



# Provider Legacy and Sustainability Survey

February 2021

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# The Survey

## Introduction

Brightlife was formed in 2015 by a group of organisations from across the public and third sectors in the Cheshire West and Chester area and led by Age UK Cheshire, as the regional delivery partner for the National Lottery Community Fund's Fulfilling Lives: Ageing Better programme.

The aim of the Ageing Better programme was to reduce loneliness and social isolation for people aged over 50, by enabling them to improve their social connections, to be more engaged in the design of services for their communities, and to be recognised for their positive contribution to society. Funding was distributed to 14 regional partnerships across the UK – including Brightlife – to plan, coordinate and deliver services in each area using a range of approaches, including contracting local providers, delivering services directly, and funding grassroots activity.

## Survey Background

Over the course of five years, Brightlife commissioned, delivered and evaluated a huge range of innovative initiatives to support more than 3000 older people. Using a 'test and learn' approach, it gathered valuable evidence about what works (and what does not) to tackle loneliness and social isolation amongst older people within the specific geographic and social context of the Cheshire West and Chester region.

Brightlife's commissioned providers have helped us to reach thousands of potentially isolated older people through a wide range of innovative ideas. All our commissioned activities have now come to an end but as part of Brightlife's legacy and sustainability work, we are interested to know how our providers and programmes have progressed and evolved particularly considering the current COVID-19 pandemic. To achieve this, in Autumn 2020 Brightlife invited organisations to share their experiences and the knowledge gained during these challenging times via an online survey.

**Brightlife contacted 38 organisations representing 54 projects of which 14 were key commissions and 40 were Bright Ideas projects.**

Response to the survey was **42%**.

The reasons for some projects not responding to the survey were varied:

- Three were discontinued due to COVID-19
- Some projects suspended their activities whilst staff were furloughed
- Project leaders leaving the organisation

We asked organisations to answer a series of questions based on:

- Service delivery
- Networking
- Funding
- Volunteering

**From the responses received one outstanding theme emerged.**

There has been a considerable shift towards online working and the use of various social media platforms, such as Zoom, WhatsApp and Facebook. This shift in focus has been positive for organisations and volunteers. Several organisations report an increase in volunteer opportunities due to the use of digital technology.

# Survey Questions

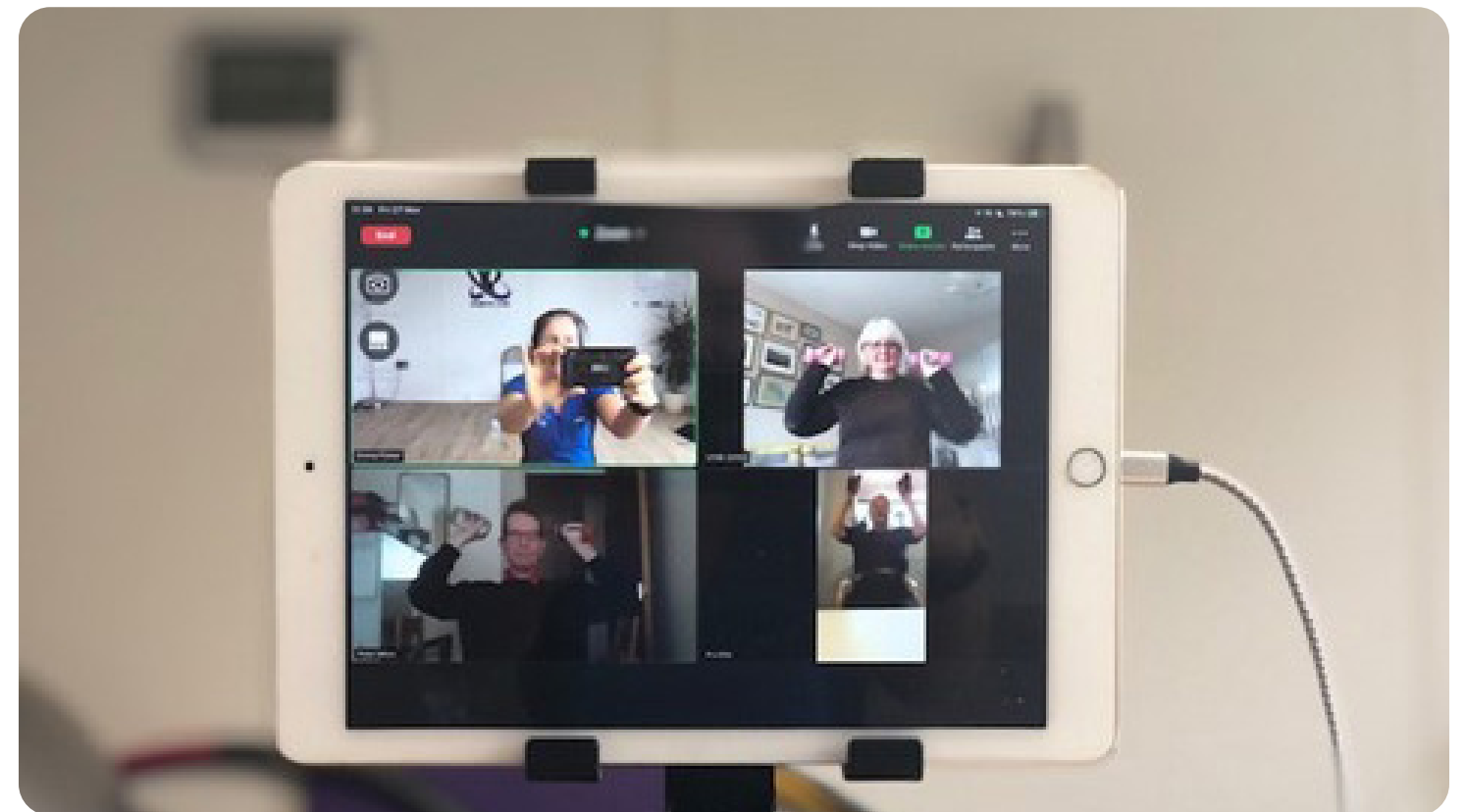
1. What is the name of your project?
2. What is the name of the organisation delivering your project?
3. Have you been able to continue with your usual activities?
4. If you answered 'No' to Q3: Do you anticipate your usual activities resuming sometime in the future?
5. If you answered 'Yes' or 'Partially' to Q3: What have you done differently since the COVID-19 pandemic emerged? Are you delivering services that you did not deliver before?
6. Have you been able to engage volunteers in any activities/services during this time? Please give details.
7. Will you continue with your new activities going forward?
8. Have you made links with other organisations to enable you to continue to deliver services?
9. Have you been able to secure funding to enable you to respond to the COVID-19 crisis?
10. Do you see your organisation continuing for the foreseeable future?
11. Will you be able to continue with the activities you started out with under Brightlife funding?
12. What do you think are the most valuable lessons you have learnt since the COVID-19 pandemic emerged?
13. Have you experienced any positive outcomes as a result of COVID-19 either for your organisation, employees, volunteers or service users?
14. Are you happy for Brightlife to contact you regarding your responses to the survey?

# Survey Headlines

**61.54%** of respondents were partially able to continue with their usual activities.

**76.92%** of respondents have made links with other organisations to enable them to continue to deliver services.

**84.62%** have been able to secure funding or have applications pending to enable them to respond to the COVID-19 crisis.



“When Covid hit, I moved over to the online classes and have been doing them ever since. They work really well and it’s good to see everyone as I live on my own. It means it’s easier to keep in touch with the friends I’ve made there which makes me feel less isolated.”

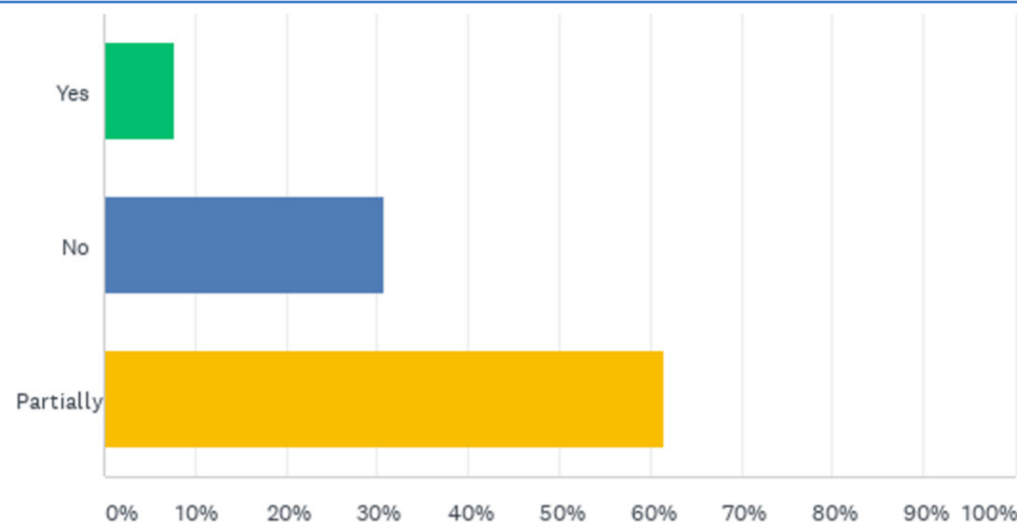
# Service Delivery

The survey data based on 13 responses.

## Q3: Have you been able to continue with your usual activities

Answered: 13 Skipped: 3

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	7.69%	1
No	30.77%	4
Partially	61.54%	8
TOTAL		13



For those organisations that answered 'yes' or 'partially' to Q3 "Have you been able to continue with your usual activities?" we asked them to state "What have they done differently since the COVID-19 pandemic emerged?" One organisation said they were able to continue with their usual activities, by transferring their face-to-face service to a telephone befriending service.

Eight organisations said they were 'partially' able to continue with their usual services and due to the pandemic were also delivering new services including:

- Telephone befriending
- Telephone conversations replacing 1:1 sessions
- Online activities replacing face to face
  - » Exercise classes
  - » Craft sessions
  - » Music therapy
  - » Spiritual services
- Delivering the service online via Zoom
- Delivering services using a blend of Zoom and Facebook
- Shifted in focus of delivery to telephone befriending, doorstep visits, distribution of activity packs, helps with shopping/prescriptions, help to access funds
- Keeping in touch via email
- With the help of volunteer leaders able to run groups by creating 'bubbles' of people

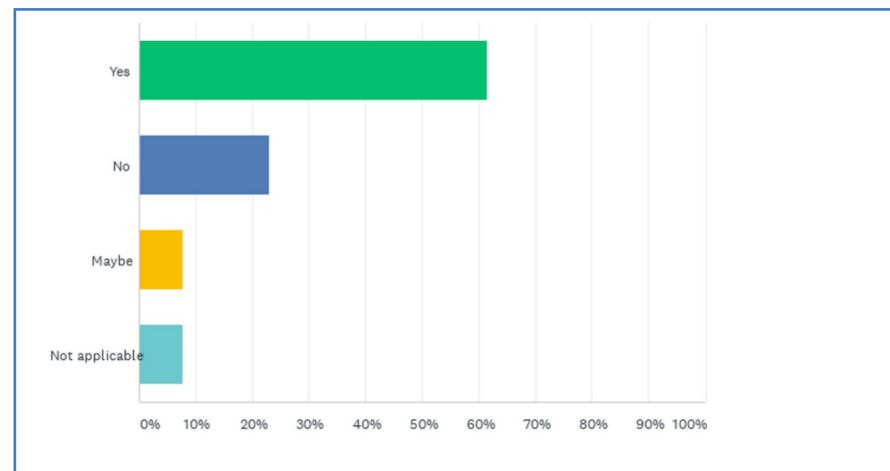
Four organisations said they were not able to continue with their usual service however, two organisations said they anticipated their services resuming sometime in the future. The project leader of one of these organisations whose project staff have been furloughed, is maintaining contact with participants, via weekly safe and well telephone calls, and as lockdown eases, the delivery of activity boxes and socially distanced catch ups.

# Networking and Funding

## Q7: Will you continue with your new activities going forward?

Answered: 13 Skipped: 3

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	61.54%	8
No	23.08%	3
Maybe	7.69%	1
Not applicable	7.69%	1
TOTAL		13



Ten organisations have made links with other organisations to enable them to continue to deliver services.

## Q8: Have you made links with other organisations to enable you to continue to deliver services?

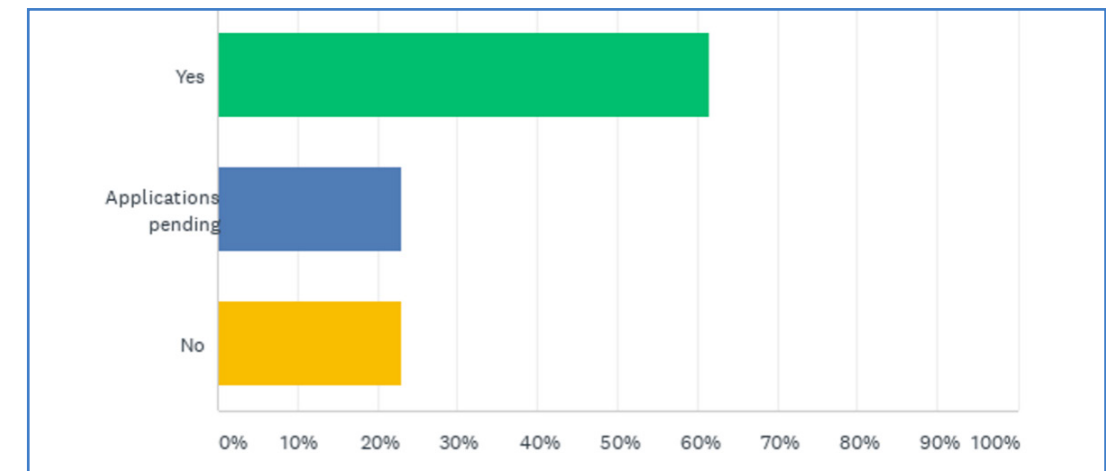
Answered: 13 Skipped: 3

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	76.92%	10
No	23.08%	3
TOTAL		13

## Q9: Have you been able to secure funding to enable you to respond to the COVID-19 crisis?

Answered: 13 Skipped: 3

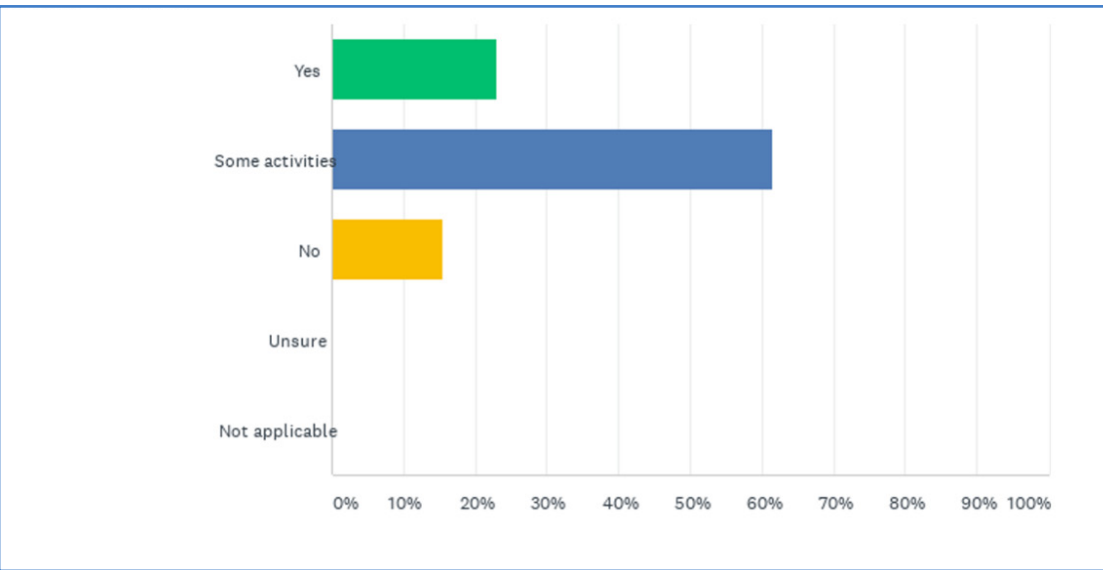
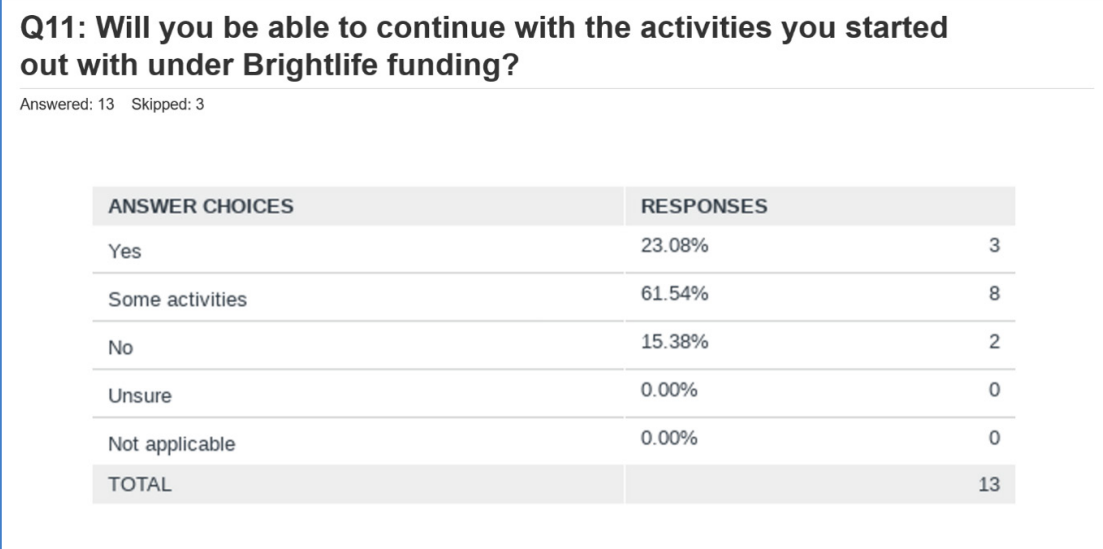
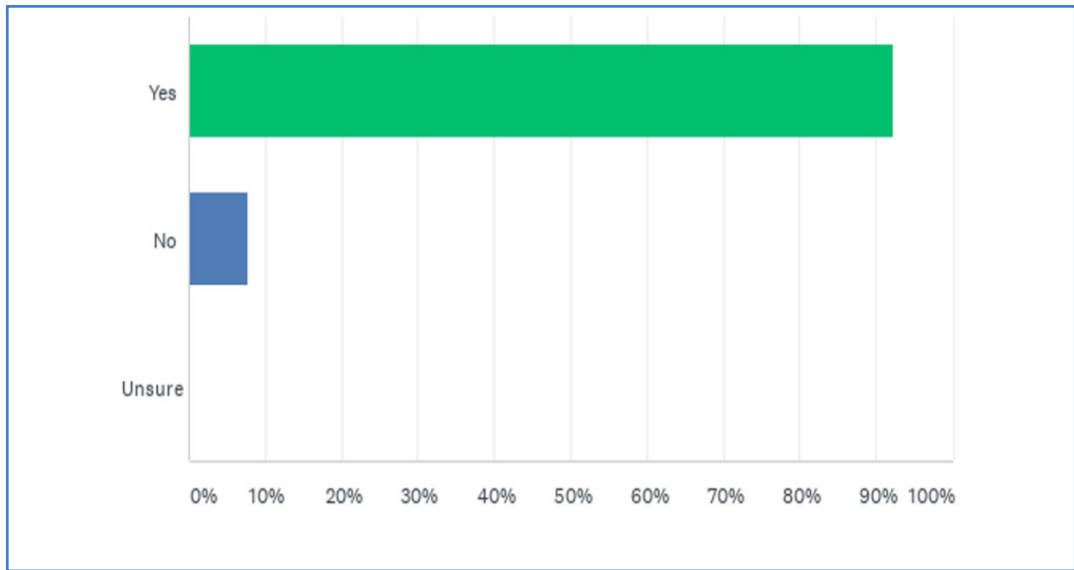
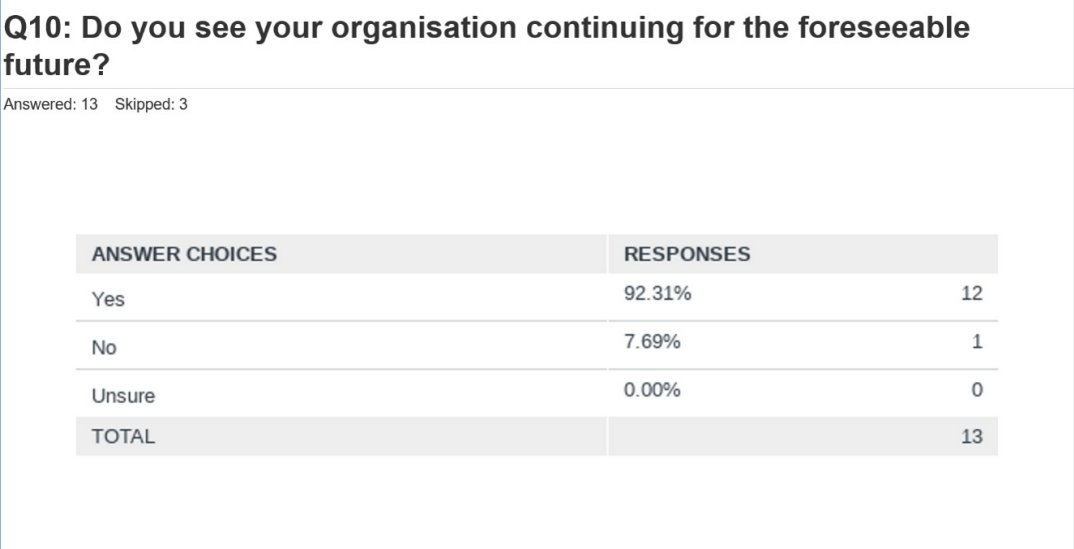
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	61.54%	8
Applications pending	23.08%	3
No	23.08%	3
Total Respondents: 13		



Eight organisations were able to secure funding to enable them to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. One organisation has already secured funding with additional applications pending. Two organisations have applications pending.

# Sustainability

Twelve organisations envisaged that they would continue for the foreseeable future, with eight saying that they would be able to continue with at least some of the Brightlife activities they previously delivered.





# Learning

We asked organisations:

**“What do you think are the most valuable lessons you have learnt since the COVID-19 pandemic emerged?”**

- To be adaptable and flexible as a business to continue in the current climate
- Adapting quickly to respond to changing guidance/being flexible and creative
- The resilience of people has been amazing but mental health and wellbeing issues are becoming an issue
- Telephone befriending and video link technology has enabled organisations to support the most vulnerable in their community
- **IT and digital technology has played a crucial role in being able to continue to deliver services, but there is an awareness that there is a skills gap and potential difficulties with regard to availability of IT equipment**
- The move to telephone work enabled one organisation to focus on branding, website work and sourcing new products
- Not reinventing the wheel when other agencies have already created the necessary documentation that you need e.g. telephone befriending volunteer training packs
- The pandemic has made people realise how greatly they value the services they have received
- The value of connections made prior to the pandemic for participants who choose to stay in touch via mail / telephone with the social group, and with individuals

It would be natural to view the pandemic solely in negative terms, but we have sought to find the positives in this experience and capture the learning from these new ways of working.

The pandemic has hit individuals, communities and the organisations that support them, hard. Organisations have had to be innovative and creative to continue to deliver their services, and this legacy of creativity will be carried forward to the future.





# Positive Outcomes

- Our members are very grateful for the support we continue to give them. We have developed a volunteer distribution system to send out regular wellbeing activity packs to keep our members engaged. This has been very well received. It is also an opportunity for us to keep them informed on local matters.
- One organisation reported that they were able to continue with their service and offer their support across a wider area of Cheshire.
- The increase in online working has enabled some people who due to caring responsibilities could not get out, an expanded opportunity to attend online groups.
- Members and volunteers continue to expand their IT knowledge.



**"I really look forward to Saturday nights with Brightlife. I had fun at the bingo and enjoyed doing poetry. So much to be thankful for. Really looking forward to Spirit. Massive thanks to everyone who has worked so hard to keep the NMC Virtual Community going."**

Being prevented from delivering their service in the usual way has enabled one organisation to focus their attention to improving other areas of their organisation and obtain funding.

**"With more time on my hands, I entered my project in the National Community Fitness Awards 2020 and couldn't believe it when I WON the Social Inclusion Award and came RUNNER UP in the Community Impact Project category! This was only last weekend. I am also preparing press releases and have attracted some more short term funding which is great. I certainly used my time wisely when not delivering."**

The shift to telephone befriending has enabled one service to extend their volunteer offer and enabled people to volunteer from home with one organisation reporting an increase in referrals of 175% and an increase in volunteers.

**"It has become apparent how much people care for each other on the project, keeping in touch with each other during lock down to make sure everyone is ok etc."**

For more information about our learning from across the project, visit the Brightlife website at:

[www.brightlifecheshire.co.uk](http://www.brightlifecheshire.co.uk)







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