

Turn2us

Grants Evaluation

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Background and Methodology

In order to further develop their grant services, Turn2us commissioned research to evaluate the impact of their grant-giving services for people in financial hardship. The aims of this research were to assess both short and longer-term impacts of receiving grant support via the Elizabeth Finn Fund and the newly established Response Fund.

The methodology for this research consisted of interviews with grantees from the Elizabeth Finn Fund and the Response Fund (consisting of separate research phases), followed by a quantitative survey sent to grant recipients from both grant streams combined.

This document outlines some of the key, headline findings from the research. We hope it reflects the work, and incredible commitment shown by the team at Turn2us and participants in the research process.

Key findings

Overall, the grant-giving programme is meeting the needs of the target audiences, and the general experience of receiving a grant is reported as being positive by grantees.

Prompts and Barriers to Seeking Help

Lack of awareness and knowledge of where to look for support both emerged as key barriers to help-seeking. 45% of grantees said not being aware of Turn2us was a barrier to reaching out, for example. Likewise, lack of confidence and embarrassment also prevented people from making contact, which we know from research with other similar organisations, are common issues.

The reasons behind applying for a grant were complex and often multi-layered. For Response Fund recipients a significant, unexpected event had changed their situation within the last twelve months. Grantees overall were 'just about managing', which tended to put them in vulnerable positions with the potential for small things to upset this delicate balance. Struggling to manage on current income, as well as ill-health and disability were cited as the most common reasons for seeking support and needing a grant. Two thirds of grantees consider themselves to be disabled (far higher than the prevalence among the UK population at large), further pointing to this as a significant factor underpinning need among grantees.

Seeking help is a difficult process for both practical considerations (time and resources) as well as mental and emotional reasons. This emphasises the importance of the signposting process, which proved to be vital in the process whereby grantees sought help, with the majority only doing so on the recommendation/advice of someone else (either a friend/colleague or other organisation).

Application process

Respondents had high levels of satisfaction with the grant-making process, and the vast majority (94%) would recommend Turn2us to others in a similar situation. The Turn2us brand and ethos are seen as being professional, yet empathetic, thoughtful and with a good attention to detail, and this was carried through in the way applications were processed.

Some respondents expressed that they would have liked to have had more information about how the decision would be made. This was especially the case among Response Fund recipients.

Impact

A key learning Turn2us were hoping to gain through this research was an understanding of the measurable improvements/impacts for individuals. Consequently, we carried out an analysis of each individual's 'journey travelled'. This looked at the initial situation for each individual grantee, how they felt themselves about their lives and position, and to what extent this had changed since receiving the grant, and in what ways. We asked participants to think about how they felt about four different areas of their life – physical well-being, emotional and mental well-being, day-to-day life, and economic stability – before receiving the grant and after. We found that overwhelmingly, people tended to feel more positive about their situations after receiving the grant. Even where their circumstances had remained largely the same, the fact that things had not gotten worse was a meaningful outcome, given the difficulties they faced.

Indeed, all respondents reported a positive impact, and for a proportion this impact had lasted for a longer period (over six months). This was experienced, for example, as relief, feeling cared for/not forgotten, and anxiety reduction. With both the Elizabeth Finn Fund and Response Fund, the short-term impact tended to be of a higher intensity than long-term impact, and many people spoke of a feeling of immediate relief.

“You’re in a little bit of a state of despair. You’re trying to be brave, you try and keep your dignity. When you get a little bit of a hand-up, it makes you think: ‘Oh, okay. Things are turning round now. I’ve got a bit of power here. I’ve got a little bit of money. I didn’t expect this. So I’ve got a few more options now.’ And it just builds your confidence up a little bit”

Response Fund recipient, Female, 35-44

For a smaller number, the impact of the grant had had a profound, long-term effect on their lives. An increase in economic stability was the most common impact of the grants reported in the survey component of the research, with 43% of respondents reporting that they would have had to sell their possessions without the grant. A further 28% said they would have become overdrawn on their current account, and 25% said they would have run into credit card debt. In many cases, a small additional cost could easily lead to a situation spiralling out of control.

“I thought the whole life I’d created was going to come crashing down. The things I was used to doing, I couldn’t do.”

Elizabeth Finn Fund recipient, Female, 45-54

Housing was a key area in which impact was felt. This ranged from enabling respondents to make home adaptations to create a safer environment for themselves and the family, to move into a new home or remain in their current one (e.g. avoid eviction).

“Once the arrears were all wiped out it was like a fresh start where then I could go back to my monthly contractual payments out of my benefits... [If I hadn’t received the grant] there would have been no way I’d have been able to afford it, because they were spreading the arrears over the remaining time of the mortgage and it was too much”.

Response Fund recipient, Male, 45-54

There were reported improvements in mental and physical health as a result of the grants received. Grantees were also able to improve their relationships, e.g. with friends or family members, with a subsequent reduction in the isolation they may have experienced.

Overall, however, as people's lives remain complex and often chaotic, they were still facing difficult circumstances and there are limits to what the Turn2us grants can achieve in situations where people found themselves experiencing multiple hardships.

Response Fund

The new Response Fund, launched in April 2017, is meeting a different kind of need and reaching a wider pool of recipients than existing grant-giving by Turn2us. For this fund, the role of the intermediary is key, and our research showed this proved highly effective in facilitating reach/access. It is likely that without an intermediary in many cases, grantees would not have been able to make an application.

Next steps

Building on this research, Turn2us intends to carry out continued measurement of its impact, primarily through a quantitative survey sent to grantees after receiving a grant, reporting the results at intervals. This will enable the charity to further develop its grant services.



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