

# Review of lessons learned from Foreshore Trust Charity Large Grant programme 2021-2024

## Summary of the Final Report



**29<sup>th</sup> August 2023**

**Dr Anne Rathbone**

**[annerathbone@outlook.com](mailto:annerathbone@outlook.com)**

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## Executive Summary

This review was completed for Hastings Borough Council (HBC), who administer grants on behalf of the Foreshore Trust (FT). The purpose of the review is to capture benefits and learning so far from the FT large grants programme.

This programme has funded 7 projects against 6 priorities:

- Change Grow Live to address the priority of Domestic Violence and Abuse.
- Citizens Advice 1066 to address the priority of Housing, Debt and Benefit Advice.
- Funding Advice and Support Service (Hastings Voluntary Action) to address the priority of Funding Advice and Support to Voluntary and Community organisations.
- Hastings Advice Services Partnership (delivered by Hastings Advice and Representation Centre (HARC), Brighton Housing Trust (BHT) and Age UK East Sussex) to address the priority of Housing, Debt and Benefit Advice.
- The Links Project (hosted and managed by HVA) to address the priority of Migrant Interventions.
- Seaview Rough Sleepers Outreach Team to address the priority of homelessness.
- The Golden Thread (co-ordinated and managed by HVA on behalf of all the funded organisations) to address the priority of improving responses to mental health.

Overviews of all these projects and their individual achievements are outlined in the main summary report.

All the direct service delivery projects address the most basic needs of survival and access to safety, food, accommodation and warmth. The Funding Advice and Support project supports other Voluntary and Community organisations to bring in funding and keep their organisations sustainable. The Golden Thread facilitates joint working across the large grant funded projects to improve how they identify and respond to mental health needs.

The review found that all the projects have delivered well, meeting and often exceeding targets up until end March 2023. There are clear examples across all the projects of how their work has helped to make real changes for individuals.

The review highlights the value of organisations working together to make sure that individuals get high quality referrals into other services they might need, and to improve the awareness of staff in partner organisations about working with people from different groups and with a range of needs.

It also highlights the importance of the FT being aware of where there are key funding gaps that are not being met by other resources in the town. Funding should make sure that the most deprived and socially challenged areas are focused on as this is where many of the people with the highest and most complex needs live.

From feedback, the grants programme overall appears to have been well administered and managed. The application form and monitoring forms would benefit from review and updating. Clearer and more specific focus on outcomes (changes for the better) would improve knowledge about how the funding is benefiting individuals and communities.

The review therefore recommends that:

- Any future funding priorities explicitly focus on: i) importance of collaborative working and mutual capacity building, where there is a particular evidenced need for development; ii) importance of projects understanding and using strengths-based approaches to promote long term growth and change for individuals and organisations; iii) need to make sure that the needs of individuals in the most socially and economically challenged areas of the town are met.
- Any future priorities take into consideration other funding brought into Hastings through other sources, to identify gaps in the current 'funding landscape'.
- The application form and monitoring are reviewed and updated prior to any further funding programme. These should have a clear focus on outcomes to improve understanding of benefits of funding to individuals and communities.

# Review of lessons learned from Foreshore Trust Charity Large Grant programme 2021-2024: Summary Final Report

**29<sup>th</sup> August 2023**

**Author: Dr Anne Rathbone ([annerathbone@outlook.com](mailto:annerathbone@outlook.com))**

## 1. Introduction

This section outlines the background to the review and the scope of the work and report.

Foreshore Trust has funded 5 organisations with large grants for a 3-year period. The programme is administered by Hastings Borough Council (HBC) on behalf of the Foreshore Trust. The programme was always due to end in March 2024 and this remains the current plan.

This review was completed for Hastings Borough Council (HBC) who administer the programme on behalf of the Foreshore Trust. The purpose of the review was to capture what has worked well, any areas where things could have been improved and learning that could inform any grants/commissioning in the future.

This report is a summary of the key issues raised in the full report to HBC.

The review was undertaken through desk work and consultation meetings with the project leads. The Chair of the Grant Advisory Panel was also contacted. Appendix A attached describes the method for the review in more detail.

## 2. Summary of Review Findings

**2.1 The current social and financial challenges for Hastings and St Leonards residents.**  
An overview of key statistics is attached as Appendix B. This overview highlights the current financial and social challenges for residents of Hastings and St Leonards. The overall picture is one of worsening poverty and life chances. This provides the context for any decisions made by the Foreshore Trust in relation to priorities going forward.

### **2.2 The priorities the large grant programme has aimed to address**

The Foreshore Trust has aimed to address five priority themes through the large grants programme. These are:

- Domestic Violence
- Housing, debt and benefit advice (including Fuel Poverty)
- Migration intervention
- Homelessness
- Support infrastructure to voluntary organisations
- Addressing mental health needs through 'The Golden Thread'

### **2.3 Overview of the funded projects and their key achievements**

The Foreshore Trust has aimed to address these priorities by providing larger grants to 7 projects in total.

These are summarised below, alongside the key relevant points identified by the review. For each project there is a summary of amount funded, purpose, the positive changes expected from the project, and an overview including any key achievements.

The funded projects are all in their third year of implementation, with the exception of the Golden Thread project which is in its second year of implementation (this project is only 2 years duration). The Golden Thread was designed by all the funded projects, working together and led by Hastings Voluntary Action (by mutual agreement).

The summaries below outline the overall performance and impact of the projects, based on their monitoring returns up until end March 2024 and examples and feedback shared in the consultation meetings.

<b>Priority theme: Domestic Violence</b>	
<b>Organisation:</b> Change Grow Live	<b>Funding:</b> £22,299 per year x 3 years
<p><b>Purpose:</b> to employ a Hastings Domestic Violence and Abuse Worker, providing dedicated support to low and medium risk victims of domestic violence and abuse in Hastings and St Leonards.</p>	
<p><b>What the project expected to achieve in terms of change:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced risk of repeat or worsening domestic violence and abuse</li> <li>• Prevention of homelessness due to domestic violence and abuse</li> <li>• Improvement of mental health and wellbeing of victims/survivors of domestic violence and abuse</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Overview</b></p> <p>Already a major social problem, risks from Domestic Violence and Abuse worsened during Covid 19 lockdowns and restrictions. It also posed challenges in how to make sure that individuals experiencing Domestic Violence and Abuse were able to get help and support. Change Grow Live set up systems to contact people through online meetings, messaging and telephone during the strictest Covid restrictions and they recruited and trained their staff member the same way until restrictions were ended.</p> <p>The organisation has performed well so far against the agreed targets in their contract and the staff member has received advanced training. The organisation appears to have a clear focus on Equality Diversity and Inclusion as part of its Foreshore Trust funded delivery and wider services.</p>	<p><b>Key achievements</b></p> <p>Some anecdotal evidence from the project that the work has contributed to fewer ‘high risk’ cases of Domestic Violence and Abuse.</p> <p>Improved links with other services such as Housing, through training and development work with those services, which makes getting the right service for the individual experiencing Domestic Abuse and Violence easier and quicker.</p> <p>Helping individuals who have experienced Domestic Violence and Abuse to move forward in their lives by getting involved with other groups and community social networks and support.</p> <p>Close links between the worker funded by the Foreshore Trust and the worker for Complex Needs has helped learning and improved the service that can be offered to individuals who are medium risk but with complex needs.</p>

<b>Priority theme: Housing, debt and benefit advice (including Fuel Poverty)</b>	
<b>Organisation: CA1066</b>	<b>Funding: £42,108 per year x 3 years</b>
<b>Purpose: to deliver ‘first tier’ advice to residents with the highest needs, to help them access their rights, help them to deal with debt and housing problems and to get the benefits they are entitled to.</b>	
<p><b>What the project expected to achieve in terms of change:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The highest-need residents have information, advice and guidance to move forward with their presenting issues including employment, benefits, debt.</li> <li>• The highest-need residents improve their digital skills and financial capability from use of PCs.</li> <li>• Risk of homelessness is reduced through relevant advice (measured through number of people supported).</li> <li>• Local residents are supported to access fuel and food vouchers and small grants throughout the pandemic response.</li> <li>• Increased understanding of local needs to help with future service design and planning.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Overview</b></p> <p>Households are under worsening financial, budgeting and housing pressures. This makes the claiming of full benefits entitlements for those struggling essential for people to meet their own and their families basic needs.</p> <p>The project has trained volunteers to provide local people with ‘first-tier’ advice across a range of issues including debt, income maximisation, employment, housing, consumer rights, immigration and asylum. The project has met or exceeded its contract targets so far and appears to have a clear focus on Equality Diversity and Inclusion as part of its Foreshore Trust funded delivery and wider services.</p>	<p><b>Key achievements</b></p> <p>A service that stands out as being particularly tailored to individuals’ needs and refers to other services and advice systematically to make sure that the needs that might be underlying the person’s immediate problems are also addressed.</p> <p>Many examples of positive change for individuals including immediate debt relief and access to entitlements and showing potential for positive longer-term changes.</p> <p>Real changes for people most in need or at risk, in helping them to use digital methods of getting appointments with key services and using digital methods effectively to help them get the best from services.</p>



<b>Priority theme: Support infrastructure to voluntary organisations</b>	
<b>Organisation: Hastings Voluntary Action</b>	<b>Funding: £15,755 per year x 3 years</b>
<b>Purpose: to maximise levels of inward investment levered into Hastings through the voluntary sector by supporting local organisations in their eligibility and quality of applications to external funding sources.</b>	
<p><b>What the project expected to achieve in terms of change:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase levels of funding for the voluntary and community sector brought into Hastings and St Leonards through external funding sources.</li> <li>• New groups are supported to meet emerging/changing needs.</li> <li>• Increased sustainability of voluntary and community sector organisations.</li> <li>• Contribution to wider social/economic regeneration.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Overview</b></p> <p>With cost-of-living pressures affecting voluntary and community sector organisations as well as individual households, it is important to make sure that these organisations and groups are able to write good quality funding applications for their work.</p> <p>This project provides funding and capacity building support, helping small or new groups to meet the criteria for applying for funding, supporting medium sized organisations to be sustainable and bringing organisations together to work on joint funding applications.</p> <p>The project aims to achieve greater independence among voluntary and community organisations and groups through direct support and by encouraging joint working. The project has met or exceeded targets up until end of Year 2 with clear outcomes. The project appears to have a clear focus on Equality Diversity and Inclusion as part of its Foreshore Trust funded delivery and wider services.</p>	<p><b>Key achievements</b></p> <p>Supporting local voluntary and community organisations to bring in new funding into Hastings or sustain existing funding. This has also led to job creation or sustaining jobs in the Voluntary and Community Sector.</p> <p>Producing a small grants guide available on the Hastings Voluntary Action website.</p> <p>Bringing groups and organisations together to work on specific problems or issues such as keeping their premises going during the recent challenges.</p>

<b>Priority theme: Housing, debt and benefit advice (including fuel poverty)</b>	
<b>Organisations: Hastings Advice and Representation Centre (HARC), with Brighton Housing Trust (Hastings Advice) and Age UK East Sussex (Information and Advice Service)</b>	<b>Funding: £42,108 per year x 3 years</b>
<b>Purpose: to provide a joined up comprehensive and holistic information, legal advice and information/advice focusing on older people.</b>	
<p><b>What the project expected to achieve in terms of change:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased income.</li> <li>• Prevention of homelessness.</li> <li>• Improved health and wellbeing, care and support.</li> <li>• Reduced social isolation.</li> <li>• Promotion of understanding and capacity to manage issues more effectively in the future.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Overview</b></p> <p>This project addresses housing insecurity, benefits issues and debt poverty which are urgent and increasing and looks set to continue for the foreseeable future. Increasing inequalities in terms of digital skills and access is affecting older people more than most. They are also facing increasing housing pressures as more private landlords sell properties and raise rents.</p> <p>This project has a specific focus on helping older people who often do not realise their full rights.</p> <p>Across the reporting so far, all three partners organisations have met or exceeded their contract targets. The organisation appears to have a clear focus on Equality Diversity and Inclusion as part of its Foreshore Trust funded delivery and wider services.</p>	<p><b>Key achievements</b></p> <p>Each partner organisation improving their own working practice through their joint working, building on the experience and expertise they have shared with each other.</p> <p>Doing more telephone advice (for HARC in particular) has increased the number of individuals that the service is able to help. Also, improving outreach to reach individuals who are most in need.</p> <p>Increasing income for individuals through access to their proper benefits entitlement.</p> <p>Preventing homelessness for Hastings and St Leonards residents.</p>

## Links project

<b>Priority theme: Migration intervention</b>	
<b>Organisation:</b> The Links Partnership hosted and managed by Hastings Voluntary Action	<b>Funding:</b> £11,140 per year x 3 years
<b>Purpose:</b> to improve quality of life and life chances for asylum seekers, refugees, migrants and wider BME communities.	
<b>What the project expected to achieve in terms of change:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve access to, and knowledge of, local advice and support services</li> <li>• Identify and help to remove barriers to positive integration</li> <li>• Reduce risks faced by developing communities to feel part of Hastings and St Leonards</li> <li>• Enable social and community engagement</li> <li>• Create opportunities for people to make a contribution</li> </ul>	
<b>Overview</b> <p>The Links project is a partnership across many organisations and groups that aims to improve quality of life and life chances for local asylum seekers, refugees, migrants and wider BME communities. It is facilitated by a Co-ordinator funded through Foreshore Trust. There is a focus on supporting individuals to feel a sense of belonging and to be involved in the community as well as providing information and support.</p> <p>Support is provided through a weekly session for staff and service users to seek information, advice, support and access to health, housing and benefits related services. Development activities include play sessions, English language classes and support for individuals to take British Citizenship language tests. Support is tailored the different needs of individuals.</p> <p>The project has met or exceeded all its contract targets up until end of Year 2. It appears to have a clear focus on Equality Diversity and Inclusion as part of its Foreshore Trust funded delivery.</p>	<b>Key achievements</b> <p>A quick and effective response to the arrival of Ukrainian people seeking refuge from February 2022.</p> <p>Good links with many other organisations and services that helps the project get good outcomes for the individuals they support.</p> <p>Many stories of positive changes for individuals supported (for example, to apply for Settled Status and to deal with mental health issues that have stemmed from trauma).</p> <p>Following positive evaluation, the value of the project has been recognised by being replicated in Eastbourne following a quick rise in asylum seekers in hotel accommodation there.</p>

<b>Priority theme: Homelessness</b>	
<b>Organisation: Seaview Project</b>	<b>Funding: £28,000 per year x 3 years</b>
<b>Purpose: to find and connect with rough sleepers, building trust and gradually engaging to encourage people onto a pathway of support and accommodation away from the street.</b>	
<b>What the project expected to achieve in terms of change:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement/re-engagement with support and services.</li> <li>• Improved health and wellbeing (physical and mental health).</li> <li>• Out of area rough sleepers reconnected to their area of origin within 2 weeks.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Overview</b></p> <p>Rough sleeping is increasing and it is associated with many risks including higher risk of violence and abuse, mental and physical health issues that can go untreated, problematic substance use, exploitation and being a victim or perpetrator of crime<sup>1</sup>.</p> <p>The Rough Sleepers Outreach Team is largely funded through the Foreshore Trust large grant with a small amount of match funding from another source. It focuses on identifying, contacting and verifying individuals sleeping rough and liaises with Housing and other services to facilitate people’s access to temporary and longer-term accommodation. The support is based on developing high levels of trust with individuals and with rough sleepers networks and peer groups.</p> <p>At the end of Year 2 the projects contract targets were being exceeded. The organisation appears to have a clear focus on Equality Diversity and Inclusion as part of its Foreshore Trust funded delivery and wider services.</p>	<p><b>Key achievements</b></p> <p>Makes contribution wider than its direct role, by encouraging people to get involved with other support and services. Reaches individuals who have urgent or necessary need of other services, including people with serious mental health issues, to get them the help they need.</p> <p>Evidence of helping individuals to achieve improved health and make progress in addressing the complex challenges they face.</p> <p>Giving people the time they need to trust and to seek help and support, especially important during the Covid 19 pandemic when people were often afraid and sceptical of lockdown.</p> <p>Particularly good partnership working with other voluntary and community organisations, private landlords and the public. It works closely with CA 1066 on the Digital Inclusion Project<sup>2</sup>, helping to make sure that rough sleepers can access online services, information and appointment systems.</p>

<sup>1</sup> [Rough sleeping | Crisis UK | Together we will end homelessness](#) accessed 24<sup>th</sup> August 2023

<sup>2</sup> [Digital inclusion project brings healthcare technology to the homeless - NHS Digital](#) accessed 24<sup>th</sup> August 2023

**Priority theme: Additional funding to promote positive responses to mental health and wellbeing across funded organisations.**

**Organisation:** Hastings Voluntary Action on behalf of all funded organisations.

**Funding:** £20,000 over 2 years (Years 2 and 3 of the large grants programme timescale).

**Purpose:** to facilitate funded organisations (and wider) to identify and address key mental health issues and trends and to promote policy and practice that builds on the latest research on effective solutions.

**What the project expected to achieve in terms of change:**

- A clearer understanding of mental health related needs and trends locally.
- Organisations have enhanced capacity in relation to addressing mental health need within their work, and in building their own mental health and resilience.
- Those with mental health issues who are digitally excluded are supported to use digitally based support and access to services.
- Stronger collaborative responses and referral links between funded organisations.

**Overview**

This project was based on evidence of increasing mental health need locally. The plans were developed jointly between the funded organisations who agreed that Hastings Voluntary Action should co-ordinate.

This work began in April 2022 and is across 2 years until end March 2024. The project has delivered its agreed plans to date.

**Key achievements**

Positive feedback on the value of the work by all participating organisations, who felt it has improved their abilities to address mental health need for both service users and staff.

Has brought in expertise of nationally recognised leaders in the area of Mental Health and tools for better joint working to address mental health.

Has informed the Facing the Future report which captures local trends and priority issues. Has met with the Mental Health Commissioner for East Sussex to influence wider Mental Health Commissioning.

The Action Learning Set and training has now also been opened up to other interested local organisations and services.

## 2.4 What has gone well across the whole Large Grants Programme

The monitoring returns and consultation show that, overall, all the projects have performed well and targets have been met, and often exceeded, across the programme. Positive changes for individuals are clear from the written project reports and were reported in consultation meetings.

There is a good emphasis across the programme on delivering services and meeting immediate needs. There is also a focus by projects on helping people to progress towards independence, working with people with a focus on their own strengths. Research shows this is an approach which helps individuals and communities achieve real, long-lasting progress<sup>3</sup>.

The funding has enabled organisations to sustain work that would otherwise have been lost at the end of the HBC Community Partnership Fund and allowed them time to identify alternative sources of funding. Whilst projects have not yet identified any future funding for the projects, after March 2024 (the planned end of the programme), this is not unusual given that there are seven months of funding left. Hopefully, all the projects will be able to be sustained.

There is strong agreement across organisations that local funding, such as this provided by Foreshore Trust is evidence to other funders of local support. Previously, under the Community Partnership Fund, this came from HBC and the current Foreshore Trust large grants have also fulfilled this function. For some projects, the large grants funding has meant that organisations are able to make reference to their experience of delivering the particular way of working funded by Foreshore Trust, and the positive outcomes. There are also examples of where funded projects have resulted in better inter-agency partnerships which have also helped with bringing in additional funding to the town. If the total funding from the programme was not available from the Foreshore Trust going forward, some allocation of funding could help as 'match' for other applications and would demonstrate local commitment to projects. A local example of this is the East Sussex County Council Arts Partnership Grant<sup>4</sup> which organisations can apply to for a small amount of match funding for a larger bid to the Arts Council. This seems a positive way to use smaller amounts of funding to lever in other funding.

Whilst there is some learning that can be taken from the review regarding administration of the funding, overall it appears that the administration of the Foreshore Trust large grants programme has been well delivered given the resourcing attached to it. Communication and ease of administration for the projects was reported by most as good, compared with other funder and commissioner requirements.

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<sup>3</sup> For example, see [Strengths-based approaches for working with individuals | Iriss](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Arts Partnership Grant. How to Apply | East Sussex County Council](#)

## 2.5 Key issues to be considered for any future programme

### The priority themes

The most pressing and obvious issue for any future funding programme is whether the priorities in the current programme are the best use of money going forward. Certainly, it appears to be the case that all projects have put the funding to good use. Without a more comparable system of capturing impact for individual projects, and what other funding might also be contributing to the projects, it is impossible to comment fairly on which, if any, priorities have had more impact than others. All the direct delivery projects (Change Grow Live, Citizens Advice 1066, Hastings Advice Services Partnership and Seaview Rough Sleepers Initiative) directly address the most basic survival and safety needs of those with complex challenges. The capacity building work of Hastings Voluntary Action emerges as having been of high value to the funded projects and some of the Golden Thread activity has now been opened up to the wider Voluntary and Community sector.

### The value of collaborative approaches

Well-functioning collaborative projects can potentially produce greater impact by working together to maximise identification of those facing the greatest barriers to accessing services (that services struggle to reach) and to support them to take advantage of direct delivery, through a streamlining of pathways. Reaching those facing the most complex challenges, whilst promoting mutual learning and competence are key strengths of collaborative projects. The NCVO highlight these and other benefits<sup>5</sup> and there is evidence of this from the review. However, such projects may need more funding allocation to make the additional work involved in collaborative working achievable. This can be taken as an indication that fewer, but larger grants, which promote smoother pathways, may be more effective in terms of producing higher impact. It is important also to note, however, that collaborative working and effective referral links should as a rule be integrated as good practice within and between all services. Any future funding that prioritises collaborative initiatives should do so on the basis that there is a clear need to improve access and support for particular groups.

### Addressing funding gaps in decisions about priorities

In future allocation of funds, it may be useful to consider filling gaps in how priorities are being addressed, rather than seeking to prioritise one basic needs service over another. Government and other large scale funding programmes become available from time to time and alter the funding landscape of the town. A mapping of these was outside the scope of this review (and a full mapping is expensive and goes out of date very quickly) but awareness of what other funding has recently been brought into Hastings and St Leonards (as one example, the Youth Investment Fund) can provide useful and up to date information regarding gaps.

### Focusing on areas most negatively impacted by social and economic pressures

Many of the demographic, social, environmental and health needs highlighted in 3.1 are alarming and the most deprived and excluded individuals need to be a priority. Many such individuals live in

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<sup>5</sup> [Benefits and risks of collaborative working | NCVO](#)

the most deprived and socially challenged areas of the town. In order to maximise social and health impact, funding should either specifically target the most deprived areas of Hastings, or ensure that any funded projects have explicit strategies for targeting the most challenged areas.

#### The administration of the large grants programme

The application form used for the large grants programme could benefit from review before being used again in any future programme. Several of the funded projects fed back that it was circuitous and over complicated, a feeling shared by the members of the Grant Advisory Panel contacted. Whilst it asks about desired impact of the proposed projects, it lacks a robust and specific emphasis on individual and wider outcomes that can be effectively monitored, leading to a lack of distinction between outputs (numbers seen etc.) and outcomes (positive changes) in project profiles and monitoring.

All but one of the project leads who expressed a view, agreed that the monitoring/reporting arrangements were comparatively useable and straightforward whilst also allowing room to report on individual outcomes and other achievements through the case studies.

Linked to the lack of focus on outcomes within the application form, most of the Key Performance Indicators (contract targets) for the funded projects tend to be output focused rather than outcome focused (see above). Potentially, this kind of emphasis can disadvantage projects that work with fewer service users but with higher complexity of need and is not, in itself, an effective indication of a quality service. This issue is highly relevant to the projects working within the Foreshore Trust large grants programme priority themes.

Any future programme of a similar size should review both the application and the monitoring systems to ensure that individual and wider outcomes and impact can be identified clearly and (as far as possible) quantifiably, but without losing the opportunities for projects to tell of significant changes through individual stories and journeys. More focus on outcomes was also something mentioned by the Chair of the Grants Advisory Panel as being desirable, for the members of the panel to fully understand the value of a grant to anyone project or organisation.

One person felt that communication on the part of the programme administration could be improved. However, all other project leads commented positively on the ease of communication and accessibility of the programme administration staff.



### 3. Conclusions

The brief of the review was to identify

- What has worked well so far from the current TF large grants programme.
- How Covid and the cost-of-living crisis has impacted on the community and voluntary sector.
- How these changes might affect priorities going forward for the Foreshore Trust.

It is clear that the economic and environmental shocks to our systems over the past 3 years have vastly increased poverty, security of accommodation, worklessness and ill health. It is also clear that Hastings has been disproportionately affected as health inequalities widen. The national and local financial context has severely impacted on the amount of funding available to the voluntary and community sector to meet these vastly increased needs. Cost of living pressures, rents and fuel price increases and loss of buildings for community use have all placed added burden on voluntary and community sector organisations to sustain their committed levels of delivery.

It has been relatively easy for the review to identify achievements from the funding of the projects under all the existing priority themes. Overall, the projects have delivered well against their set output targets and exceeded them in many cases. The projects have worked well collaboratively through the Golden Thread, to optimise mental health aware environments and practices. It is much harder to identify which of the current priorities are more or less important to support in any future programmes. All of the projects that deliver directly to individuals in the community address basics survival and safety needs. The support to voluntary organisations and the Golden Thread provide an important role in optimising capacity and bringing new resources into the town.

It seems sensible when considering priorities going forward to take an approach of identifying where there are gaps in the funding landscape, rather than trying to work out a 'ladder' of basic needs. This means cross referencing the most pressing priorities with an overview of the areas in which major funding has been brought into the town and where there is underinvestment. This does not require formal mapping (which is resource intensive and quickly out of date) but a relatively straightforward bringing together of existing knowledge across Council and ESCC officers and their relevant partners.

Collaborative projects (where organisations are encouraged to put in joint applications) can help improve an individual's journey through services. However, such projects might need more resources to do well. Funding of such proposed projects should require clear justification of why they are necessary and are not currently being met by standard 'good practice' (see 3.4). Recent demographic and needs information highlights a need to focus on the most disadvantaged areas in order to attain maximum impact, given increasingly widening social and health inequalities.

Some review of application processes and monitoring systems would be useful for future funding programmes as a way of ensuring that learning from funded projects is maximised and an appropriate focus on outcomes. This will make comparisons of impact easier to assess in the future.

## 4. Recommendations

This review recommends that:

Any future funding priorities and specifications are clearly outcome focused (rather than overly focused on numbers worked with), with an emphasis on sustainable individual progress towards independence as appropriate to the needs of respective groups.

Any future funding priorities and allocations explicitly include in their specifications:

1. The importance of collaborative working and mutual capacity building where this is a clearly evidenced need.
2. The importance of using strengths-based approaches and other approaches that promote individual progression and independence (appropriate to the needs of the targeted group) and wider systems change where possible.
3. The importance of specific targeting of the most deprived areas of Hastings.

Any future funding priorities take into consideration funding brought into Hastings and St Leonards through recent Government and other large scale grant programmes or commissions, using this knowledge to identify priority gaps in the funding landscape.

Both the application and the monitoring systems are briefly reviewed and adapted to ensure a greater focus on outcomes rather than outputs so that impact for the individual and the wider systems can be more clearly expressed and understood.

## Appendix A: Method

The work has been undertaken through desk work and consultation meetings.

For the desk work element, all relevant written documentation was reviewed as supplied by HBC and supplemented by funded organisations. This included:

- Original funding applications and contracts.
- Activity and progress reports from the funded organisations up until end March 2023 (the last complete funding year).
- Any relevant strategies or needs assessments.

Additionally, basic literature searches were undertaken to identify any key areas of good practice in funding and any other research evidence that related to local findings.

Consultation meetings (either in person or online) were held with project leads from all the funded organisations. A standard set of outline questions was used, which was agreed with HBC leads. Project leads were also asked about any specific issues arising from monitoring returns so that the review could comment on the extent to which targets have been met.

Fortnightly meetings were undertaken with the HBC Compliance and Liaison Officer (who administers the Large Grants Programme on behalf of the Foreshore Trust) with input from the HBC External Funding and Compliance Manager who had historical experience of establishing the large grant programme. A meeting with the Chair of Foreshore Trust Grant Advisory Panel (GAP) was also held, to inform them that the review was taking place and to capture any relevant learning for the review from the perspective of the GAP. Details of people consulted can be found at Appendix A.

Findings were analysed across the statistics and notes of consultations. This report was then produced to capture the key learning from the review.

The table overleaf lists the people consulted for this review, their roles and dates of meetings.

## List of people consulted for this review

<b>Name, Job Title</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Project name/description</b>	<b>Date met</b>
Abbie Williams, Compliance and Liaison Officer	Hastings Borough Council	Administration of Foreshore Trust Large Grants Programme	2 <sup>nd</sup> August 2023 online 22 <sup>nd</sup> August 2023 in person
Ian Sycamore, External Funding and Compliance Manager	Hastings Borough Council	Oversight of history and context of Foreshore Trust Large Grant Programme	
Jacky Everard, Chief Executive	Hastings Advice and Representation Centre	Hastings Advice Services Partnership	15 <sup>th</sup> August 2023 online
Suzanne Hennell, Senior Advice Manager	Brighton Housing Trust		
Charles Sheldon, Health and Wellbeing Manager	Age UK, East Sussex		
Debbie King, East Sussex Domestic Abuse Service Manager	Change Grow Live East Sussex	Change Grow Live Domestic Abuse Medium Risk project for Hastings	16 <sup>th</sup> August 2023 online
Nick Porter, Chair	Foreshore Trust Grant Advisory Panel		16 <sup>th</sup> August 2023 online
Sarah Coop, Vice Chair			14 <sup>th</sup> August 2023 by email
Sue Burgess, Projects Manager	Seaview	The Seaview Project	17 <sup>th</sup> August 2023 in person
Dave Perry, Chief Officer			
Tracy Dighton, Chief Officer	Citizens Advice CA 1066	Advice Services	17 <sup>th</sup> August 2023 in person
Peter Thorpe, Deputy Director	Hastings Voluntary Action	Funding advice and support service	21 <sup>st</sup> August 2023 in person
Steve Manwaring, Director		Golden Thread	
		Links Project Support for Asylum Seekers and Migrants	

## Appendix B: The current situation for residents of Hastings and St Leonards

The various socio-economic crises experienced by the UK in the past 2 to 3 years follows a prolonged austerity policy by central government, which has resulted in fewer and more pressured public services, restrictions on benefits and access to benefits<sup>6</sup>. Whilst the cost-of-living crisis, defined as fall in net disposable incomes is affecting most UK individuals and households, those on the lowest incomes are shouldering the biggest burden. There is clear evidence that this situation is widening health inequalities, affecting life expectancy, infant mortality and chronic conditions that impact on ability to be economically active.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, this is particularly the case in coastal towns such as Hastings.<sup>8</sup>

The final evaluation of the CHART (Connecting Hastings and Rother Together) programme<sup>9</sup> covers 20 neighbourhoods in the most deprived areas of Hastings (as well as 3 in Rother). As such it provides a valuable recent update of the changes to the socio-economic context of the most challenged parts of Hastings. It highlights:

- Increasing levels of economic inactivity, with a doubling of unemployment rates since 2017, low and decreasing employment opportunities and an increase in disability affecting ability to work (40.8% in the CHART area and 29.3% across Hastings) both of which are significantly higher than the South East average (21.9%) and the national average (23,5%).
- High levels of adults without formal qualifications (an increasing trend – a HBC analysis of Economic Indicators notes that a fifth of Hastings residents have no formal qualifications which is the highest in East Sussex and higher than the national average of 18%).
- Above average numbers of asylum seekers supported by HBC (0.73 per 10,000 people in September 2022 compared to 0.23 across the South East).
- Declining health across Hastings across many of the national health indicators including mental health and wellbeing

The evaluation notes that learning from the delivery of the CHART programme included insight into the complex and interacting barriers to gaining employment which included ‘acute lack of confidence, mental health issues, disabilities, caring responsibilities and the benefits trap’.

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<sup>6</sup> [The public health implications of the cost-of-living crisis: outlining mechanisms and modelling consequences - The Lancet Regional Health – Europe Feb 2023](#)

<sup>7</sup> Hiam, Dorling and McKee. [Things Fall Apart: the British Health Crisis 2010–2020](#) British Medical Journal 2020.

<sup>8</sup> [Chief Medical Officer’s annual report 2021: health in coastal communities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>9</sup> Prepared for Hastings Borough Council by Forever Consulting March 2023

The HBC analysis of Economic Indicators and Trends updated in December 2022 provides additional insight into pressures on net disposable income for individual Hastings residents and households, for example:

- Lower salaries, with the median weekly wage for a full-time position in Hastings being £150 lower than averages for the South East and nationally, impacting on Gross Disposable Household Income which in 2022 was lower in Hastings than in the South East and national averages.
- Proportion of residents in receipt of benefits (32.1% in May 2022) is higher than the South East (17.7%) and national (22%) averages at the same time point.

All of these statistics link to a local context of worsening poverty and life chances. The Index of Multiple Deprivation shows that Hastings is ranked 13<sup>th</sup> most deprived local authority in the country, dropping 7 places in this ranking since 2015 indicators.

It is within this context of deprivation that the Foreshore Trust operates and it is therefore relevant to any plans for future funding.