

Impact Measurement Report

Supporting Communities Fund



Hillcrest

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1. Introduction

The Supporting Communities Fund (SCF) was a £20m investment fund set up in 2020 by the Scottish Government to support community anchor organisations with local responses to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Scottish Government made the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) a referring partner, encouraging housing associations to take a strong role in the use and distribution of these funds. Over £3m of the fund was allocated to Scottish housing associations and co-ops with the support of SFHA.

Hillcrest successfully bid for £100,000 from the SCF in order to deliver relief services in Dundee in four key areas:

1. **Energy Top Ups** – offering top up energy cards through the award winning Hillcrest Energy Advice Team.
2. **Early Release Prisoners** – supporting with accommodation and tenancy starter packs for prisoners released early under the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020.
3. **Isolation & Wellbeing** – working to reduce the damage caused to groups particularly vulnerable to the effects of long-term isolation.
4. **Recovery & Outreach** – distributing basic hygiene and wellbeing packs, as well as advice on harm reduction and wellbeing, to some of the most vulnerable people in the community.

After a bidding process the funds received were allocated to a range of groups, both internal and external, to deliver outcomes in the four areas above. In order to capture the impact of the work done, improve services and strengthen any future bids for similar funds, Hillcrest undertook a social impact measurement exercise using the Social Value Bank to quantify the effect of services with the help of robust research and measurement techniques. This report summarises the findings of that exercise.

2. Methodology

Wellbeing Valuation

The exercise was carried out based on research findings using an approach called Wellbeing Valuation. Through analysis of large datasets from UK household panel surveys, an operational outcome that generates wellbeing in an individual can be equated to the average amount of money the individual would require to achieve the same improvement in wellbeing. This monetary figure is then considered to be the per-person social impact value of that outcome.

While the values do not directly represent money generated, they can be thought of as an estimate of the financial equivalent of the positive impacts generated by a particular project. Therefore it is possible to compare value generated by different projects, or compare the budget of a project with the social value generated in order to evidence value for money.

The Social Value Bank

The Social Value Bank was created using the Wellbeing Valuation approach by HACT, a housing innovation agency, and Simetrica, an impact measurement consultancy. This tool lists a range of positive social value indicators, such as moving from unemployment to full-time employment, resolving issues with mould in a property or participating in a social group. For each indicator a monetary figure is given representing its associated social value. The values are adjusted to account for geographical location, age group and 'deadweight' – positive social change that would have occurred even without the intervention of the project being measured.

A more recent Mental Health Social Value Calculator has been added to the Social Value Bank, applying the Wellbeing Valuation approach to the 7-point Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale allowing for more detailed analysis of the impact of support on service users' mental wellbeing. An activity cannot be measured using indicators from the Mental Health Social Value Calculator and the Social Value Bank, as the Social Value Bank already accounts for mental health so this would be double counting.

Methodology in this project

All groups that received funding from Hillcrest's £100,000 SCF funding were contacted with the opportunity to be involved in a social impact measurement exercise. There was a very positive response to this initial contact, however due to the limitations of the Social Value Bank not all responses could be progressed. Six groups embarked upon the exercise, although one group was unable to complete the project because of delays caused by difficulties related to Covid-19 restrictions. Of the five groups that completed the exercise five were external and one was internal. For all five groups this was the first time they had participated in an impact measurement project of this type. The five groups' funding amounts to £41,997 – approximately 42% of the total funding distributed.

For each group an indicator was identified from the Social Value Bank that was relevant to the service being provided. As the groups delivered their services they tracked their outcomes against these indicators and provided summary data to Hillcrest to allow for reporting on the social impact generated across all groups. Due to the size of the project it was not possible to also collect qualitative feedback such as quotations from service users. For the same reason data on service users' ages was not collected; the Social Value Bank also provides figures regardless of age. Data was collected over a three month period from approximately mid-September to mid-December 2020. Figure 1 summarises the groups that participated and their activities.

Group	Activity	Funding	Social Value Bank indicator
CrossReach	Distributing dongles to allow online access to social opportunities	£2,000	Mental health
Tayside Council on Alcohol	Socially distanced women-only fitness sessions	£997	Frequent moderate exercise
Barnardo's	Wellbeing packs, cooking equipment and phones	£5,000	Housing service for people in temporary accommodation
Dundee Social Enterprise Network	Weekly sports sessions through local clubs	£4,000	Frequent moderate exercise
Hillcrest Energy Advice Team	Energy meter top ups	£30,000	Financial comfort

Figure 1 – The five groups that completed the measurement exercise, their activities, funding allocated and indicator used to measure social impact.

It is important to note that while comparison of social value with funding figures is a worthwhile exercise in terms of demonstrating value for money to SFHA and the Scottish Government, it does not represent the full picture because many of the groups involved also spent money from their own budgets as part of providing these services and it is not possible to isolate the impact made purely by actions or resources made possible by SCF funding.

Hillcrest has complied with all relevant data protection legislation in its collection of data towards this project, and provided advice to participating groups to ensure they were also compliant. Survey participants were aware of how their data would be used and their right to not participate with no impact upon the support they received. Consent was sought where appropriate. Hillcrest minimised its collection of data by only asking external groups for summary data where possible, and asking for only anonymised results.

3. CrossReach

Service Provided

CrossReach is a large social care provider offering services across Scotland. It is the Social Care Council of the Church of Scotland. It runs Tayside Support Services (TSS), which provides financial, employment and housing advice to over 16s in the Dundee area recovering from drug use. In particular TSS runs SMART Recovery meetings, support and social sessions and a community cafe, all of which have been unable to operate under social distancing restrictions. The meetings have moved online but many service users were unable to attend due to lack of equipment, credit or an internet connection. The cafe is unable to operate which has a detrimental impact upon service users' opportunities to socialise in a safe environment. TSS reports concerns around an increase in domestic abuse since the start of lockdown.

TSS was awarded funding from Hillcrest's portion of SCF in order to distribute equipment to enable service users to attend SMART Recovery meetings and support and social sessions.

Indicators and Data Collection

Three potential indicators were identified from the Social Value Bank in relation to this service, however the most relevant approach was a mental health assessment using the Mental Health Social Value Calculator. As this assessment cannot be combined with indicators from the Social Value Bank this was the only tool used in relation to CrossReach's service.

Seven service users completed a mental wellbeing survey both before and after attending online TSS support sessions through October to December 2020 using equipment provided through SCF funding. The survey used was the 7-item Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) which asks 7 questions with between 1 and 5 points allocated per answer, producing an overall 'score' from 7 to 35, with a higher score indicating greater mental wellbeing.

Seven service users completed the 7-item WEMWBS assessment before and after attending online TSS support sessions through October to December 2020 using equipment provided through SCF funding.

Results and Findings

Results were overwhelmingly positive, with all service users reporting improved mental wellbeing. The average service user's score improved by 7.6 points with one service user's score rising by 12 points (Figure 2). The gains reported were consistent across the service users and just one service user reported a gain of fewer than 6 points.

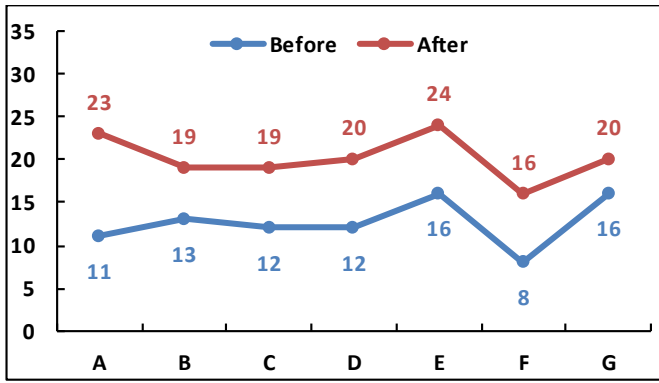


Figure 2 – Individual WEMWBS scores across the seven service users (A-G), before and after online support sessions.

Service users reported particular gains in relation to thinking clearly and feeling useful, relaxed and close to other people (Figure 3). It is particularly encouraging that the sessions achieved such a positive result for feeling close to other people, as this was a fundamental aim of the service. The least gains were reported in the more practical area of dealing with problems.

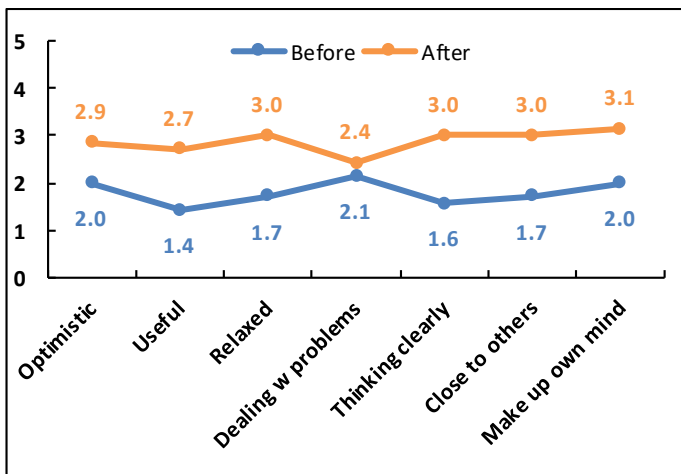


Figure 3 – Mean WEMWBS scores across the seven questions, before and after online support sessions.

These wellbeing improvements were processed using the Mental Health Social Value calculator, and represent an overall social impact for the service of £76,586, or £10,655 per service user.

4. Tayside Council on Alcohol

Service Provided

Tayside Council on Alcohol (TCA) provides support, education and information to those affected by the misuse of alcohol in Dundee, Arbroath and Perth. It offers counselling, training, awareness raising and resources. The Mentoring Team were concerned about the physical and mental wellbeing of their service users – this is always an issue but is even more essential to address in light of the impact of social distancing.

TCA was awarded funding from Hillcrest's portion of SCF in order to arrange football and activity sessions in order to inspire people to change their lives. Working in partnership with Street Soccer Scotland, a social enterprise that uses football inspired training to empower those affected by social exclusion, TCA provided socially distanced women-only fitness sessions incorporating circuit training and fun sporting activities to address concerns about physical and mental wellbeing. These sessions were offered to service users recently or currently involved with the community justice system, to support them to reduce offending, rebuild their lives and reintegrate into the community.

Indicators and Data Collection

The impact of the sessions was measured using the Social Value Bank indicator "Frequent moderate exercise". In order to meet the requirements for the indicator a service user had to participate in "exercise that raises your heart rate and results in breaking into a sweat at least once a week for at least two months". During previous conversations with HACT it has been advised that the two month requirement can be relaxed as long as a participant exercises 8 times within an approximate 3 month period. This allows a participant in a weekly session to miss an occasional week and still meet the requirements over a longer period of time. This indicator gives a social value of £4,273 per successful response, or £3,461 after adjusting for deadweight.

Participants' progress towards meeting this indicator was tracked through the register of attendance.

Results and Findings

20 sessions took place, weekly between July and December 2020. 11 TCA service users attended the sessions. 3 decided it was not for them after their first session, but other than this the group was well-attended. 3 women attended more than 10 sessions each. In October a number of women from TCA's partner agency Pause joined the sessions having heard positive feedback from the women already attending.

TCA reported encouraging changes for the women attending the group, for instance:

- One service user who now volunteers with Street Soccer as a coach for the group. She has grown in confidence, completed a Peer Mentoring and Support course, and is about to start a walk leader course to tie in to TCA's new walking group.
- One service user who struggles to manage and attend appointments. Her social worker has noted that her attendance at the sessions is her most consistent attendance throughout this year. She has told TCA that the sessions have had a positive impact on her physical and mental health, and helped her develop

coping strategies for difficult situations.

- One service user who feels the group has supported her through some challenging times, given her structure in her life and feels less isolated.

In total 4 women attended the sessions required towards the “Frequent moderate exercise” indicator. These wellbeing improvements were processed using the UK Social Value Bank calculator, and represent an overall social impact for the service of £13,843.

5. Barnardo's

Service Provided

Barnardo's is the UK's largest national children's charity. Set up in 1867 it supports children, young people, parents and carers through the belief that all children have the right to a happy and healthy life. The work of Barnardo's is more important than ever given young people have increasing support needs in areas such as sexual abuse, mental health problems and serious violence.

Barnardo's was awarded funding from Hillcrest's portion of SCF in order to provide essential items to service users being released from prison. These service users already access the Shine mentoring service, but starter packs with items such as toiletries and cooking items greatly improve the opportunities they have to make a stable adjustment to life outside of prison.

Indicators and Data Collection

The impact of this service was measured using the indicator "Housing service for people in temporary accommodation", which is defined as the provision of "services that provide assistance to secure or maintain housing". Barnardo's staff kept a record of the number of people in temporary accommodation that they supported with starter packs to enable this indicator to be measured. This does not mean that everyone receiving a starter pack was counted – only those in temporary accommodation.

As age data was not collected any responses were considered as 'age unknown' and 'from outside of London'. This gives a social value of £192 per person and there is no adjustment for deadweight with this indicator.

Results and Findings

Barnardo's supported 15 service users entering temporary housing with starter packs. These wellbeing improvements were processed using the UK Social Value Bank calculator, and represent an overall social impact for the service of £2,880.

6. Dundee Social Enterprise Network

Service Provided

Dundee Social Enterprise Network (DSEN) is a membership network offering support, promotion and events for existing and aspiring social enterprises.

DSEN was awarded funding from Hillcrest's portion of SCF in order to organise activity-based sessions for those experiencing isolation and reduced wellbeing due to social distancing. The sessions ran weekly from September 2020 and were organised by four local sports clubs (Figure 4), with DSEN providing oversight and coordination.

Club	Activity	No. participants
Dundee East Community Sports Club	Men's walking football	24
Dundee United Community Trust	Men's walking football	14
Fairfield Sports Club	Art therapy and activities for a male veterans' group	14
Dundee West Sports Hub	Women's activity sessions for ages 30-55 years	22

Figure 4 – The four sports clubs running sessions, the activities and the numbers of participants

Indicators and Data Collection

The impact of the sessions was measured using the Social Value Bank indicator "Frequent moderate exercise". In order to meet the requirements for the indicator a service user had to participate in "exercise that raises your heart rate and results in breaking into a sweat at least once a week for at least two months". During previous conversations with HACT it has been advised that the two month requirement can be relaxed as long as a participant exercises 8 times within an approximate 3 month period. This allows a participant in a weekly session to miss an occasional week and still meet the requirements over a longer period of time. This indicator gives a social value of £4,273 per successful response, or £3,461 after adjusting for deadweight.

Participants' progress towards meeting this indicator was tracked through the register of attendance.

Results and Findings

A total of 74 people participated in sessions across the four groups. In total 66 of these attended the sessions required towards the "Frequent moderate exercise" indicator. These wellbeing improvements were processed using the UK Social Value Bank calculator, and represent an overall social impact for the service of £228,407.

7. Hillcrest Energy Advice Team

Service Provided

Hillcrest Energy Advice Team (HEAT) is a free energy advice service for Hillcrest tenants. HEAT provides advice to tenants on heating and hot water systems, fuel cost reduction, debt management, moisture control and energy reduction.

HEAT was awarded funding from Hillcrest’s portion of SCF in order to distribute Fuel Bank vouchers arranged by Fuel Bank Foundation. Covid-19 pandemic has had devastating financial implications for many households and the vouchers were intended to free up funds for other bills such as food and rent. The vouchers could be used to top up pre-paid gas and electricity meters. Application to this scheme was not limited to just Hillcrest tenants.

Indicators and Data Collection

There is no indicator in the Social Value Bank that relates directly to the affordability of energy bills. It was decided to use the more general indicator “Financial comfort”. Those receiving vouchers were asked on their referral form the question “How well would you say you yourself are managing financially these days?” and given five possible responses ranging from “Living comfortably” to “Finding it very difficult”. Two responses were positive, two were negative, and one was neutral. In order to meet the criteria for achieving financial comfort a response had to be negative or neutral before the intervention, and positive afterwards. As age data was not collected any responses were considered as ‘age unknown’ and ‘from outside of London’. This gives a social value of £8,898 per successful response, or £7,207 after adjusting for deadweight. A few weeks after receiving the voucher respondents were called back to ask them to answer the same question.

Results and Findings

The fund was very popular and successful. HEAT worked with 62 different support organisations to provide Fuel Bank vouchers to 1,000 households in Dundee. 190 households returned survey results both before and after the voucher was provided.

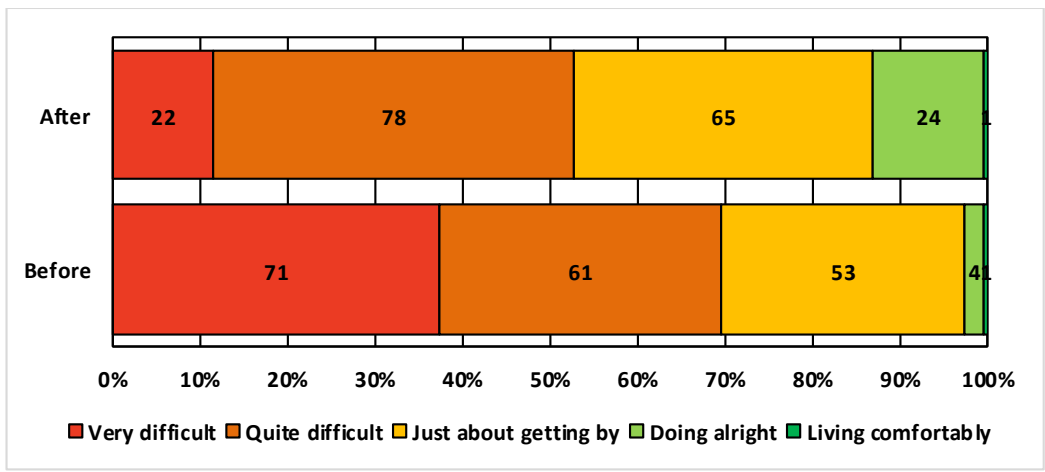


Figure 5 – Responses to the financial comfort question before and after receiving a Fuel Bank voucher.

The survey results showed a significant improvement in the financial comfort of those accessing a voucher (Figure 5). 37.4% initially selected the most negative option, “Finding it very difficult”, but this shrank to 11.6% after the intervention. The proportion choosing the two negative options (“Finding it very difficult”, “Finding it quite difficult”) decreased from 69.5% to 52.6%. Including the neutral option “Just about getting by” the figure dropped from 97.4% to 86.8%. 5 respondents initially gave a positive initial response, compared to 25 after the intervention. On average a response after the intervention was half a response category more positive than before.

20 responses met the criteria for achieving financial comfort (a negative or neutral response before intervention, and a positive response after). These responses all started at “Quite difficult” or “Just about getting by”, and after intervention ended as “Doing alright”. These wellbeing improvements were processed using the UK Social Value Bank calculator, and represent an overall social impact for the service of £144,144.

8. Conclusion

The measurement exercise shows that the £100,000 of SCF funding received by Hillcrest has been used to generate at least £465,860 of social value across a range of activities related to the four key areas for which the funding was awarded. All but one of the projects measured generated more value than the funding they received. The most impressive results came from DSEN and CrossReach, who both produced gigantic social value figures in comparison to the funding they received.

Group	Activity	Social Value Bank indicator	Social Value figure
CrossReach	Distributing dongles to allow online access to social opportunities	Mental health	£76,586
Tayside Council on Alcohol	Socially distanced women-only fitness sessions	Frequent moderate exercise	£13,843
Barnardo's	Wellbeing packs, cooking equipment and phones	Housing service for people in temporary accommodation	£2,880
Dundee Social Enterprise Network	Weekly sports sessions through local clubs	Frequent moderate exercise	£228,407
Hillcrest Energy Advice Team	Energy meter top ups	Financial comfort	£144,144
Total			£465,860

Figure 6 – Summary table of projects measured, social value evidenced and scaled by amount received in funding

These results are extremely positive but it is important not to overclaim what they represent. While the other groups that took part doubtlessly generated large amounts of social value, we have no evidence of this and it would be inconsistent to project a larger overall figure using these findings due to the diverse nature of the services being offered. Furthermore it would be wrong to claim that Hillcrest and the community groups turned created £465,860 of social value out of nothing but £100,000 funding. Every participating groups contributed their own resources such as staff, buildings and equipment, and the cost of these is not accounted for in this report. What we can say with confidence is that at least £465,860 of social value was generated, which represents £4.66 of social value per £1 of funding contributed by SCF.

These results should give confidence to any organisation looking to allocate similar funding packages in the future, that funding given to Hillcrest is used to generate great gains in social wellbeing.