

# Mayor's Small Grants Fund Success Stories Newsletter 2022-23



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## Introduction



**Peter Taylor**  
Elected Mayor of  
Watford

One of the great things about my job is being able to meet so many of our wonderful community and voluntary groups. These groups do so much for our town, and whether it be small or big, it can all make a real difference to people's lives.

What always strikes me is the dedication and commitment to everyone involved in our voluntary sector and their willingness to go the extra mile to help people.

My Small Grants Fund offers grants of up to £3,000 to help fund a project, community initiative or purchase a piece of equipment.

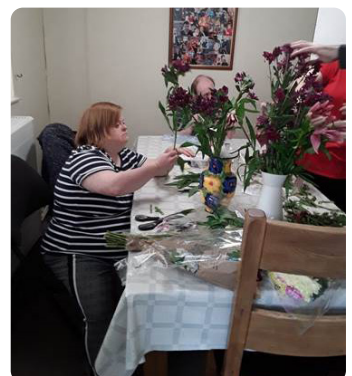
In 2020-21 due to the Coronavirus pandemic, I quickly adapted my fund so that it could be used as an emergency support fund and I was able to provide funding to 20 local voluntary and community organisations and charities.

Here are some of their stories, of how funding has supported them during the pandemic and pre-Covid in 2019-20. I hope you enjoy reading them.

If you think you might like to apply for funding in 2022-23, keep an eye on our webpages ([www.watford.gov.uk/smallgrants](http://www.watford.gov.uk/smallgrants)) for the latest information or email your interest to [smallgrants@watford.gov.uk](mailto:smallgrants@watford.gov.uk)

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## Watford and District Mencap



Watford Mencap is an independent charity for people with learning disabilities and their families and carers. Their main activities include residential and supported housing, community support, children's services, free advice and information and adult learning and leisure activities. They support around 800 local people with learning disabilities plus their families and carers each year.

They received funding of £2,960 to create activity boxes for four residential assisted living/care facilities in Watford and four activities boxes to be used to deliver to families facing crisis where either a child/children and/or a parent has a learning disability.

### **Jane Pattinson - CEO, Watford Mencap**

Thank you so much for our Mayor's Fund Covid-19 grant.

Having locked down our residential care homes and supported living projects a week earlier than most people, the residents that we support were very quickly searching for things to do to fill their days. People were unable to attend their usual day centre, voluntary jobs or to visit family and friends. Days were very long and for some people so much time without their usual structure or routine caused real anxiety and distress.

We applied to the Mayor's Fund to ask for £2,960 to supply activity boxes full of resources to help people fill their time. Within days our grant was approved, I think we were the first applicants and it certainly was the first emergency grant that we received. The funds were paid in to our bank account quickly which then enabled us to deliver art and craft materials, pamper products and tablet computers to each project which in turn helped staff to plan activities, giving residents things to look forward to.

During the first weeks we filled the activity boxes from our head office, then we moved on to enable residents and staff in our homes to plan, shop online and have resources delivered directly to their home, this all enriched people's learning.

Our Hillside residential home created a pub garden with afternoon skittles and karaoke, hanging baskets were planted and no dig vegetable patches were created. Many, many cakes have been baked, cards have been made and needlework sessions started with a donated sewing machine. The results of people's hard work have then been shared with family and friends online, also enabling people to develop their IT skills. Group activities have also strengthened friendships and communication within the homes.

We really appreciated our grant from the Mayors Fund, it made having to stay at home a much happier, calmer and productive experience for the people with learning disabilities that we support.

## Small Acts of Kindness



Small Acts of Kindness is an award winning, high impact, charitable organisation working in partnership with over 90 other organisations from the voluntary, corporate and statutory sectors and over 200 community volunteers. Their aim is that every older person feels warm in their home and connected to their community.

They do this by sourcing and distributing practical gifts that reduce the negative impact that feeling lonely and isolated can have on older people's physical and mental wellbeing. They have a special interest in helping older people who are cold in their homes.

Small Acts of Kindness were awarded £3,000 to provide an additional 120 Warm in Winter Gift Bags to be delivered to elderly, vulnerable residents in Watford.

### **Lynne Misner - CEO, Small Acts of Kindness**

It is always a sobering thought that one in five older people spend their day alone during normal circumstances. The reality, during this period, is that every older person living on their own will be spending every day alone. The negative impact of loneliness on physical and mental wellbeing is huge and is often equated to smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

This project enabled us to make additional Small Acts of Kindness Warm in Winter gift bags and our Purple Pages information packs available for distribution, as required, to older people throughout Watford. These are local residents who are self-isolating/shielding during the Covid-19 pandemic and who have been identified as part of the Council's co-ordinated approach to identifying and contacting vulnerable people in the borough.

We know from the feedback that we receive that recipients of our gift bags feel warmer, feel less lonely and isolated, have an increased feeling of wellbeing and are better connected to their community. The feedback that we have received from recipients during the Covid-19 pandemic is filled with people telling us how appreciative they are to know that someone cares about them and how much that means to them.

"Happy and not forgotten"

"Thankful as it was so kind but so needed "

"Made me feel very happy to know that there are so many people who care"

"Good, such a lovely surprise to receive in the current 'lock down' it really cheered me up to know people care, although they can't see us about at present "

"It made myself and my husband feel good that somebody cares. It was very much appreciated."

We are hugely grateful for this funding. It enabled us to make an immediate response to helping some of the most vulnerable local older people during lockdown and self-isolation. Every phone call and feedback card that we receive gives an insight into the difference that we have been able to make. We would not have been able to do this without this support.

What was particularly refreshing was how straightforward the application process was and how quickly we received not only a decision but the actual funding. We extend a huge thank you to everyone who helped make this funding possible.



## Watford Workshop



Watford Workshop exists to tackle the issues of unemployment, social isolation, lack of education and lack of life skills that disproportionately affect people with disabilities by providing paid employment in their workshop in the fields of hand packing and light assembly for commercial customers, as well as training opportunities in functional education and independent living skills taught by professional tutors.

This makes them very much a unique project, not only in Watford and Hertfordshire. They give adults with disabilities a chance to work when nobody else will and enabling them to reach their potential. They describe themselves as being *no ordinary workplace*. Their community consists of people with learning, mental, physical and sensory disabilities.

Watford Workshop were awarded £2,400 to help with the organisation's general running costs so that they were able to keep their vulnerable workforce employed and they could continue to support all their service users either at the workshop or remotely.

### **Ronnie Jacob - Finance Trustee, Watford Workshop**

Watford Workshop went into lockdown on Monday 23 March 2020 sending many staff and service users home. At that time, before “furlough” entered into our vocabulary, we took the decision that even though it was a risk to our reserves and the future of the Workshop, that we would pay all our people full pay for two months to take some of the worry out of an already incredibly stressful situation and to keep them safe in the hope that we would have a resolution in the meantime.

We immediately looked at ways that we could remotely support everyone and this initially took the form of regular phone calls to check in on everyone's health and wellbeing, have a friendly chat and also identify if they required any additional support. During these conversations, we were also able to establish if they were taking care of themselves and taking the correct precautions. We also made sure that they had the technology to remain in touch with the outside world.

Many customers had suspended their operations during this time, however, we did have two who asked if we would be able to remain open to work on products that were deemed “essential” as part of the food chain. We decided that if we were to have a skeleton staff to manage this by implementing social distancing as well as infection control through hygiene measures and the use of PPE, we would be able to do it.

This would help us to hopefully keep the Workshop going and in turn, help those customers to do the same. Initially, we invited back those who were happy to do so for their mental wellbeing and although our capacity has been reduced due

to social distancing, we have continued to invite more to return. This worked successfully, and even though the income generated by the essential commercial work was lower than normal activity levels and it did not cover our expenditure on staff costs and overheads, we were at least still open to some service users. Watford Borough Council's grant contributed to making this possible.

The impact of Watford Borough Council's grant has been significant. It has helped maintain stability at a time when the charity's expenditure has been exceeding its income by a considerable amount, allowing us to remain open, support our service users both remotely and on the premises, and thereby alleviate many of the issues that Covid-19 and lockdown have caused for them.

We continue to remain in touch with those who are still on furlough due to their medical vulnerability and have provided everyone with PPE packs thanks to the funding we have received. The case study below will also help to highlight further the impact the funding has had:

### **Covid Case Study**

This service user suffers from debilitating anxiety and this was magnified 100 fold due to lockdown. The remote support we provided enabled us to try and alleviate their fears and give them the reassurances that were needed. As time went on, thanks to this remote support, we recognised that they were struggling - they were desperate to return to work but were too fearful to do so.

The solution was to provide them with their own "workshop" using an external training cabin which would enable them to park immediately outside the cabin, work with their friend and have no need to enter the main building or for anyone else to enter their space. This solution was a great success - they felt confident enough to return to work, had the opportunity to see, chat and work with their friend in a safe space which increased their wellbeing, reduced their anxiety and improved their happiness enormously.

We were pleased to have been presented with a straightforward application form from Watford Borough Council which allowed us to explain our dilemma at the time of application and why we needed their help; and we were delighted with such a quick response to the application and the subsequent payment of the grant. Thank you.



## New Hope



New Hope exists to serve individuals who are homeless or vulnerably-housed through the provision of accommodation and opportunities to transform lives. They house up to 66 people every night and support almost 600 individuals every year through their 17 services, including nine accommodations and eight support services.

Comprised of a comprehensive range of support and accommodation services, New Hope is proud to be able to offer support at every stage of the journey from homelessness to independent living; from initial rough sleeping, to mental/physical health, to addiction, to recovery and finally onto supported accommodation and back-to-work training/mentoring.

The organisation were awarded £3,000 funding to provide meals to individuals rough sleeping or experiencing homelessness. Meals were provided 3 times a day, 7 days a week during the Coronavirus crisis.

### **Joe Meehan - Fundraising and Communications Officer, New Hope**

Upon the advent of Covid-19, social distancing and lockdown, we knew that the way we offered support to those experiencing homelessness in Watford would have to change. Previously the Rough Sleeping Prevention Service existed as a drop-in centre throughout the week providing a cooked breakfast, a packed lunch, showers, laundry facilities and one-to-one meetings for support and guidance.

In response to the social distancing regulations, the rapid emergency accommodation of those rough sleeping and for the safety of service users, volunteers and staff, the service developed in to one of remote support, preparing meals, packs of essentials and support programs for delivery to those in temporary housing.

Over 70 individuals were housed between New Hope, One YMCA, Watford Borough Council and Travelodge Properties under the Government's 'Everyone In' scheme when the crisis began, all of whom have received direct support with meals, groceries, items to combat boredom and intensive support in adapting to life away from the street as well as with making arrangements to move into safe and longer-term accommodation once lockdown came to an end.

Each day members of the Rough Sleeping Prevention Service cooked meals and prepared boxes of supplies with the help of volunteers from the local community ready for delivery by the Street Outreach Service throughout the day. We are pleased to say that throughout this period of uncertainty, everyone who came to us was given access to food and support and many of those who resided in the emergency housing options have been supported in making connections to longer term accommodation.



This comprehensive programme of support would not have been possible without funding from generous trusts, foundations and community groups as, like many other charities up and down the UK, the financial impact of having to close multiple income streams such as our pair of charity shops while offering extended service opening hours and facilities has been challenging.

The grant from the Mayor's Small Grants Fund has allowed us to focus our existing resources on ensuring we can deliver the highest level of service while operating for an additional day per week and several hours longer than usual. Although the lifting of lockdown does not mean a return to business as usual for New Hope in the support of those experiencing homelessness, we are incredibly grateful that The Mayor's Small Grants Fund chose to support our work through the most challenging part of the pandemic so far.

We would very much recommend reaching out to the team at the Mayor's Small Grants Fund for any charity in need of financial support in these uncertain times. The application process is a straightforward and manageable-length form and the team are quick to respond to any email communications. Upon making their decision, the team made the funds available to us quickly which, during a crisis, made the project begin on schedule. Once again, we'd like to say thank you for this funding and making the transition of our drop-in service a smooth process.



## Watford Hindu Group



Watford Hindu Group (WHG) was formed in 1973 to cater for the cultural, social and religious needs of the Hindu community in the Watford area. Catering for about 300 families, they actively encourage involvement and participation of all communities, which encourages intercultural awareness and understanding, thus promoting community cohesion.

They are run by a dedicated team of volunteers who organise and participate in a wide range of social and cultural events throughout the year. Over the years they have recognised how the community has come to regard them as a hub for information on a wide variety of subjects including health, sport, education and integration in to the broader community. They therefore initiated a drive to cater for those needs by devising, organising and delivering various projects which aim to address the community concerns and requirements.

Watford Hindu Group were awarded funding of £2,754 to help provide and deliver community members with food and grocery supplies.

### **Raj Pandya - Committee Secretary, Watford Hindi Group**

During the Covid-19 pandemic we have been contacted by many members of our community who had reached a crisis point and requested our help. Although those shielding received generous care packages, some of the items were not really usable due to the specific diet of traditional vegetarian Indian food (many are also diabetic).

We started by shopping, cooking at our homes and delivering to those who we knew were in need. However, this became unsustainable as the 'three items per household' was implemented by supermarkets. At this point we decided to apply for the Mayor's emergency fund so that we could purchase and deliver hot food provided by Namaste Restaurant.

Having been awarded just under £3,000 we renegotiated costing with Namaste who had by then teamed up with 'Go Dharmic' and were able to offer food free of charge. We started delivering these but it was also apparent that what people really needed was traditional Indian vegetables and cooking ingredients that are not available in supermarkets and could only be bought from Indian shops. We therefore adapted to the needs of the vulnerable community members by sourcing and delivering these items too.

This has made a massive difference to the local people who have been housebound, particularly the elderly and those with underlying health issues. They have had the option of having cooked food and/or appropriate cooking ingredients delivered to their doorstep, such that their specific dietary needs are catered for. We have also been able to identify members of the community that were not previously under our radar but are vulnerable and in need of support during the pandemic and in the future. We have also opened up a line of

communication between these people and ourselves so that any further needs can be identified or just for someone to chat to when feeling lonely or sad.

The Mayor's funding has enabled WHG to carry out a valuable service to members of the community that have been most in need. Initially we were catering for about 20 families in Watford but due to the Mayor's funding we were able to reach out to 70 families.

In Hinduism there is great emphasis on 'seva', selfless service to benefit the community. We have been able to do this with the help of the Mayor's funding, the dedication of WHG's volunteers (none of whom have received or expect to receive volunteer expenses) and the grace of God. This has been one of the most satisfying services WHG has been involved in.

## The Living Room



The Living Room provides treatment for adults living with the illness of addiction. Their vision is a future where people with the illness of addiction are able to live their lives free from an addiction to drugs, alcohol or behaviours, becoming contributing citizens in society.

The organisation were awarded £3000 funding to set up a Family and Carers Group in Watford so that family members and carers could receive support at the same time as the adult with the illness of addiction.

### **Rita Cooper - Operations Manager, The Living Room**

In 2019, following a successful grant application from Hertfordshire County Council, we were able to expand our service delivery to a venue in Watford. We identified the need to open a centre in this geographical area from local and professional statistics.

The Living Room provides treatment for adults with the illness of addiction across Hertfordshire. By 'addiction' we mean any addiction; substance (e.g. alcohol; illicit and non-illicit drugs) and behavioural addictions (e.g. disordered eating, gambling, hoarding, self-harm to name but a few). Importantly in our efforts to break the generational cycle of additions, we also support the family and carers of those that the addiction effects.

We applied for a grant from the Mayor's Small Grants Fund to enable us to facilitate a weekly Family and Carers group for the residents of Watford. Funding was required to rent additional premises, produce flyers, attend professional and local meetings to publicise the opportunity for family members to take back control of their lives. During the workshops and sessions, the attendees learnt how to set boundaries, acknowledge the daily frustrations and to understand the complexity that addiction brings. It also provided an opportunity for participants to form friendships with others that understood the issues and could provide ongoing support outside of group sessions.

Nothing can convey the importance of this group better than the words of one of the participants.

### **Testimonial**

When my partner of 16 years' spending addiction came to light I reached out to The Living Room for support and joined the Family and Carers group. Although it was obvious to me that I needed help I had no idea what it was I needed to do or how to deal with this situation.

My mental and emotional wellbeing were suffering, I was anxious, not sleeping well, becoming consumed with trying to find out what was happening in my relationship, by checking my partners phone and emails, rummaging through any paper work I could lay my hands on, and constantly trying to catch him out

in explanations he gave me for his behaviour and financial position. I could hardly recognise myself and the way I was behaving which was so out of character for me.

What I found in the group of women and facilitators I met at The Living Room was a sense of belonging, a place where we were 'all in it together' all suffering with the same problems. Our stories might on the surface appear to differ but what it came down to was a very common thread - the effects of living with or in close contact with someone in active addiction.

Week after week as I sat in group it gradually became clear to me that I didn't know my partner at all, that I had swallowed an awful lot of lies to the point I no longer believed a word he said, not the basis for a long term relationship.

The members of the group fostered such a deep bond between us and I felt able to share really honestly and receive such a huge amount of support and caring and as the veils of my illusion fell away, the women were there to hold me up and the facilitators were there to offer the way forward. One week when things came to a head and so much came to light about what had been going on with my partner and I realised that was it, no way back for this relationship now.

So this group offered me so much and we shared a hard road together, buoyed on by love and support and getting answers that made the way forward clear and obvious. My whole life was affected in different ways by the work I was doing in the group. My boundaries were becoming clearer and I became more assertive and able to stand my ground more and say what I wanted more than before and I was regaining my confidence.

Not long after joining the group I realised my relationship probably wasn't going to survive and I was filled with fear and couldn't imagine how I'd survive on my own, the thought was unbearable. Yet, incredibly only 3 months later I asked him to leave and now I've faced many of the worst fears I had and feel so very different. I've achieved more than I could have ever imagined and I'm building a new life for myself.

One of the best things I did was going to this group and I got the clarity I needed to make wise choices and decisions and the support to carry them out. If I hadn't joined this group I can't imagine what would have become of me because living with someone in active addiction draws you in, little by little, to a blindness and fog, it has to so you can stay in denial of all that you can't face and accept. With the strength of the group you have the confidence and shared strength to face all your fears and make a stand for your own highest good.

I shall be forever grateful for the opportunity the Living Room gave me and even more grateful for those beautiful souls who held my hand and offered their love and caring as we walked the path of recovery together.

## Watford Folk Club



The Watford Folk Club provide an opportunity for those with an interest in folk music to sing and perform at gatherings and engage with professional folk artists.

This informal group were awarded £500 funding to hire one of the leading folk musicians to perform for the group, attracting a large audience.

### **Pete Nutkins, Treasurer and Committee Member, Watford Folk Club**

Watford Folk Club meets weekly at the Pump House Theatre and Arts Centre and provides an opportunity for those interested in Folk Music to both listen and perform.

We also engage professional folk artists to perform, promoting both Traditional and Contemporary Folk Music in Watford and the surrounding areas.

Headline folk performers command high fees, but can attract large audiences, increasing the profile of the organiser(s), the venue and the locality. We wanted to book the well-known artist MartinCarthy for these reasons but needed to ensure that we could honour his fee for performing on 13th September 2019. After a discussion with Kim Bloomfield (Watford Council's Partnerships and Funding Manager) at a Pump House event, we decided to apply for a Mayor's Small Grant.

The application process was very straightforward, and Kim was extremely helpful and co-operative, offering advice and support when needed, making what could have been a difficult task very easy.

The event achieved all our aims, bringing in new audience members, some from as far afield as the West Midlands. Our regular attendance has increased since this event and the cultural image of Watford has been enhanced.

We have plans to book more professional folk artists in the future and will have no hesitation in approaching the Council for a further grant if we feel it would be appropriate.

We are grateful to the Mayor and the Grants team for their help in enabling us to put on this event.



## Music 24



Music 24 provides a vast range of support services that utilise music therapy techniques in order to help people explore their creativity and feel heard. The group supports health and wellbeing by building confidence, reinforcing self-identity and building support networks.

The organisation were awarded funding of £3,000 to run a music therapy group with a focus on offering elderly/frail residents from BAME communities the opportunity to increase a wider social network.

### Teela Hughes - CEO, Music 24

Music24 saw a need in Watford for a music group that supported the health and wellbeing of the elderly/frail BAME community. Together with Caring Sharing Friends, a local day service based at Elim Pentecostal Church, Music24 embarked on creating an opportunity for people in the local area.

Music is an intrinsic part of our culture - in our community, faith and spirituality. It brings people together and that's exactly what we have done. In addition to this 'togetherness', music also has many other benefits. Music can support us mentally, emotionally and physically. In an ageing population, anything that keeps our minds and bodies active should be pursued and embraced.

Each session started with a light physical and vocal warm-up, followed by singing some songs that the group members had selected. No doubt at some point during the session, there would definitely be some dancing! It is safe to say that the people attending our group had a natural ability within music and this was a pleasant surprise. Everyone was so musical!

We brought along lots of instruments for people to explore, microphones, a guitar, a keyboard and some drums. We provided structure to the sessions and that ultimate opportunity to be expressive. Then the beautiful music we made simply happened all by itself!

When we make music together, it gives people an outlet, an opening for the chance to be creative and feel heard. Our voices are a huge part of our identity. Providing this opportunity left people with huge smiles on their faces.

The start of the session, when it is quiet and people are apprehensive, compared to the end of the session when people are walking out the door laughing and hugging everyone - well that says it all. Music transforms people. It lifts their spirits and improves their confidence.

We are so pleased that the Watford Mayor's Small Grants Fund has been able to support this project, they have been wonderful to work with.



**Kim Bloomfield**  
**Partnerships & Funding Manager**

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