all her confidence and self-esteem. There was psychological and financial coercion and control; Anna described having no money of her own, and her movements were constantly monitored and questioned. Anna was gradually distanced from her own family and friend support and became more vulnerable once their daughter was born. It was at this point that she made the decision to separate from her partner. When we first met Anna she was extremely anxious about caring for her daughter by herself and lacked the knowledge of developmental stages and appropriate diet. She spent all her time on her own with her daughter in her flat, rarely leaving. We placed a volunteer with Anna who had a professional background in Early Years. Mandy visited for around three hours a week, providing some adult company, advising on planning and preparing a good balanced diet, and gradually over three months increasing her confidence and self-esteem. Anna secured a non-molestation order against her ex-partner and with some help from us applied for child maintenance which she is now receiving regularly, and with no more calls or messages through social media. Towards the end of our support Anna had started her daughter at nursery and has since learned she has gained some part time employment.

9) **Hope Housing, Training and Support**

Life skills are lacking greatly in our residents and due to homelessness and bad life choices they already have long term ailments. We arranged group cooking activities across our houses, providing food, sharing skills and teaching residents how to make healthy meals on a budget and promote the social benefits of eating together. Cooking together helps them bond with their house mates, helps them learn skills from each other and helps them budget for food costs more realistically. It also helps with anxiety, boredom, isolation and loneliness, improving their overall wellbeing. We had some problems with anxiety over working together in close proximity but we dealt with this by letting people just watch or eat the food at the end, until they felt reassured to join in. Thanks to the evidence we have gathered we have been able to apply to the Healthy Heart Grant and I am thrilled to say we have been accepted with a further grant of £10,000 in 2023 to continue this project plus other activities which improve the heart and life of residents.

We have got a people fridge installed in reception and have food donations made weekly which residents can now help themselves to. We have been putting together a basic cookbook which we hope to publish in the future for residents to have and use in the houses.
Case study
We have a resident Des who is an ex-service man, has suffered with addiction for many years and suffered from Cancer which has effected his eyesight. Des was a chef and has participated in a lot of the groups helping other residents to cook by talking them through it. he also helped put a large spread on in the summer for our opening day with the help of other cooking participants. Des has now been able to achieve his personal independent payment with the help of his support worker and moved onto independent living after three years abstinent of drugs while being with Hope in his own flat. The project gave him feel he had something to contribute and gave him the motivation he needed.

10) Poole Communities Trust
We purchased the folding room partition as outlined in our application. It is of high quality and easy to operate and gives us great flexibility to use the partition and have two activities running at the same time or open up the partition for larger events. The grant has added both flexibility to the range and scale of activities offered and assisted the organisation in maximising income generation through room hire. Unfortunately the building flooded and it impacted on the operation of activities whilst drying out work took place. A series of work has been undertaken by Wessex Water and BCP Council to protect the building for the future. Fortunately the room divider was not damaged.

“I have been very worried with the cost of living and everything else that has been happening in the last few years. I feel lighter when I am in class. It is time where I can put my worries aside and focus on doing something for me.”

“I haven’t been out very much since the end of lockdown and don’t like going far. This class is perfect! It’s a ten-minute walk, I’ve met new people and learned new ways of being creative.' I want to do more!”

11) Somerford youth & Community Centre
It saddens us to hear from families that when they are unable to afford to buy food how much of a further challenge it is to then purchase basic health and hygiene items such as toilet rolls, washing toiletries, washing powder and toothpaste. With the grant we have been able to purchase discounted non-food items from a charity site which was then given out free to those who use our Community Food Project. Items purchased included essential cleaning products, toilet rolls, washing powder and bath and shower wash. We have been able to offer families who experience food poverty the opportunity to have other basic provisions which they would not be able to otherwise afford.

12) Vale Charitable Trust
Our primary objective has been to tackle food poverty and we have successfully addressed this for all those who visit us weekly but our work continues as the cost-of-living crisis has bought an unprecedented demand and the need for our help is growing. We used the grant to purchase food, mainly fresh fruit, vegetables, meat, fish, dairy products, and staple foods such as cereals, baked beans, tomato ketchup.

We have just successfully won a 3-year lottery bid to fund a manager and dedicated CA Advisor along with funds to complete a charity strength tests to ensure we are robust and sustainable for the long term.
Case study

"Thank you so much for this morning. I was totally overwhelmed but also overjoyed at how wonderful the pantry is! My son and I have made a huge amount of soup, bolognese sauce, Thai chicken curry and made a ton of cauliflower rice that is now in portion containers in the freezer. The veggies have gone a really long way! I was able to do some clothes washing finally and he loved his chocolate! Plus starting the day with an ice lolly was “amazing” he told me. We are so very grateful. You were all so welcoming and I can’t wait for next Thursday. Now I know where you are I’ll be on time! 🤩 Thanks again from the bottom of my heart, I was quite emotional as I was cooking it all this morning. P.S My son wants hash browns for breakfast! (Now he can)”

13) Youth Resource Services (The Rendezvous, Sherborne)

We provided targeted advice/information and help (100hrs) for vulnerable young parents age up to 25, in Sherborne/Gillingham area. Participants were referred by Health Visitor Teams, to resolve housing/benefits issues, help with budgeting/managing money and reducing anxiety.

Housing – we have helped young parents improve their living conditions by removing housing uncertainty, getting them onto the housing register, moving them into their first home or more suitable accommodation and liaising with landlords to resolve practical problems. For those without money for essential household items we have used our connections in the communities to source free carpets and white goods – the churches in both Sherborne and Gillingham have been tremendously supportive. This gives the young families security and provides the children and babies with somewhere safe and suitable to live.

Money – Ensuring that the young parents are in receipt of their full entitlement is one of the first thing we do with everyone and this can make a substantial difference to their monthly income and ability to manage and provide for their families. Some struggle to manage their money effectively and by working with them we have helped them better manage their money, sort out payment plans for arrears etc and become more in control of their life.

Cost of Living – through discussion we have helped identify ways in which they can reduce their expenditure and by being connected with other agencies have been able to secure them additional funding (£147 vouchers through Healthy Homes Dorset) towards utility bills which will help them keep warm this Christmas.

Mental health – the young parents we support often worry and become stressed and anxious whilst burying their head in the sand. This in turn has a negative effect on the family unit. Having someone to turn to for help and guidance to resolve problems whether it’s about housing, money or relationships improves the young parents’ mental health and 100% of our users report feeling better for having turned to us for support.

Case study

Aleisha is a young mum (22) with two young children under 3. She was living in a housing association flat which suffered badly from mould. She had contacted the housing association but no response. Grace, our project leader intervened formally on her behalf and the housing association then responded positively and the problem was resolved. This resulted in better living conditions for the family and a noticeable reduction in colds/ill health in her children. Aliesha is prone to burying her head in the sand and is not great with money. Grace discovered that she had not paid any council tax since she moved into the flat over two years ago. Obviously this could result in prosecution and needed to be addressed. Aleisha was fearful and went through a period of anger, denial and withdrawal for a few weeks. She finally responded to Grace’s messages and asked for help. Grace again intervened on her behalf to set up her account and using our name to vouchsafe for her, managed to secure a reduction in council tax and a manageable payment plan for her. Aleisha is pleased she was able to face up to the situation and feels greatly relieved. Having seen how problems can be resolved by facing up to them and remaining calm and civil throughout she is more likely to not only not end up in that position again but address problems should they arise in the future.