

Small Grants Fund 2023 Report

Background

The Small Grants Fund offered grants of up to £10,000 over a twelve-month period. It is one of a number of funding streams under Cloudesley’s Health Grants Programme 2019-24 which aims to reduce health inequalities in Islington by improving health outcomes for people experiencing multiple disadvantage.

The 2023/24 round launched in October 2022, with projects starting from March 2023 onwards. The round was promoted through Cloudesley’s website, Voluntary Action Islington’s (VAI) newsgroup, and by direct email. A Meet the Funder session was held in partnership with VAI. An initial budget of £100,000 was supplemented by funding from Islington Community Contact.



Artbox London

The Fund focused on three areas: work with young people; work with people with learning disabilities and/or neurodiversity; and work by organisations led by and for minoritised communities. Organisations had to be based in Islington and have an income of under £500,000. Projects had to support Islington residents with health problems or who are disabled and on low or no income.

Applications

Applications	
Applications received	36
Amount requested	£309,115
Organisations new to Cloudesley	28

Grants	
Grants awarded	19
Amount awarded	£150,030
Organisations new to Cloudesley	14

53% of applications were successful

74% of grants were awarded to organisations that were new to Cloudesley

An Access Bursary of £600 was also provided to an organisation to engage a Support Worker to assist with the writing of an application.

Grants

Organisation	Project Name	Grant Amount
Community Language Support Services	Helping Hand	£10,000
Scarabeus Aerial Theatre	Take Flight	£10,000
Islington Somali Community	ISC Connect	£10,000
The Elfrida Society	LD Access to Health	£10,000
Prospex	Prospex Listens and Cares (PLC)	£10,000
The Garden Classroom	Bringing nature to the children at Samuel Rhodes School	£10,000
MahaDevi Yoga Centre	Wellbeing activities for children and young people with disabilities and special needs	£9,780
Memory Gardens	Hand and Sky Project	£9,560
HealthProm	Youth Club for young Ukrainian refugees in Islington	£8,600
Families in Harmony	Harmony Grows Therapeutic Parenting Programme	£8,600
Islington Bangladesh Association	Islington Bangladeshi Community Health Project	£7,600
Minority Matters Ltd	Special Somali Mums Support Plus	£7,500
Mixed Martial Arts for Reform And Progression (MMARAP)	MMARAP for Islington	£6,700
Artbox London	SEN and Mindfulness Practitioner Role	£6,500
Urban Forest Tribe CIC	SEN Forest School Home Education Program	£6,150
Angel Shed Theatre	Support and training for young people with disabilities	£6,000
Angel Community Canalboat Trust (ACCT)	Summer Scheme 2023	£5,000
Bubble and Speak C.I.C.	Bubble & Speak in Islington	£4,400
Read Easy Islington	First New Readers for Read Easy Islington	£3,640

Themes

Organisation	Led by and for minoritised communities	Young people	People with learning disabilities
Community Language Support Services	Yes		
Scarabeus Aerial Theatre		Yes	
Islington Somali Community	Yes		
The Elfrida Society			Yes
Prospex		Yes	
The Garden Classroom		Yes	Yes
MahaDevi Yoga Centre		Yes	Yes
Memory Gardens		Yes	Yes
HealthProm		Yes	
Families in Harmony	Yes		
Islington Bangladesh Association	Yes		
Minority Matters Ltd	Yes		
Mixed Martial Arts for Reform And Progression		Yes	
Artbox London			Yes
Urban Forest Tribe CIC		Yes	Yes
Angel Shed Theatre		Yes	Yes
Angel Community Canalboat Trust (ACCT)		Yes	
Bubble and Speak C.I.C.		Yes	
Read Easy Islington			Yes

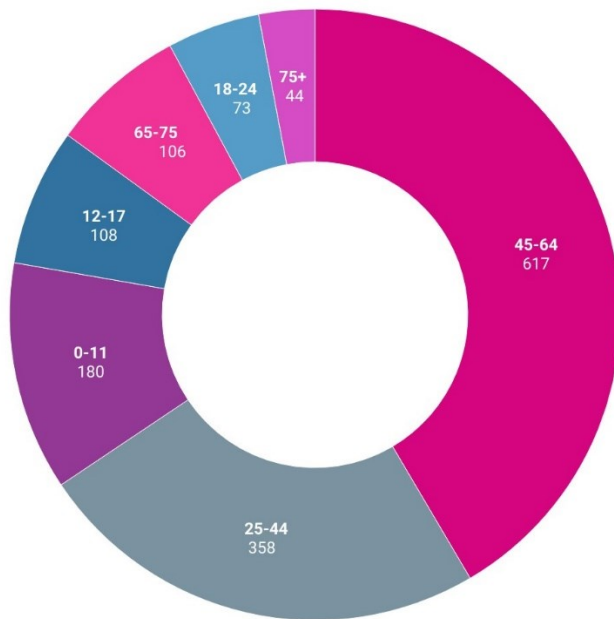
Created with Datawrapper

Beneficiaries

The Small Grants Fund reached **1,565** Islington residents overall. The charts below give a breakdown of who was reached by the Fund. The figures are somewhat distorted by Community Language Support Services (CLSS) who reached 877 people, more than all other groups combined. For instance, 480 of the 617 people aged 45-64 were supported by CLSS. Removing CLSS, that age group is the third largest grouping. The CLSS data also largely accounts for the disproportionately high Somali and Eritrean figures in the ethnicity reporting.

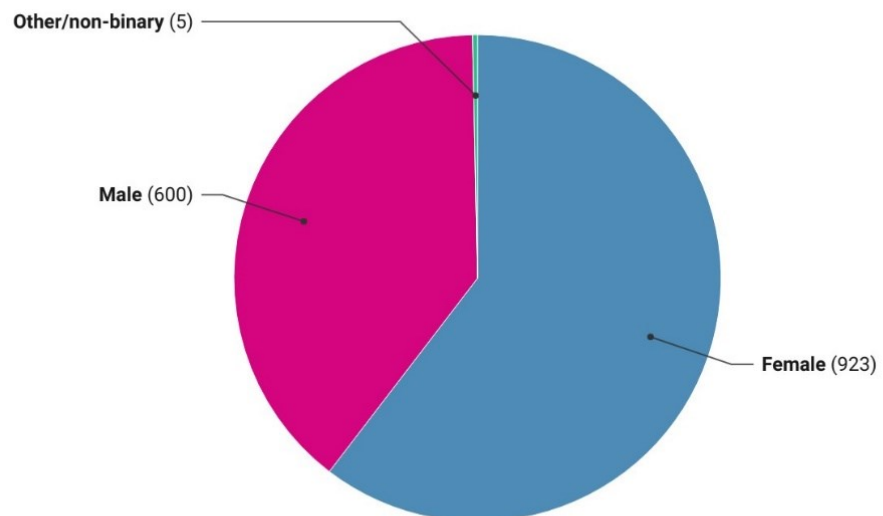
Age

45-64 25-44 0-11 12-17 65-75 18-24 75+



Created with Datawrapper

Gender



Created with Datawrapper

Ethnicity

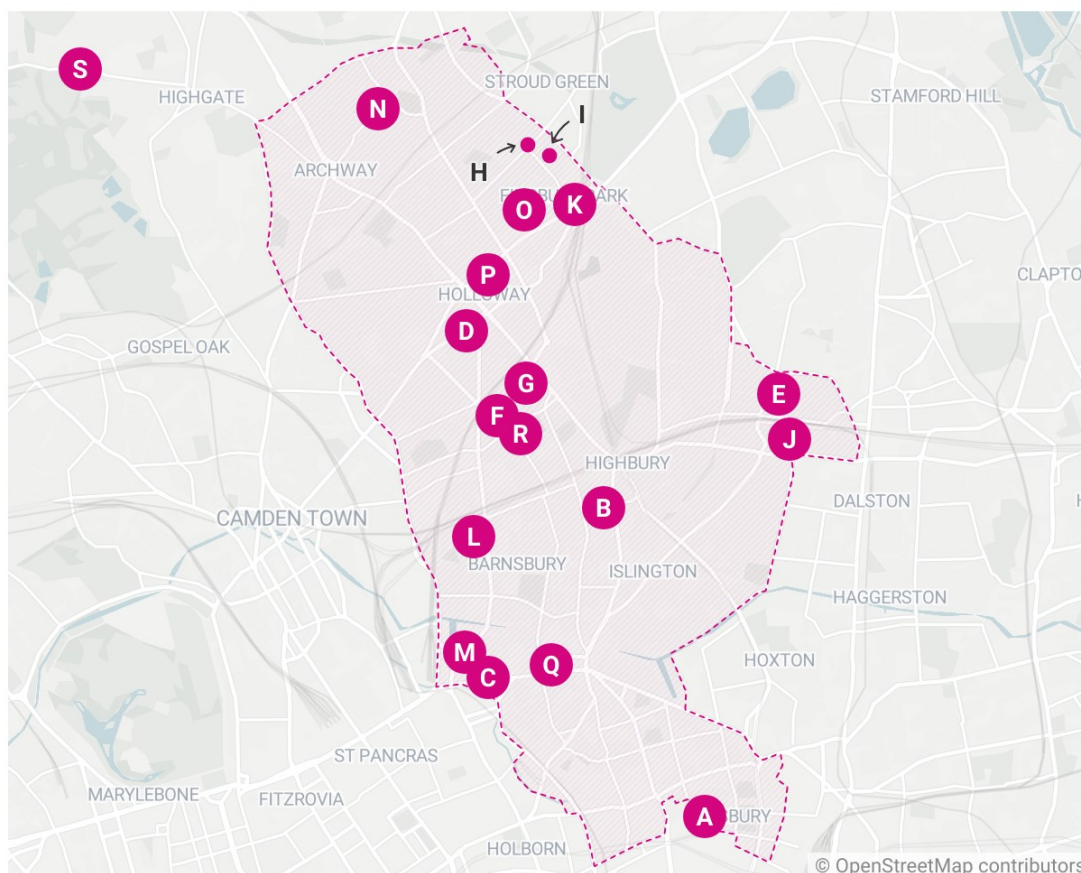
Ethnicity		Total number of beneficiaries
Asian	Bangladeshi	87
	Chinese	0
	Indian	1
	Pakistani	4
	Any other Asian background	1
	Asian general category	8
Black	Black Caribbean	5
	Somali	504
	Eritrean	210
	Nigerian	0
	Ghanaian	2
	Other Black African	30
	Any other Black background	4
	Black general category	47
	Mixed	Asian and White
Black African and White		5
Black Caribbean and White		9
Any other Mixed background		10
Mixed general category		2
White	White British	25
	White Irish	2
	Turkish/Turkish Cypriot	4
	Greek/Greek Cypriot	0
	Kurdish	25
	Gypsy or Irish Traveller	2
	Any other White background	26
	White general category	61
	Other	Arab
Latin American		0
Any other ethnic group		5
Other general category		22

Created with Datawrapper

Location

The table below shows where each organisation is located, or if they do not have a permanent office, where the service takes place. It does not necessarily reflect where the service users come from, with many organisations attracting people from across the borough. In some cases, they may also work across multiple locations, with only the primary location or office base being marked on the map.

Small Grants Fund 2023



- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| A Memory Gardens | B The Elfrida Society | C HealthProm |
| D Angel Shed Theatre | E The Garden Classroom | F Prospex |
| G MahaDevi Yoga Centre | H: Community Language Support Services | I: Bubble and Speak C.I.C. |
| J Read Easy Islington | K Islington Somali Community | L Artbox London |
| M Islington Bangladesh Association | N Scarabeus Aerial Theatre | O Minority Matters Ltd |
| P Families in Harmony | Q Angel Community Canalboat Trust | R Mixed Martial Arts for Reform And Progression |
| S Urban Forest Tribe CIC | | |

Created with Datawrapper

Outcomes

Each individual project has unique outcomes, making overall measurement a challenge. However, there are some common themes that span a number of projects. These outcomes are summarised below.



The Garden Classroom

- **Improved mental health and wellbeing**

This was a stated outcome for eight of the organisations. One organisation highlighted that their project led to decreased incidents of self-harm and suicidal thoughts, whilst another indicated that carers felt less anxious about their caring roles. Reduced stress and anxiety and improved mental wellbeing were common outcomes across many of the organisations.

- **Increased social connections and networks**

This was a stated outcome for eight organisations. Many of the projects offered service users the opportunity to connect and form relationships with peers. The work reduced isolation and helped improve social and communication skills. At one project, 90% of participants made new friends, whilst at another, 95% of people got to know new people who were different to them.

- **Equipped with new skills and learning**

This was a stated outcome for nine organisations. The projects equipped service users with a wide range of new skills and knowledge, including creative skills, improved literacy, health knowledge, financial literacy, and improved coping mechanisms.

- **Improved access to services**

This was a stated outcome for five organisations. Some organisations directly supported service users to access services, such as supporting clients to attend and engage with hospital appointments. Others helped signpost and inform service users of available services, both statutory and cultural, and increase their confidence to access them independently.

- **Increased confidence and self-esteem**

This was a stated outcome for five organisations. Organisations reported that the increase in confidence led to service users being more likely to try new things, ask for help and take more risks.

Learning

The funded groups also reported on the key learning points from the projects, as well as the challenges they faced. Common learning points included:

- **Partnership working** – many groups highlighted the benefits that working in partnership with other organisations brought to their services. The benefits included recruiting more people to their services, enhancing the service offer and establishing referral networks.
- **Mental health needs** – a number of the groups felt that staff required mental health training or trauma-informed training to help address the needs of the service users.
- **Tailored services** – some of the groups highlighted the need for specially tailored services, with some emphasising the need for culturally-tailored services, whilst others highlighted the benefits of personalised support.



Scarabeus Aerial Theatre

Challenges experienced by the groups were:

- **Funding** – funding continues to be a key challenge for the majority of groups. Some groups felt that the funding landscape was getting worse; becoming more competitive and narrower. Others highlighted the challenge of securing core and unrestricted funding to make the organisation sustainable.
- **Increased demand** – the demand for services continues to increase, which has brought challenges to many of the organisations, such as how to maintain the quality of their services whilst working with more people. Some groups also highlighted that the needs of the people they are working with have become more complex.
- **Staff recruitment and retention** – many felt that more staff were needed in order to adequately deliver services, but recruitment proved difficult. Both volunteer and staff retention issues also caused disruption for some of the organisations.

Over just the last 12 months..., the total percentage of members unable to pay suggested fees has grown from 58% to 74%, and the percentage of new members requiring support has grown from 25% to 95%

-Angel Shed Theatre

Case studies

Some case studies have been edited for brevity and names have been changed.

Anthony, Artbox London

Anthony faced challenges with communication and confidence, particularly in accessing studio space and interacting with others. He appeared nervous in environments perceived as unclean, often isolating himself from others and requiring encouragement to participate in artistic activities.

Artbox used Anthony's passion and interests in music to engage him, encouraging him to colour drawings of various instruments created by his friends in the studio. They gradually encouraged Anthony to transition into the main studio area to retrieve his work materials, fostering familiarity in a broader studio environment. Over time, Anthony's confidence and skills blossomed. He began expressing his needs and preferences, including his newfound boundary of not wanting hugs from his friend, demonstrating assertiveness and self-advocacy for the first time. With increased confidence, Anthony actively participated in studio sessions, contributing to group discussions and showcasing his artwork at the end of each session. Anthony's transformation is evident: he appears happier, more relaxed, and actively involved in studio activities.

Laura, The Elfrida Society

Laura is currently undergoing a number of interventions to manage the long term effects of stage 4 cancer. She is very articulate and self-confident but the information she was receiving about her treatments was very complex and had many side-effects. Medical practitioners were not always able to explain the processes clearly or appreciate that her cognitive processing skills were delayed, and she would not be able to retain information on the spot. This led to her being rushed into decisions that she didn't fully understand which made her very anxious and she eventually refused all support which was detrimental to her health. The advocate identified what the health professionals were suggesting she agrees to, and made easy read versions of each one. They went through them with Laura several times to make sure she understood what the pros and cons were and find out which ones she was most anxious about. The advocate then accompanied her to appointments to explain the information more slowly and ask professionals to alter their approach to accommodate Laura's needs. This culminated in the agreement of several life-affecting therapies and medications which had previously been refused. Laura now understands the consequences and could confidently relay her decisions. She has more trust in the medical practitioners and does not always have advocates attending appointments with her.

Amina, Islington Somali Community

Amina is a 69-year-old single woman living alone. With no immediate family, she has experienced significant isolation. Before the pandemic, Amina was an active member of the community. However, after developing arthritis in her knee and experiencing depression, she became withdrawn, leading to increased isolation and loneliness. Through an ISC

Connect worker, Amina received personalised one-to-one support. This support was instrumental in addressing her housing issues, repair needs and fuel debts. Beyond these practical matters the Connect worker also reintroduced Amina to the community gently. As part of this re-engagement Amina started attending the weekly social sessions where she could see familiar faces. The Connect worker facilitated befriending by arranging a volunteer to establish a link with Amina. This support extended to encouraging her to participate in women's swimming sessions and local community events, which she had not attended for some time. Additionally, the Connect worker provided home visits when Amina was unwell, ensuring she received the care and attention she needed. Over time, Amina's confidence grew and she became more engaged in social gatherings. Remarkably, she even attended an Islington Council event for the Somali community independently.

Quotes from service users

"We must highlight the youth club, which has been instrumental in aiding my daughter through her homesickness and distress. She has found friends and a nurturing and joyous environment that allows her to experience her Ukrainian childhood. War may have stolen this precious time of carefree youth, but your help has been instrumental in reclaiming it. This is priceless."

HealthProm

"I struggle with understanding English, and when I get letters, I become anxious, as I don't have much money for bills. I can see the Connect worker quickly to see if it is a bill and what I need to do. Knowing what the letter is and knowing I will have help reduces my worry and anxiety."

Islington Somali Community

"The yoga classes have been a lifeline for my daughter. She sleeps better and is more relaxed."

MahaDevi Yoga Centre

"I have been struggling with agoraphobia for a while, and Take Flight is one of the few things that I will 100% be able to leave the house for. My attendance has improved significantly since I started. I'm also so much more confident moving my body than I have ever been, I'm much less embarrassed about moving my body"

Scarabeus Aerial Theatre

Conclusion

Overall, the Fund achieved its aim of addressing some of the gaps in Cloudesley's funding portfolio. Five of the organisations that received a Small Grant went on to receive a grant in Round Four of the Principal Grants Fund, whilst a further seven received another Small Grant in the 2024 round.



Angel Shed Theatre

The data is hard to synthesise, which limits the extent of the reporting. This is partly because the projects are different and had different outcomes, so can't be aggregated, and partly due to our current monitoring practice, which is due to be reviewed as part of the Health Grants Review.

The benefits of partnership working was a common theme across the funded organisations, as was the acute challenges of the current funding landscape. The cost of living crisis has squeezed all funding sources, whilst increasing the cost of the projects and the challenges faced by service users.