

Fusion21 Foundation invests in £1 million Cost of Living Hardship Fund

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The [Fusion21](#) Foundation has invested £1 million in a Cost of Living Hardship Fund, benefiting 70 Fusion21 members and their communities.

The Cost of Living Hardship Fund supports projects that meet the Foundation's funding priorities of financial inclusion and resilience, and health and wellbeing.

Our housing association members tell us that the cost of living challenges in communities will continue to have a considerable impact for years to come. The resilience of individuals, communities, and the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector is low with austerity, the pandemic, inflation, and changes to the funding landscape having had a deep impact.

Our members also tell us that their support services (particularly financial inclusion services) are seeing a significant increase in demand. New customers, many of whom are in employment, are tipping into poverty and needing additional support (for example, food banks) for the first time due to in-work poverty.

Based on feedback from our members and wider research, we have invested in the following projects:

1. Co-funding the launch of a new VCSE Sector Resilience Fund

We teamed up with Clarion Futures and Places for People to co-fund a new programme providing strategy support and core cost grants to VCSE organisations in communities across England.

This programme supports community-based VCSE services through targeted funding and capacity building. These services are key partners to housing associations as they provide vital support to

individuals and families in their local neighbourhoods – from financial advice to sports activities, mental health and wellbeing and youth services and skills development.

The programme also delivers strategic business advice so that the VCSE organisations are equipped to face current and future challenges, ensuring viability for the longer term.

To date, 101 VCSE organisations have been referred for specialist charity consultant support on income generation, business and strategic planning, and governance.

2. Co-funding the HACT 2023 Fuel Fund

We co-funded this new wave of fuel vouchers providing residents of housing associations in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland with support beyond the winter. The fund enabled housing associations to access fuel vouchers for residents who are struggling to pay their energy bills. A total of 1,568 households benefited from the fund, receiving an average value of £216 per property.

Jo Hannan, Head of Fusion21 Foundation, said: “Through our Cost of Living Hardship Fund we’ve collaborated with partners who can assist individuals facing hardship and supported the wider VCSE sector to sustain their services. We’ve listened to our members and understand the impact the cost of living crisis is having on their tenants and local VCSE services, and we were pleased to offer our support to their communities at this challenging time.”

We like to collaborate directly with Fusion21 members to find practical solutions that make positive differences in people’s lives. Get in touch to find out more.