Executive Summary and Oldham Case Paper

Year 1 CCS Programme: Evaluation and Learning

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The Children's Society is proud to be working in partnership with the following organisations to deliver the Coordinated Commuity Support Programme

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Year 1 of the Coordinated Community Support Programme, Evaluation Executive Summary

About the Coordinated Community Support Programme

The Children's Society (TCS), in partnership with several organisations including Buttle UK, the Lloyds Bank Foundation, Children in Need, The Church of England, The Legal Education Foundation, The Local Government Association (LGA), Trust for London, Smallwood Trust, Stepchange and Trussell Trust are delivering the Coordinated Community Support (CCS) Programme.

The initial aims of the programme were twofold. Firstly, to address the gap in emergency support provision left following the elimination of Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants through better networking of different local agencies (including the Local Authority) involved in the provision of emergency assistance. Secondly, to reduce repeat instances of financial crisis by addressing underlying causes of crises, as well as the immediate emergency.

Five themes - the programme aims to improve outcomes including:

- Improving **access** to crisis support schemes
- A simpler, supported, **application process**
- Addressing **underlying needs** to prevent the recurrence of crisis
- Providing **aftercare**
- A commitment to ongoing **learning**

Four Pilot Sites selected as the focus

- Norfolk
- Oldham
- Swansea
- Tower Hamlets

Three Theories of Change were developed in the early stages of the programme

- Tier 1 – Impact on people accessing services
- Tier 2 – Impact on local systems
- Tier 3 – Impact on national systems

The CCS Programme works within four different local authority areas to setup pilot projects providing support, guidance and resources to local community organisations to better coordinate crisis provision. The programme invites organisations in each local pilot site to develop workstreams to contribute to the five thematic areas with an overarching coordination objective. A central CCS team, hosted by the Children's Society, provides programme management support.

In addition to the funded workstreams, the programme has delivered facilitation of meetings between organisations and supporting them with responses to Covid-19. Taking a collaborative approach, the programme seeks to develop new ways of supporting people facing financial crisis through the sharing of ideas, direct funding and supporting applications to welfare support. The programme also seeks to influence national systems by bringing policy makers and funders closer to the experiences of local people.

About the evaluation

Cloud Chamber were invited by TCS and partners to conduct an independent formative and summative evaluation of the programme. This report is an account of Year 1 of the programme. The main data sources for

this report include workstream case studies, monitoring data, interviews with the CCS Programme team, observation of partnership meetings and facilitation of pilot-site outcome-setting sessions.

A responsive programme: Covid-19

Implementation plans were drafted in each Local Authority in early 2020. However, due Covid-19, many of the workstreams were adapted to respond to the challenges arising within communities. The overall objective of 'access to crisis support' has remained constant for the programme while priorities around 'access' have changed and workstreams have adapted accordingly:

o   Pre-pandemic workstreams had a focus on *improving access* to support and appointments through funding translation, transport and some co-designed services. These workstreams were paused or reconfigured.

o   Covid-19 workstreams have a focus on *timely access* through provision of food, furniture and advice in a timely and Covid-safe setting via trusted agencies.

A summary of workstreams in shown in the table below:

Swansea	Oldham	Norfolk	Tower Hamlets
Citizen's Advice Swansea Food Parcel Leaflet (£110)	Ancora KeyRing food parcel leaflet (£55)	Leeway: Smallwood funding for homestart packs (£4,500)	Island Advice / Tower Hamlets Community Advice Network (THCAN): School referral project (£5,000)
Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team (EYST) Centralised Hardship fund (£9,000)*	Ancora Keyring Emergency hardship fund (£3,125)	Norfolk Citizen's Advice: Grant Awareness project (£7,600)	**Mulberry School food and advice service (£20,000)***
Housing Justice Cymru, Citadel (£12,883)	REEL clothing bank (£3,200)	Norfolk Citizen's Advice: Digital Inclusion project (£1,200)	RSS Training session with Northgate and Tower Hamlets local authority (no cost)
The Wallich Home Starter packs (£2,625)	**SAWN Furniture and Extended services (£9,650)***	Norfolk Community Law Service: Family Solicitor Expansion (£5,000)	
		Norwich Integration Partnership: joint project (£16,298)*	
		Norfolk Community Advice Network: Development and staffing resource for NCAN system (£6,552)	

Note: Workstreams in **bold font** are case studies in this evaluation. Those marked with an * have additional resource funding from leveraged sources explained in more detail in the full report.

The programme actively brought organisations responding to the Covid-19 crisis together and offered a chance to exchange experiences and understanding the emerging needs resulting from lockdown. Cloud Chamber observed these sessions, and the ways in which Covid-19 prompted rapid adaptation for organisations to able to help people in financial crisis. While coordination remains the primary objective of the programme, there has been acknowledgement that Covid-19 has had a double-edged impact on this objective:

o   Firstly, Covid-19 has catalysed rapid adaptation and relationship building between VCS organisations to identify and implement solutions quickly.

o   Secondly, Covid-19 has left some organisations with little time, space or resource to codesign long-term sustainable coordinated projects.

It is possible that the relationships forged between organisations during the Covid-19 pandemic will be sustained.

- *"We forged a relationship with [another VCS org] and I'm hoping it will continue."* (partner during a partnership call during lockdown Spring 2020)

CCS adding value and capacity

The CCS team has contributed local provision of crisis support and local systems change in the following ways:

- **CCS as a broker**: organisations in the pilot sites, especially VCS organisations, value the brokerage role that the CCS team have played. This has taken place both through facilitating CCS-programme meetings and through direct contact between organisations.

- **CCS as an asset-identifier**: since the 'bringing together' of organisations through the programme, further catalysed through the needs arising because of Covid-19, organisations report an improved awareness and understanding of the strengths of other organisations in their local areas.

- **CCS workstreams welcomed as a non-target driven space**: some organisations funded to deliver workstreams report that the CCS programme is a space to 'try' new things and is refreshing when compared to the target-driven requirements from other funders. Organisations welcome the spirit of the programme.

- **CCS as a platform, boosting credibility**: there is some early evidence of VCS organisations feeling 'seen and heard' because of the facilitation of the CCS programme. Being involved in the programme has raised their profile in their localities and boosted their credibility. This is particularly the case for small, volunteer-led organisations.

- **Flexible, warm and responsive central CCS team is valued**: consulted stakeholders have really welcomed the relationships built with the CCS team and value their flexibility, especially in relation to Covid-19. Partners welcome the collaborative approach the team have taken. The team are increasingly being approached by local authorities for advice.

- **A blended approach of workstream funding and facilitation has been welcome:** The value of workstream funding combined with facilitation has been valued by partners.

Activity and output summary

Much of the energy of the programme in Year 1 has been focused on local systems change. At the time of writing, the programme is working with the four pilot sites to identify the steps needed to make 'good' coordination happen.

The CCS programme has delivered the following activities in Year 1 and distributed just over £100,000 of workstream funding:

- Promotion, engagement and partnership development
- Pilot site partnership meetings (26 meetings)
- Online grant awareness training (31 attendees)
- Development of the CCS Charter (26 organisations have signed up to the charter)
- Cross-pilot site partnership learning meetings (three meetings)
- Commissioned research on analysing different perspectives of crisis provision (ongoing)
- Support to develop 17 workstreams funded directly by CCS funding

o   Leveraged £68,000 from additional sources to complement and add value

The CCS Team have engaged 368 professionals during Year 1 of the Programme; representing approximately 139 organisations across the four pilot sites. Further statistics demonstrating the level of engagement are shown in the table below.

	Norfolk	Oldham	Swansea	Tower Hamlets	Total
Number of people	142	78	76	72	**368**
Number VCS organisations	24	35	31	31	**121**
Number local authority, county council or other statutory	8	3	3	1	**15**
Number of schools	0	1	0	2	**3**

Workstream case studies

The key lessons from four workstream case studies across each of the pilot sites are summarised in the table below. This research formed a principal input to the evaluation.

Workstream	Summary	Learning emerging from case study
Norwich Integration Partnership (Norfolk)	Norwich Integration Partnership (NIP) is a pre-existing partnership of three organisations (Bridge Plus, New Routes Integration & English+) supporting individuals with NRPF, migrants and asylum-seekers. With an expected reach of 250 clients CCS funding was provided to support a collaborative response to Covid-19. The funding helped proactively and collaboratively identify and support vulnerable clients through information sharing, supermarket vouchers, IT top-ups and other support.	o The case study highlights the important role of trust, and wider (non-crisis) related provision, in developing relationships and providing crisis support o A wide range of outcomes were seen, linked both to the response to Covid-19, and often in addition to the outcomes outlined in the CCS theory of change o *"We came closer together as a team of three organisations, with fewer overlaps in delivery; and much closer working – it really enhanced that." (NIP Staff member)*
SAWN Furniture Packs and Additional Support (Oldham)	Funding for SAWN to resume safe supply of furniture packs to vulnerable clients illegible for support via the Oldham LWAS (i.e. people with NRPF). SAWN also offer wider holistic and ongoing support, information and guidance. Some funding for fuel top-ups and other emergency costs.	o The service is providing so much more than providing furniture to vulnerable residents; it is building trusted relationships with people, signposting to other services, helping with applications and informal aftercare. o The time taken to provide this service is not something SAWN are renumerated for directly although stakeholders in the borough, including the local authority and other VCS organizations, recognise and value this support. o ***"If we hadn't had that time with her, those cups of tea, I don't know what would have happened to her. She's still alive. That's an outcome. It's a soft outcome. She's come to understand what has happened to her, the trauma she's experienced. We ask her what she wants. She finds her own solutions." (SAWN)***

Centralised Hardship Fund, EYST (Swansea)	The project managed by Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team (EYST) is a centralised hardship fund accessible to local organisations to improve the access to crisis support of asylum seekers, refugees and those with no recourse to public funds. The fund focuses on IT equipment, data and phone top-ups, children's needs (e.g. baby food) and other emergency costs.	o The need to respond in a focused and rapid way to the Covid-19 crisis has led to stronger working relationships between organisations. o While the Covid-19 pandemic has increased the difficulty of offering face-to-face support, organisations successfully shifted delivery aspects to a remote model. o It was felt that remote approaches developed during the pandemic could be used in the future and would help to reduce, for example, unnecessary client expenditure on bus fares to attend appointments. o Recognising the value of face-to-face contact in building trust and understanding underlying needs, a balanced approach has the potential to improve both co-ordination between organisations and client outcomes in the longer-term. o *"I think the project has allowed us and our partners to develop our relationship with each other and more importantly with our clients." (EYST team member)*
Mulberry Food and Advice Service, (Tower Hamlets)	At the beginning of lockdown, staff at Mulberry School identified that certain products were disappearing from shops due to stockpiling – nappies, sanitary towels, lentils and flour for example. The service provided food parcels, household necessities, toiletries, and sanitary hygiene kits. The service included welfare referrals to the school social worker and local advice agency, Island Advice.	o The service was successful due to the commitment and dedication of teachers who volunteered their time and the funding leveraged by the CCS programme. o Referring families to Island Advice was new for the school and a successful example of coordination. Need for food and advice remains high in the borough although teachers are back to their "day job" and capacity is low. o *"[CCS team member] introduced us to Island Advice. As I understand it, the [CCS] programme brings together organisations that are struggling but all trying to achieve the same thing" (Mulberry School employee)*

Impact on people accessing services

Monitoring data from the programme shows at least 2,000 individuals have been supported directly through the programmes workstreams in 2020. The importance of trust between people who access services and organisations is frequently mentioned during our case study work and our evaluation encourages the programme to identify ways to support the VCS to harness and build upon these trusted relationships. Outcomes for people accessing services in Year 1 for those who have accessed a workstream include:

o More likely to access support from the right place, quickly (access theme)

o Access to a wider range of support services (underlying need theme)

o More dignified experience of accessing crisis support and systems (cross cutting theme)

o More able to trust someone who can help me

o Wellbeing is maintained or prevented from entering crisis

o More likely to have had support with additional needs (beyond immediate crisis)

- o Mental and/or physical health is maintained
- o Children are more likely to be able to engage with education

Impact on local systems

Much of the work in Year 1 of the CCS programme has been focused on building the foundations - the networks and relationships of organisations working at local, pilot site level. The CCS programme has offered a unique opportunity for organisations to communicate with each other in their localities, albeit virtually. In some cases, the CCS-facilitated meetings were the first time that organisations were made aware of one another.

Consulted stakeholders in the pilot sites have welcomed the relationships built with the CCS team and value their flexibility, especially in relation to Covid-19. Partners welcome the collaborative approach that the CCS team have taken. The team are increasingly being approached by local authorities for advice indicating that they have gained trust and credibility in the four pilot sites and have laid a good foundation for improving systems in Years 2 and 3. Outcomes for pilot sites in Year 1 include:

- o Increasing levels of communication between organisations
- o Increasing levels of trust between organisations
- o Increased clarity of responsibilities and strengths of voluntary community sector (VCS) provision
- o Agility of VCS is better understood
- o Shared vision of the centrality of client journey
- o Joint understanding of the importance of referral systems
- o Building upon learning within the programme

The CCS programme seeks to influence local eco-systems i.e. relationships between organisations. This model assumes a set of preconditions or assumptions amongst practitioner and organisations for enabling this. These preconditions include willingness, skills and capacity of practitioners and organisations. It also assumes that the pathway to collaboration is inclusive for all organisation types (size, sector, subsector)

Impact on national systems

Much of the impact on national systems has been in direct response to Covid-19, bringing policy makers closer to the experiences of communities with regards to challenges around digital exclusion and access to Free School Meals. It was noted that many of the smaller organisations did not have other routes in to influence policy and practice, so this was an empowering part of the programme for them. TCS, together with others in the sector, have directly influenced some operational systems change at national level in response to Covid-19. Examples include:

- o **MHCLG and the Treasury funding:** The Children's Society was active in engaging with Central Government regarding financial hardship and Covid-19. An additional £63 million was provided by central government in June to be distributed to local authorities in England

- **Discretionary Assistance Fund (Welsh Government**): contribution of evidence to decision regarding provision of additional support to this fund. Subsequently, a further £11 million was allocated in May to the fund which supports individuals and families facing extreme financial hardship.

Looking forward

This full evaluation report invites the CCS Team and partners to ensure that Years 2 and 3 of the programme put emphasis on:

- **Responding to 'additional' needs:** we have seen how services have been supported beyond the immediate crisis presented – for example, brokering conversations with housing teams or helping register with a GP. While this does not go so far as addressing an *underlying* need it does address additional, sometimes multifaceted need. At present, this is not represented in the programme Theory of Change and we invite the CCS team to consider it as a valid objective of the programme.

- **Building trusted relationships:** some of the support provided by organisations is informal, relationship building. It shares some characteristics with aftercare although the term does not always resonate with delivery organisations. As a result, some organisations are not requesting funds (both within the CCS programme and beyond) for this work. We recommend shifting the discourse from aftercare to 'building trusted relationships' in an attempt to support organisations to do this work. Building these trusted relationships is critical to helping identify and respond to identifying need.

- **Consider where on the 'ownership continuum' the project wants to be:** An early aspiration of the programme was for local organisations to own the direction of the programme and come forward with workstream ideas. Evidence suggests that the open nature (i.e., a sense of freedom for organisations to design their own projects without a pre-determined set of outcomes) of the workstreams has been challenging to engage with. We invite the team to consider how realistic true ownership of the programme at pilot site level is likely to be and recognise that full co-production may not be possible. Steps towards ownership (such as local organisations calling meetings, offering to lead on workstreams etc.) should still be regarded as a success especially given the organisational pressures due to Covid-19.

It is also recommended that the programme considers how best to:

- Ensure that system pathways allow space for practitioners to build trust with people accessing services.

- Consider how the programme can improve the ability and confidence of organisations to place value on building trusted relationships.

- Consider ways to better engage smaller, voluntary led organisations in the programme.

- Consider the role of schools in the programme and beyond.

Year 1 of the CCS programme in Oldham

Key learning

o Access to goods is an opportunity to explore underlying need: the Support and Action for Women Network – known as SAWN - furniture and extension project was to provide furniture packs to vulnerable residents. However, the service is providing so much more than this – building trusted relationships with people, signposting to other services, helping with applications and informal aftercare.

o Significant time taken to build relationships and provide emotional support: The time taken to provide this service is not something SAWN are renumerated for directly although stakeholders in the borough, including the local authority and other VCS organisations, recognise and value this support.

CCS Activity in Oldham

Summary of funded workstreams

o **Reused furniture pack provision and existing core offer of wider support – Support and Action for Women Network (SAWN):** Funding for SAWN to resume safe supply of furniture packs to vulnerable clients illegible for support via the Oldham LWAS (i.e. people with no recourse to public funds (NRPF). SAWN also offer wider holistic and ongoing support, information and guidance. Some funding for fuel top-ups and other emergency costs. The project had a value of £9650 and ran for 12 weeks.

   ▪ **Primary target outcome theme = improved access to crisis support**

o **Emergency hardship fund - KeyRing- Ancora Project**: Hardship fund to cover emergency expenses for clients of the Ancora partnership project (KeyRing, Oldham foodbank and Christians Against Poverty). Items covered include fuel and phone top-ups, safe travel costs and digital devices. The project had a value of £3,125 and ran for 6-8 months.

   ▪ **Primary target outcome theme = improved access to crisis support**

o **Clothing bank interim funding - Real Education Empowering Lives (REEL)**: REEL developed a clothing bank in response to an identified need during Covid-19. Recent months have demonstrated the ongoing need for such a project across Oldham. REEL provide a range of family support including online support for people across Oldham. The CCS workstream funding provides interim funding for 8 weeks, pending outcome of REEL's Big Lottery bid. The project ran for 8 weeks and has a value of £3,200.

   ▪ **Primary target outcome theme = improved access to crisis support**

About this paper

In consultation with the TCS team, it was agreed that a useful lens for the Year 1 evaluation would be for Cloud Chamber to conduct workstream case studies in each of the four pilot sites. The questions that workstream case studies aim to answer include:

o What happened in the workstream?

o How did the workstream adapt / respond to Covid-19?

o What have we learned as a result of this workstream?

- What was the impact of the workstream on service users? How many service users were reached?
- What was the impact of the workstream on local systems change?
- How did CCS Programme add value to this area of work?
- To what extent did the workstream contribute to the initial five themes (access, simplified application, underlying need, aftercare, learning)?

This paper is based on a case study of the SAWN workstream. Interviews have been completed with the two SAWN lead staff, a representative from the Ancora project and a representative from Oldham Council. The remainder of this paper focuses primarily on learning and reflections from the Reused Furniture Pack and Extended Core offer project delivered by SAWN (hereafter referred to as the SAWN Furniture and Extension project) and highlights lessons that may be relevant across the borough and for other CCS sites.

About the SAWN workstream

Support and Action for Women Network (SAWN) was established in 2007 to promote the welfare of Black/African women in Oldham and Greater Manchester. The aim of the network is to realise the full potential of women by engaging them in activities, providing opportunities and events to help make women independent, key players in matters that concern them.

SAWN provide support and training to their service users as well as work with other organisations to raise awareness of female genital mutilation (FGM). SAWN provide furniture to people who need it, and it is often through this furniture provision that other conversations are 'opened up' about complex and underlying need.

SAWN is managed by two volunteers both with a wealth of professional experience and skill. There are no salaried positions with the exception of some National Lottery Community Funding (NLCF) for someone to clean and prepare furniture.

The CCS funding for SAWN arose from a recognised need that many service users needed furniture but were unable to access the service due to Covid-19 lockdown restrictions. The CCS funding was for SAWN to safely supply furniture packs and fuel top-ups to vulnerable clients, ineligible for support via the Oldham LWAS (i.e. people with NRPF). Although not an explicit aim of the project, it was recognised that this funding has the potential to support SAWN to offer wider holistic and ongoing support, information, and guidance.

Reach

A total of 109 people were supported in May, June, July and August 2020 with a peak in June where 63 referrals were received. All referrals were accepted, the majority of whom were supported with migration status issues and/or replacement goods.

Figure: Number and nature of referrals to SAWN between May – August 2020

Statistic	Total
Number of referrals received	109
Number of referrals accepted	109
Need: Migration status	55
Need: Replacement goods	52
Need: Unfurnished new tenancy supported	36
Need: Fleeing domestic violence	14
Need: Other	9

Source: CCS monitoring data

Most referrals, almost half, were self-referrals with people attending drop-in sessions or hearing about the service via word of mouth.

Figure: Referrals by source (May to August 2020)

Referral source	N
Self-referral	53
Professional Referral - Other	29
Professional Referral - Local Authority	20
Professional Referral - Housing Association	6

Source: CCS monitoring data

Monitoring data tells us that all service users supported had no recourse to public funds (NRPF) and almost half of those supported include families with children. An estimated 73% of people who have been in receipt of furniture have also accessed other support from SAWN. This support is likely to be a combination of data/fuel packs, emotional support, migration support and/or signposting to other services.

Figure: Nature of support provided and people who have received support

Statistic	N
The number of people with no recourse to public funds supported	187*
The number of people in receipt of furniture who then engaged with other forms of support offered by SAWN	79
Number of adult-only households supported	57
Number of families with children supported	53
The number of data/ fuel packs issued	45
Number of onward referrals to other support services	18

Source: CCS monitoring data *Cloud Chamber and the CCS team have queried this number as the number of people with NRPF who are supported by the project is higher than the total number of referrals mentioned elsewhere. Attempts have been made to rectify this data although limited capacity at volunteer-led SAWN has made it difficult to get clarity on this

Outcomes for people

Our interviews with SAWN volunteers and qualitative monitoring data highlighted the following outcomes for SAWN service users:

- **Service users are treated sensitively, and underlying need is understood:** the SAWN leads are highly skilled at creating a space where service users can safely share their experiences. The service users may present to the service for furniture but often stay for a cup of tea and, through these informal conversations and over time, other **underlying needs** – often complex - are identified. This makes it possible for the SAWN leads to signpost or refer – giving access to a wider range of support services.

  - *"Behind the furniture item there's a trauma, there's always a story." (SAWN volunteer)*

- **Service users are listened to and treated with dignity:** SAWN ensures that everyone who accesses the service has a **dignified experience**. When service users share their stories they are listened to and believed. When selecting furniture, service users can select their products, setting the tone for a relationship where their voice matters.

  - *"It is important for people to be able to choose what they want [furniture and home furnishings]. We make up sets so people can select. We did this over Zoom and Whats app [during lockdown] It is about self-esteem and dignity. We [service users] might be poor but we have a right to shop. We are still consumers" (SAWN volunteer)*

- **Peer and expert support provided for women:** During lockdown, the SAWN leads were aware of the challenges facing their clients including domestic violence, FGM and isolation. In response, they set up informal Zoom calls covering topics of interest and 40 women engaged. This was not part of their funded work and it is possible it contributed to **unexpected outcomes** around increasing awareness of health issues, increasing a sense of trust in SAWN, overcoming isolation and preventing further challenges.

  - *"DV was going up, FGM was going up [during lockdown]. We did some informal Zoom meetings. We [SAWN leads] are not techy! We just did them informally and gently introduced topics. What is mental health? What is menopause? In some languages these words don't even feature. We got 40 women in the end. We talked about micro-enterprise, we asked women what they are good at." (SAWN volunteer)*

- **Coproduction in service journey at point of access:** at SAWN, coproduction is central to their ethos of working with service users. Although they don't always describe their approach as a formal co-production technique, there is a commitment to placing women at the heart of their support structure, inviting women to describe how and what they would like to happen. This gives women the opportunity to **shape and inform** the care they receive.

  - *"It is a good idea to sit down with people and ask how 'would you like this to happen?'" (SAWN volunteer)*

  - *"We ask her what she wants. She finds her own solutions. These are not things we would have offered as options. Some of her solutions are not the best, but we give her space. It is about sitting where people are. We empower." (SAWN volunteer)*

- **Emotional support, feeling safe, building trust:** many of the service users have experienced trauma including domestic violence, FGM and/or bereavement. SAWN create a space where women are able to

share their experiences in a safe way. This can sometimes help with bridging to other statutory services such as social workers and medical professionals:

- *"She thought the social workers wanted to take her kids away. We explained that, no, they're here to help." (SAWN volunteer)*

- *"She needed to see a midwife but didn't know how. I went with her." (SAWN volunteer)*

The following service user perspective illustrates the impact the workstream has had. Some details have been removed to protect the anonymity of the service user. The case study below represents a typical client who presents at SAWN.

"A lady came to our door one afternoon. We didn't know her. It took her a long time to get to us by bus. She walks in and she's smiling. We sat, had a cup of tea. She had very small children. She was told, by a friend, that we might be able to help her. We said, "what do you need, what is going on." She told us untruths because she felt unsafe at first. Instantly [SAWN worker] picked up on this but we didn't correct her, we wanted her to trust us. We sat with her, we played with the kids. Lot of cups of tea! We found her a new pram. After a while we found out she's got no food, no money. She was a single parent and had some medical difficulties. She told us that she'd experienced a lot of trauma and loss in her home country. It was awful, very sad.   She didn't tell us at first but once she started to trust us, she told us more.   She told us she still received threats from men. We've supported her with food, nappies and emotionally. Then she was being evicted from her home. She asked us for advice and showed us the eviction letters. I said "ask the council to talk to me" – I said to the council "we are supporting her, she has nothing". She's in the process of being supported now. If we hadn't had that time with her, those cups of tea, I don't know what would have happened to her. She's still alive. That's an outcome. It's a soft outcome. She's come to understand what has happened to her, the trauma she's experienced. We ask her what she wants. She finds her own solutions. These are not things we would have offered as options. Some of her solutions are not the best, but we give her space. It is about sitting where people are. We empower. We will find a way to get her to her appointments." (SAWN Volunteer)

Local systems outcomes

From the case study and consultation with partners, we identified the following local system outcome for the organisations involved:

- **Improved relationships with local agencies:** SAWN credit the CCS team with improving trust between organisations in Oldham. They refer to the CCS team as a broker, able to see where connections should be made, due to the fact they are an outside pair of eyes. This has been particularly noted with housing associations and the local authority.

    - *"[CCS team] have been able to connect us […] with Housing Associations and Local Authority." (Oldham VCS organisaiton)*

    - *"[CCS team] have supported people to action. They say to others [agencies] 'why can't you support SAWN?' We are beginning to get meaningful relationships with local authority. They've helped us to question statutory organisations, especially Housing Associations. She [CCS team] will ring them up and link us in so we can have a conversation. She's not always part of the conversation but she says' I want to introduce you'. I think the fact it is an outside pair of eyes looking in." (Oldham VCS organisaiton)*

Workstream learning

- **Trust between people is improving, but the system is flawed:** stakeholders report that they are happy to accept referrals and refer to people who they trust. It is remarked that "they can pick up the phone" to a lot of people in the borough and "don't ever want to say no". This comes from people working in a trusted way with a shared vision of what needs to be done to support the most vulnerable clients. However, it is noted that sometimes people are operating on the boundaries of official systems in a voluntary capacity, above and beyond what is in their job or volunteer descriptions e.g., providing baby milk late at night, accompanying service users to medical appointments or advocating to housing services for additional support. Committed staff and volunteers are providing an advocacy role for their most vulnerable clients even though they are not funded directly to do so.

    - *"We say yes to people [referring professionals]. We don't want to say no to these people. But we want to say no to the system! People [service users] get lost in the system [….] I can tell the workers get frustrated. People get lost in the system." (SAWN Volunteer)*

    - *"The system should begin with the person [evicted person] on the phone. Sometimes they get written off. Every contact counts." (SAWN Volunteer)*

    - *"The systems are slow, repetitive, outdated. They are output focused." (SAWN Volunteer)*

- **More than a furniture service:** the SAWN furniture and extension project was to provide furniture packs to vulnerable residents. However, the service is providing so much more than this – building trusted relationships with people, signposting to other services, helping with applications and informal aftercare. The time taken to provide this service is not something SAWN are renumerated for.

- **The CCS funding does not fully represent the input and outcomes:** The CCS workstream funding was for SAWN to open for two half-days and provide furniture. However, it was reported that volunteers stayed and provided services for a much longer time frame as they were funded to do as demand was so high. The support provided went well beyond furniture and includes emotional support.

- **Strong bond with the CCS Team:** pre-lockdown, the CCS team went to visit 'The Mill' where SAWN operate. SAWN report this as a turning point in their relationship with the CCS programme

    - *"We poured out our hearts […] I was a bit skeptical at first, but it changed when they came to visits us. I think it is an excellent relationship. [CCS worker] has become our go-to person. I think there is a bond." (SAWN volunteer)*

- **A genuine approach to codesign, aftercare and addressing underlying need:** the SAWN team recognise that they have skill in codesigning a client's support pathway. This is done through building a trusted relationship with a client and inviting them to share their aspirations for the support they need and how they would like to receive it. While this is happening on a somewhat micro scale in SAWN, it is giving autonomy to service users to shape and inform services. At present, this approach to working is not funded at SAWN.

    - *"In some of the meetings everyone has all the solutions but no one asks the person what the [support] solution should look like." (Oldham VCS organisation)*

- **Importance of experience and representation:** the SAWN lead volunteers are both highly skilled and experienced. One of the team is a Black African Woman and recognises that this can help build trusted relationships with clients from a similar background.

    - *"Sometimes when you see somebody who looks like you it can create some rapport. We had a lady who had visited an FGM clinic – it was a very scary, a scary setting for her. But she is happy to talk to me." (SAWN volunteer)*

- **The cost of 'a seat':** it is important to recognise that for small, volunteer-led organisations, attending networking sessions and meetings is unpaid. One of the SAWN leads sits on at least five networks and is not remunerated or salaried for this time.

- **The CCS reporting format is not easy**: it was reported that the monitoring reporting process for the CCS workstream funding has been overly complex.