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Evaluation of the Special Funds for
the Sexual Violence Voluntary and
Community Sector

Shared Intelligence
&
Jane Ellis Consulting

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This is a report of the results of independent research commissioned by the Government Equalities Office and conducted by Shared Intelligence with Jane Ellis Consulting. Views expressed in this report are not necessarily those of the Government Equalities Office or any other Government Department.

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Executive summary

Evaluating the Special Funds

1. Shared Intelligence, in partnership with Jane Ellis Consulting, was commissioned in February 2010 by the Government Equalities Office (GEO) to undertake the evaluation of the Special Fund (and the Emergency Fund retrospectively). The focus of the evaluation has been to measure the impact of the Funds on voluntary and community sector funded organisations, their users, and the wider sexual violence voluntary and community sector (VCS).
2. In response to research that identified instability within the sexual violence VCS, the Emergency Fund (in 2008/9), followed by the Special Fund (2009/10) were created. Specifically, the **objectives for the Funds** were:
 - to alleviate short-term financial and fundraising difficulties in the sexual violence sector;
 - to facilitate capacity building; and,
 - to provide continuity of services to victims.
3. The Emergency Fund was open to members of Rape Crisis England and Wales, and a total of 22 organisations were given grants to the total sum of £1.1 million. The subsequent Special Fund was initially awarded to a total of 40 organisations who received grants to the sum of £1.6 million.
4. The evaluation has focused on identifying the main **outcomes** from the activities delivered through the two Funds and assessing the contribution have the Funds made to any changes observed.
5. We have also looked at **learning** from the process by which the Special Funds been implemented including exploring ‘what works for which types of organisations in what circumstances?’ and the extent to which the funding has delivered value for money.
6. In our conclusions we use these findings to ask ‘What transferable lessons have been learned?’ and raise implications for the future.

7. The **methodology** included: an analysis of monitoring data from both Funds; interviews with national partners and the 39 organisations who actually received the Special Fund; a learning workshop for funded organisations and in depth case study research with eight organisations, including interviews with staff, users and local partners.

How have the Funds been used?

8. **Monitoring data** from the organisations in receipt of the Emergency and Special Funds shows that both Funds were used primarily to cover core costs such as salaries, rent and office overheads, volunteer training and expenses.
9. In turn this has meant that access to existing services have been enhanced through more skilled staff, better trained volunteers, longer opening hours and targeted outreach work.
10. Most commonly, these uses of the Funds provided **continuity of services for users and prevented closure of the funded organisations**. More indirect uses of the Special Funds for organisations included releasing staff time to participate in partnership working, increasing the profile of organisations and the services they provide, and improving the ability to seek more sustainable funding.

What difference have the Funds made?

11. For **service users**, the main benefit of the two Funds has been to ensure to continuation of services. Users describe vividly the profound and positive impact that using VCS sexual violence services have had on their mental and physical health, and their emotional well-being.

12. They also point to the reasons the services have had this impact – because of the professionalism of the specialist counsellors, the accessible and safe environments, and the user focus through flexible approaches and timescales.
13. Most users we spoke to had used other more generic, statutory services previously and favourably compared the VCS services with these because it is a free, high quality specialist service.
14. For **VCS organisations**, receiving the Funds has allowed continuity of services and short term stability. This has enabled them to maintain the quality of their specialist services through increasing staff and volunteer resources.
15. In this way the Funds have been used commonly for core costs, which has also enhanced service delivery and operational processes. For example, staff have been freed up to concentrate on discrete areas of work through the separation of functions; processes such as administration and management have been professionalised; organisations have increased their capacity to work more closely with local partners, increasing their local profile and referrals, and seeing more clients as a result.
16. The increased profile and contact with partners, and the credibility that government funding gives has helped organisations widen their access to funding and lever in additional income. However, this has not yet brought long term stability to any funded organisation and all organisations were acutely aware of the impact that financial cuts being introduced by the coalition government would have on the budgets of the statutory and charitable bodies that currently provide their funding.
17. **For the wider sector** the two recent Funds have increased capacity and profile of the sector overall through preventing individual organisations closing, enabling essential services to continue and increasing usage. They have also encouraged more networking and sharing of good practice between funded organisations.

18. However, this has not necessarily led to a more coherent and sustainable sector. The changes in eligibility criteria of the two recent Funds, and the current Combined Fund, appear to have had a divisive effect within the VCS, both between gender-specific and mixed gender services, and between specialist sexual violence organisations and more generic organisations providing some sexual violence services.

Learning for sustainability

19. The Special Funds were designed to alleviate short term funding crises in the sexual violence VCS by building organisational capacity and providing continuity of services for users.
20. The Funds have met these objectives, but there are questions about the sustainability of the sector if it relies on short term funding to lurch from crisis to crisis.
21. Organisations valued the Special Funds as core funding in that it could be used to support the organisational capacity to provide a range of services. Unlike a lot of other funding, particularly from local authorities and PCTs that commission rather than grant aid VCS organisations, it was not tied to specific projects or service outcomes.
22. Not only is this sort of core funding more flexible, it can also provide the capacity and leverage for other, long term funding. Several organisations stressed how the Special Funds were helpful in securing other funding from local statutory organisations and charities.
23. This shows how **central government funding can encourage and lever in local funding.**

24. In turn, this suggests a **distinctive role for central government funding** of covering core costs to ensure there is a consistent infrastructure of VCS sexual violence services across the country, providing continuity of free (or donation only), accessible and high quality services for users.
25. This would ensure equality of access to services and avoid a 'postcode lottery' from different local policies and priorities. Organisations could then negotiate local funding and in-kind support with local statutory agencies and charities to fund specific services that reflect local priorities, circumstances and user needs.
26. For this role to be effective in *sustaining* VCS sexual violence services, any **government funding needs to be longer term** than for a year. Although the Special Funds have shown the *potential* of government funding, it will only result in leveraging additional long term funding if it is secure enough for organisations to be seen as stable and credible enough to be commissioned to provide services to vulnerable people.
27. In terms of **value for money**, there is a clear **business case for long term investment in a sustainable sector infrastructure** to:
 - Enable a distinctive service that cannot be provided by more generic organisations;
 - Encourage volunteering which both reduces the costs of the services in comparison with statutory services and puts the idea of the 'Big Society' into practice;
 - Leverage in long term funding from local statutory organisations and charities, through grant aid and commissioning;
 - Reduce costs to the 'public purse' in relation to poor health, welfare benefits, housing benefits etc. through an effective approach which results in positive user outcomes.

I. Introduction

- I.1. This report has been produced by Shared intelligence and Jane Ellis Consulting to present the findings of the Evaluation of the Government Equalities Office (GEO) Special Funds to the Sexual Violence Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) (including the Emergency Fund retrospectively), together with our conclusions, and some implications of these for the future.

Policy context: The Special Fund for the Sexual Violence Voluntary and Community Sector

- I.2. Over the last two years, around £2.7 million has been made available to voluntary and community organisations across England and Wales that provide specialist support to victims of sexual violence through the Emergency Fund and the Special Fund.
- I.3. In 2007 and 2008, emerging research¹ had indicated that specific parts of the women's voluntary sector were financially unstable and that their situation affected the sustainability of future service delivery. In particular, there were concerns about the sexual violence VCS.
- I.4. In 2008/09, the Government Equalities Office (GEO), Department for Communities and Local Government, Attorney General's Office, Department for Health, Home Office, Ministry of Justice, and Cabinet Office established the Emergency Fund. The Fund was open to members of Rape Crisis (England and Wales) (RCEW), and a total of 22 organisations were given grants to the total sum of £1.1 million. (A full list of these organisations is included in Appendix I).

¹ For example, The Crisis in Rape Crisis, (Women's Resource Centre and Rape Crisis (England and Wales), 2008); Map of Gaps: The Postcode Lottery of Violence Against Women Support Services (EHRC, 2007) www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/map_of_gaps1.pdf and Map of Gaps 2 www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/map_of_gaps2.pdf

- 1.5. The Emergency Fund was administered by GEO². There was no specified cap on funding, but organisations were only allowed to bid for funding for existing services and not for funding to develop new services. All organisations who put in an application received funding.
- 1.6. In 2009/10, GEO, Department of Health and Home Office set up the Special Fund for members of either Rape Crisis (England and Wales) or The Survivors Trust. A total of 40 organisations received grants to the sum of £1.6 million. (A full list of these organisations is included in Appendix 2). The Fund was created to address challenges around the stability and sustainability of the sexual violence VCS, and to ensure the continuation of support and services to women and men who have experienced sexual violence.
- 1.7. Specifically, the objectives for the Fund were:
- to alleviate short-term financial and fundraising difficulties in the sexual violence sector;
 - to facilitate capacity building; and
 - to provide continuity of services to victims.
- 1.8. The Special Fund was administered, on behalf of the GEO, by Rape Crisis (England and Wales). A cap of £50,000 was introduced, and those who put in an application for over this amount were given £50,000 up front and awarded a portion of the additional amount later, after the appeal process was completed.
- 1.9. This year (2010/11), the Combined Fund has been launched, which combines the Special Fund with the Ministry of Justice's Victim's Fund. The Combined Fund was open to all organisations that provide sexual violence support services, not just specialist support services.

² The GEO had responsibility for the Emergency Fund, the second round of grants and monitoring of all grants were administered by RCEW.

The evaluation

1.10. Shared Intelligence, in partnership with Jane Ellis Consulting, was commissioned in February 2010 by the GEO to undertake the evaluation of the Special Fund and the Emergency Fund retrospectively. The focus of the evaluation was to measure the impact of the Funds on VCS funded organisations, their users, and the wider sexual violence VCS.

1.11. The **key research questions** for the evaluation were as follows:

- What are the **main outcomes** from the activities delivered through the two Funds? What are short and longer term outcomes for service users, sexual violence VCS organisations, and the sexual violence voluntary and community sector in general? What has been the impact of the Funds on stability and sustainability of organisations in the short and medium terms?
- What **contribution have the Funds made** to any changes observed? Specifically, to what extent have the Funds enabled the continuation of services to women and men who have been raped or experienced sexual violence? To what extent have funded organisations sought and achieved alternative funding during the period of funding?
- Were there **unintended outcomes** (positive and negative) resulting from activities delivered through the Funds?
- To what extent have the Special Funds been **implemented** as intended?
- Are some organisations **more effective** in achieving outcomes than others, and why?
- To what extent has the funding delivered **value for money**?
- What **transferable lessons** have been learned?

Methodology

I.12. The evaluation started in February 2010, and included the following research activities:

- the development of an **evaluation framework** that detailed the scope of the evaluation and the methodology, and was agreed with GEO;
- **analysis of monitoring data from** the Emergency Fund and six month monitoring data from the Special Fund (to end February 2010);
- semi-structured **interviews with 10 national partners**, including senior representatives from GEO, key central government departments, Rape Crisis (England and Wales) (RCEW), and The Survivors Trust (ST). All the data was collected by the Funds administrator using a form designed by the GEO;
- semi-structured telephone interviews with the 37 of the 39 organisations who had received the Special Fund;
- a **learning workshop** in June 2010 (attended by 20 organisations) where emerging evaluation findings and lessons were shared with funded organisations;
- **case study research** with eight organisations, which included semi-structured interviews with key members of staff/volunteers, partners and service users, and analysis of monitoring and evaluation data;
- analysis of the final **12 month monitoring data** for the Special Fund (to end August 2010).

Case study methodology

I.13. The case study research with eight organisations was undertaken between June and September 2010. The organisations were selected using the following criteria:

- a geographic spread across England with organisations located in and serving different types of local authorities;
- at least one organisation that had received funds in both 08–09 and 09–10;
- one in an area with an established Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC);
- at least one organisation with specialist Black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee (BAMER) services;
- reflection of relative proportions of organisations federated to the Survivors Trust and RCEW;
- a range of provision for survivors available across the eight organisations;
- Size and scale of organisation (e.g. in respect of number of paid employees, level of funding, length of time established etc)³.

I.14. To maintain anonymity, quotes from case study research are referenced by type of interviewee (for example, ‘Service User’, ‘Staff member’) and a code letter allocated to each case study (from A–H) in Section 3 of this report.

³ The Interim Report for this evaluation suggested a typology of organisations receiving the Special Fund. The case studies included at least one organisation of each of the four types i.e. relatively large, established organisations with some local statutory funding; established, small to medium sized organisations with mainly charitable funding; fairly small organisations, run mainly by volunteers; other organisations e.g. targeting a specific group, UK/regional wide etc.

I.15. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with key members of staff (paid and unpaid), local partners and service users at each organisation. These were conducted in person or by phone and, where participants agreed, were audio recorded and transcribed. Where people were uncomfortable with being recorded, notes were taken. Thematic analysis of the data was carried out using NVivo8.

Research participants

Organisation staff

I.16. Each organisation was asked to nominate key staff to be interviewed with the request that the chair of trustees/management board, one person in a counselling role and one in another role were included. In total 30 members of staff, working in a variety of roles, were interviewed. The interviewees were asked about their: role in the organisation; knowledge of the Special Fund; views of the impact of the fund on the organisation; views of the challenges for VCS sexual violence and how these might be met; organisations' user feedback and evaluation processes; and professional development. Table I below shows the number of staff interviewed by role, across all eight case studies.

Table 1. Number of staff interviewed by role/job title

Title	Number interviewed
Administrator/fundraiser	2
Co-ordinator	1
Counsellor/counselling co-coordinator	6
Development worker	3
Representative of management board/trustees	8
Service manager	5
Support services (ISVA, drop-in, helpline) co-ordinator	4
Youth outreach worker	1
Total	30

Base 30 (from 8 case studies).

Local partners

1.17. In addition, organisations were asked to identify two or three local partners who had a key role in the planning and/or commissioning of sexual violence services. Fourteen such people were interviewed and were asked about their role in relation to sexual violence VCS; knowledge of Special Fund; local challenges and decision making for sexual violence services; and, partnership working. The roles and organisations of the partners who were interviewed are shown below in Table 2.⁴

⁴ Please note that it was difficult to identify and access local partners in some sites as there was limited partnership working.

Table 2: Organisations/roles of local partners interviewed

Title	Number interviewed
Local authority: domestic and/or sexual violence co-ordinator	2
Local authority: community safety	2
Local authority: voluntary sector	2
Local authority: mental health	1
Police authority	3
SARC manager	1
Charitable foundation	1
PCT	2
Total	14

Base: 14 (across 8 case studies).

Service users

1.18. Organisations were asked to distribute leaflets to all service users requesting their participation in an interview about their views of the services they had received from the organisation. As such the sample is self-selected and non-representative. In total 19 users chose to take part and were asked about access to the service; experiences of services; the impact of services; opportunities for feedback to the service; and, help and support they had received from other people or services. Table 3 below shows the age, gender, ethnic origin and length of engagement with services by service users.

Table 3: Service users by age, gender, ethnic origin and length of engagement with organisations

	Number
Age	
18–25	1
26–29	1
30–39	11
40–49	5
50–59	1
Total	19
Gender	
Female	18
Male	1
Total	19
Ethnic origin	
African/Caribbean	1
Asian	2
Other	3
Prefer not to say	1
White British	12
Total	19

	Number
Length of service use	
0–6 months	7
7–12 months	2
1–2 years	1
2–3 years	3
3+ years	6
Total	19

Base: 19 (from 8 case studies).

Structure of the report

1.19. This report provides details of the evaluation’s findings and conclusions. It is structured as follows:

- **Section 2** provides details on the funding that was allocated and how it was used, together with views from funded organisations on the application process and criteria for applying for the Funds.
- **Section 3** looks at what difference the funding has made to users, funded organisations and the sexual violence VCS, highlighting good practice examples where possible.
- **Section 4** provides conclusions and implications for the future.

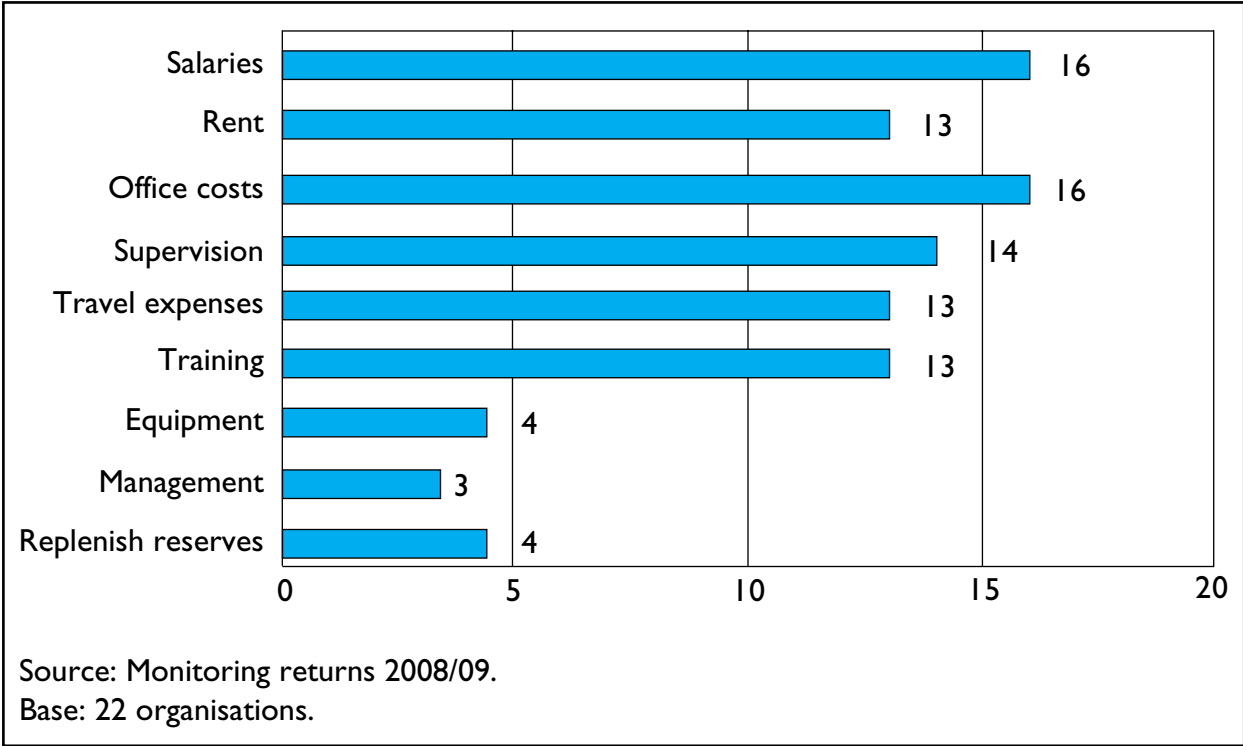
2. How have the funds been used?

2.1. This section uses **monitoring data provided to the GEO** to show how the Special Funds were used by the recipient organisations.

Emergency Fund

- 2.2. In total, 22 Rape Crisis organisations were awarded funding through the Emergency Fund, which was administered by RCEW on behalf of GEO in 2008/09. The Emergency Fund, totalling £1.1m was disbursed in two rounds. Eight groups received funding in Round One and 19 groups received funding in Round Two. Individual funding ranged from £5,000 to £115,031.
- 2.3. Based on the GEO 2008/2009 monitoring forms, the majority of organisations used the Emergency Fund to meet shortfalls in income. Most of the organisations described themselves as being at crisis point and the funding was used to cover various deficits in income for core/running costs in order to prevent closure and maintain their services. The breakdown of what the Emergency Fund was used for can be found in the chart below.

Chart 1: Use of the emergency fund



2.4. Thirteen of the organisations who received the Emergency Fund also applied for and were awarded the Special Fund; seven who received funding in the first year were not successful in the second year.

Special Fund

2.5. As noted above, the Special Fund was extended to members of The Survivors Trust, in addition to members of Rape Crisis (England and Wales). In total, 40 organisations were awarded the Special Fund, totalling £1.6 million. One of these groups closed down for reasons unconnected to the Fund and returned the funding.

Application process and terms of the Fund

- 2.6. In terms of the specific application process, the majority of organisations found it to be a fairly ‘straightforward’ process, although many had received support from either RCEW or The Survivors Trust.

“We found it was really good because we had the support of Rape Crisis (England and Wales) and if we got stuck with anything they were our main source.”

(Funded organisation)

- 2.7. However, there seemed to be some confusion over the time period of the funding, as the application process was carried after the start of the financial year and some organisations were unsure whether the Fund would run to end of the 2009/2010 financial year or for a full 12 months. Further, some organisations, which had applied for over £50,000 received additional funds some months after they received their original award. While these organisations were grateful for the additional funding, they said that it would have been better if they had been notified beforehand and therefore been able to include that amount in their budgeting and forward planning.

“We had to wait a long time for the money to come through – from it being notified and disbursed. And since we were operating really, really on the edge of surviving, it made it difficult.”

(Funded organisation)

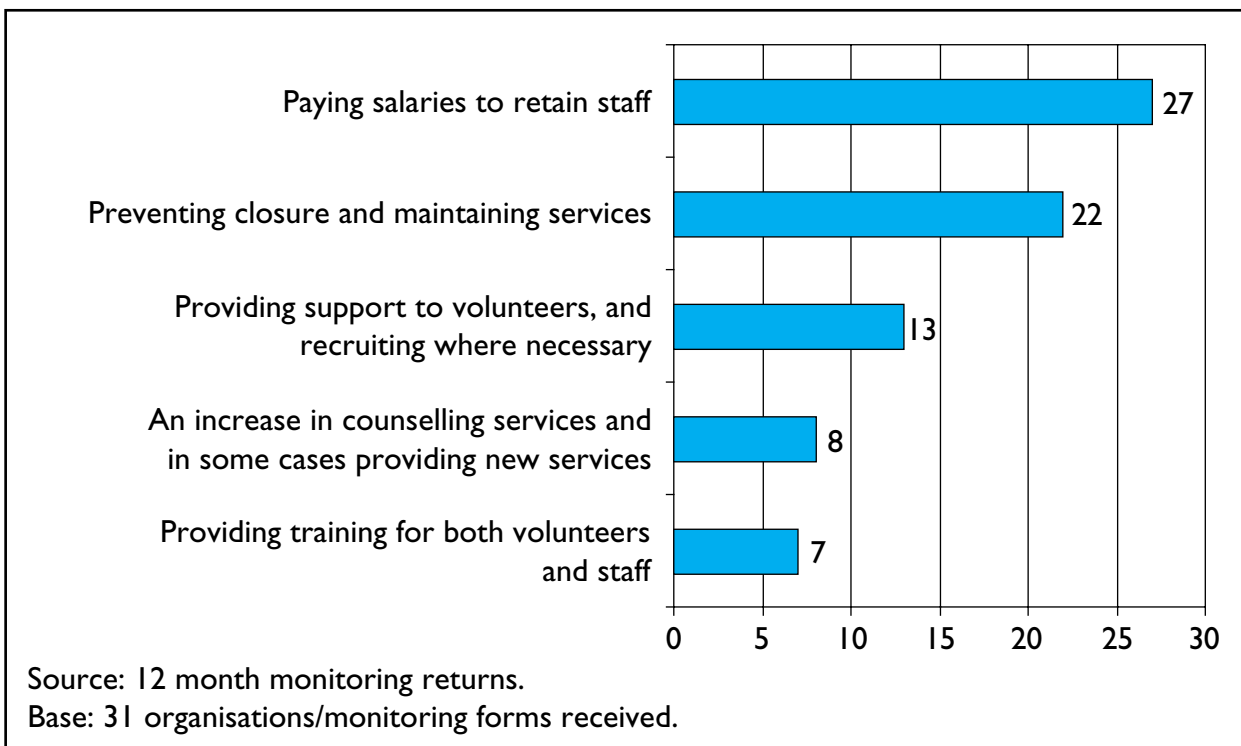
- 2.8. Additionally, many organisations said that at the time of writing the application, they were not aware of the maximum amount available from the Special Fund, and were only notified afterwards. This prevented organisations from making realistic estimates in their applications.

- 2.9. Broadly speaking, funded organisations were **satisfied with the overall criteria** specified when they applied for the Special Fund. Many organisations said that they had a significant shortfall in funding and so using the funding to maintain existing services was just what they needed.
- 2.10. However, while organisations recognised the Fund was developed to address a crisis in funding and was to be used to maintain existing services, some organisations said that they would have liked to use the Fund to build up **new and developing services**. This was especially true for organisations focusing on preventative services, such as young people's outreach projects. This finding also resonates with comments from national and local partners, which suggested services need more core funding to support sustainable development.
- 2.11. Several organisations said that they appreciated the **degree of flexibility** offered by the Fund, in comparison to other funding sources. They said that other funders usually offer project based funding, for example for a particular service, pilot project or target group, but the ability to be able to use the Special Fund flexibly to cover core costs and/or deficits in funding was extremely useful.
- 2.12. Some other organisations felt that there could have been more flexibility in terms of how the funding was used, particularly where circumstances changed and organisations wanted to be able to use the funding differently from how they had specified in their original bid. One funded organisation had to formally put in a request for a change in fund usage because it was afraid to lose the Funds for under spending due to unexpected staff absence.

How were the Funds used?

2.13. Funded organisations were required to supply monitoring information to GEO at six-month and twelve-months of funding (i.e. February and August 2010). This data indicates what the Special Fund was used for as well as giving some qualitative information on how it has impacted upon the service. The monitoring data collected at both periods shows the main benefits of the Special Fund have been through its use in covering core costs to maintain services and prevent closure. These core cost uses are identified in the table below.

Chart 2: Use of the special fund



2.14. The Special Fund was typically used across different service areas within organisations to ensure continuity of provision. Almost **all organisations’ helpline and counselling services** benefited from the Fund, with advocacy the least likely to have received Special Fund monies (see Table 4).

Table 4: Type of service funded

Support type	Whole Service	Special Fund	Contact Type
Advocacy	21	14	1:1 telephone
Counselling	25	24	1:1 group therapy, telephone
Telephone Helpline	28	27	1:1 telephone
Other (please specify)	19	16	Inc: prison support, email support, BME outreach, young girls service, parent and carers group, drop-ins

Source: 12 month monitoring returns Base: 31 organisations/monitoring forms received

2.15. The Special Fund also supported provision⁵ for **a range of client groups**; this included four organisations that provided men and boys’ only services, 19 women and girls only services, and 16 mixed sex services.

2.16. In answer to a monitoring question on **equalities**, 18 organisations said that they had used the Special Fund to provide specialist support to women (10), to young people and/or schools, (3), to adult men (1), to the Jewish community (1) and to other BME communities (3).

⁵ I.e. The Special Fund supported existing/whole service provision for these groups.

- 2.17. The monitoring forms specifically asked organisations whether they have any particular services for **BME clients**, or any good practice to share. Around 17 organisations were conducting outreach or providing specialist services, the remaining 14 did not indicate that they were undertaking any specialist service provision. It should be noted that this question asked about BME provision in general, rather than specifically what the Special Fund has enabled or affected. However case study interviews and discussions at the Learning Event provided insights on how some organisations had used Special Fund monies for BME outreach work (see section 3).
- 2.18. Qualitative responses reveal that the majority of organisations were **promoting their services** to ‘hard to reach’ communities. This was through using community or multi-agency networks, such as local BME service forums, advocacy services and community safety partnerships, as well as making information and promotional material available in different languages.

“We are looking to build personal contacts with the BME community and raise our profile via word of mouth rather than press and publicity. Although this is a longer term strategy we hope that it will be more long lasting.”

(Funded organisation)

“[Name of service] has successfully arranged for the translation of our service leaflet in Gujarati, Polish and Mandarin. These three languages have been identified as three of the most widely languages spoken and read in the county after English.”

(Funded organisation)

- 2.19. Other organisations had developed services specifically for BME communities. One service has been delivering **specific counselling and helpline services** for BME women and girls for 15 years. In this case reductions in this specialist service were prevented by receipt of the Special Fund. Another organisation has begun running sessions on self-esteem and confidence that focus on challenging the issue of shame associated with sexual violence within the Asian community.
- 2.20. Organisations continue to experience some **difficulties in providing services** for diverse groups and give the most significant factor as a language barrier. Around a dozen organisations reported a shortage of suitably qualified and experienced interpreters who can help with counselling for speakers of languages other than English. Furthermore some organisations found interpreters unhelpful, and faced a similar scarcity of counsellors who can speak fluently in other languages. In some cases, this scarcity makes the service especially vulnerable to disruptions caused by staff turnover or absence.

“Our Asian Outreach worker is on maternity leave, followed by sick leave, and because she works alone, (because of funding constraints,) the work has come to a virtual halt, We have addressed the issue by beginning the training requested by our administrator, which will enable her to use a proportion of her hours to do some of this work... We have found that using interpreters does not work well. There are not many Asian women in our area who are in a position to do our training, or who are qualified counsellors.”

(Funded organisation)

Partnership working

- 2.21. Between the six-month and twelve-month monitoring stages there is some evidence of **improved partnership working** having developed as an indirect benefit of the Special Fund. (It should be noted that the information given in the monitoring forms does not always make clear what is attributable to the Special Fund and what is on-going as ‘whole-service activity’).
- 2.22. Around 29 organisations (93%) were involved in working with multiple partners, with only two organisations not naming any active partners. Partnerships were both formal and informal. The twelve-month monitoring forms suggest that **improved resources and capacity** of staff has enabled organisations to gain benefits from partnership working. Case study research (section 3) also provides evidence of the Fund contributing to staff having ‘more time’ to undertake partnership activities. These benefits included improved profile for the organisations, more effective working with statutory and VCS bodies and, for over half of the organisations, funding opportunities.

“This funding has also meant that [service name] could develop strategic partnerships with the local authorities and local voluntary sector and develop an active outreach service, reaching out to young people and sex workers in particular.”

(Funded organisation)

“It [the Special Fund] has reduced the amount of time that the project manager has spent on fundraising applications from 40% of her working week to 25% allowing time to develop networks and attend meetings across the city. Working hard to lift our community profile and develop new networks for referrals.”

(Funded organisation)

- 2.23. Organisations were commonly **working with all tiers of local authorities**, PCTs; the Police and other VCS organisations. They participated in a wide number of local and regional partnerships or forums around sexual violence and the welfare of survivors. These included SARCs, Domestic Violence and Abuse Partnerships, Mental Health Forums, or Area Forums, amongst many others. Nine organisations were also active in volunteering and VCS forums, such as local CVSs and Compact groups, as well as working within networks of women's and BME community groups.
- 2.24. The **roles played in these forums varied**, however most organisations sat on partnerships to ensure that their organisation was represented and able to influence policy and practice where possible. Some more strategic roles were taken by a few organisations. For example, one representative was vice-chair of a partnership, and in one case the organisation was commissioned to co-ordinate a multi-agency programme of Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) for the local area.

Benefits of partnership working

- 2.25. Qualitative responses reveal that partnership working has **led to further funding for 20 organisations (65%)** which triangulates with the findings from the case study research (section 3). Using instances where values of this funding were given, additional funding totalled £541,300, with amounts ranging from £500 – £120,000 (not included in this figure is a portion of a £750,000 contract won by a local partnership formed of four women's organisations). Most commonly these funds were provided by local statutory partners: local authorities, PCTs or the Police; or from LSPs or SARCs. Three organisations had received central government funds from the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice.

2.26. The single most common purpose for **external funding was for Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) posts**, for which five organisations received some full or match funding from local partnerships or SARCs. In some cases (3 organisations) funding was given to developing new services, or in others it meant expanding or securing the provision of existing services. For three organisations the finance they secured through partnership was in the form of income, including through an SLA.

“[Name of] PCT have commissioned our service for 3 years at £50,000 and have given us free accommodation in the [town] Health Park. This is the first regular core funding received by [service name].”

(Funded organisation)

“[We developed] in partnership with [name of health centre] our service for sexually exploited women involved in prostitution in partnership with the Working Women Service. We were then able to get this work funded by our PCT [through a], £27,600 per year, 3 year commission.”

(Funded organisation)

2.27. Four organisations mentioned that funding helped release time for making links with partners who then offered **in-kind support**. This commonly included fit-for-purpose accommodation, equipment and ad hoc services (e.g. translation, printing). Although not leading directly to cash or longer term funding, in-kind donations were recognised as a valuable type of support.

2.28. Partnerships also offered an opportunity for five organisations to promote their work, and **build a reputation as experts** in working with victims of sexual violence and as careful stewards of grant monies. As a result, partners recognised the validity of their service and engaging with it. As mentioned earlier, an increased interest in services does not necessarily lead to greater funding but organisations hoped that a good reputation through partnership working might encourage funders to commission or support services.

“The building up of [service names]’s reputation, as an excellent specialist support agency for victims and survivors of sexual violence, through our partnership working has been invaluable in terms of the increased confidence of local funders.”

(Funded organisation)

“[Service name] is committed to raising the profile and the need for support for victims of sexual violence. We are working closely with partner agencies and regularly attend meeting and panels to further promote the work that we do...[we] are confident that should any funding from statutory agencies be made available then we are in a strong position to respond and able to secure it.”

(Funded organisation)

Barriers to Partnership working

2.29. Organisations reported that resources were the biggest barrier to partnership working. Although partnership working is seen as crucial to developing sustainable and integrated services, it is a ‘drain’ on **limited staff resources** that would otherwise be used for service delivery. This is why the Special Fund, through increasing staff numbers for service delivery, has indirectly helped some organisations by ‘releasing’ time for partnership development. However, organisations stressed that making the best use of staff resources required them to prioritise involvement.

“We recognise the need to be involved and work in partnership with other agencies however these meetings are a drain on our resources and can often cause conflicts for the Chief Officer in trying to balance time spent on raising funds and time spent attending these meetings however we recognise that if we do not attend then any chance of securing funding in the future will be lost.”

(Funded organisation)

“A major barrier to fully engaging with partnership working is the resource – time and competing priorities – required from [service name] as a small voluntary sector charity. As a result of this we continuously need to prioritise those partnerships and meetings that we are able to attend and contribute to.”

(Funded organisation)

- 2.30. Organisations had seen partnership working lead to an **increased awareness of the service amongst partners** and as a result, there were often increases in activity and referrals. This finding also echoes with those from case study interviews (section 3). Twelve-month monitoring data suggests that there has been a 51% increase in referrals over the last six months of the Special Fund (5,262 recorded referrals after six-months, to 7,948 after twelve months)⁶.
- 2.31. Whilst this increase in referrals was a confirmation of the need for the sexual violence services, an **increase in demand from statutory services often came without any additional funding**, causing organisations to feel that they were perceived by the statutory sector as a ‘free service’. Organisations noted a clear reluctance from partners to formalise their relationship with the organisation and its services through

⁶ Although these referrals were not necessarily to services funded wholly by the Special Fund.

funding and attributed this largely to increasing austerity, combined with the absence of a statutory duty for agencies to fund sexual violence services.

“We are also experiencing a rise in referrals from local government departments that did not refer or refused to recognise our specialist skills before.”

(Funded organisation)

“Partner agencies cite their own lack of funding as a reason not to fund us and whilst we update them on current reports and legislation they will not contribute funding unless there is an enforceable or measurable requirement from government to do so.”

(Funded organisation)

2.32. Some organisations spoke about **limited influence in partnerships**.

At the six-month monitoring stage, it was evident that organisations felt being VCS meant they were perceived as ‘amateur’ or ‘do-gooders’. This is not so evident in the twelve-month reports although some respondents reported that being VCS is still seen as a disadvantage when working with statutory services, such as PCTs.

“Particularly in difficult economic times, there is still a tendency to see the voluntary sector as expendable and our role remains that of trying to influence spending decisions rather than sharing them.”

(Funded organisation)

Sustainability

2.33. The contribution of the Special Fund to **sustainability through training and staff retention** had developed between the six and twelve month monitoring stages. 12 organisations (out of the 31 respondents) said that having the resources to train volunteers, to network, to seek further funding or to manage growth had enabled their organisation to strengthen its position.

“This fund enabled sustainability for our organisation and during the year whilst we had small growth we were able to manage this...In addition we were able to maintain staffing levels so that ‘in house’ funding work could continue and this resulted in our being able to secure sufficient funding for the organisation until the end of this year.”

(Funded organisation)

“As we have witnessed other projects/agencies form and fold around us, we have remained solid and consistent.”

(Funded organisation)

2.34. In terms of promoting financial sustainability, ten organisations explicitly recognised the role of the Special Fund in helping them **access or seek further funding**. This ‘widening’ was also identified in case study interviews. Seven organisations described the fund as giving the stability and staff resource to enable them to seek other funding, although made no mention of whether this was successful. Only three organisations felt that the Special Fund had enabled them to access other funds directly.

“I feel it has led to further funding from the Combined Fund ...and in turn has assisted our application to [charitable foundation’s name] who has recently awarded us £45,000 over 2 years for our Young Persons Worker salary.”

(Funded organisation)

“Due in part to the leveraging opportunities provided by this [Special Fund], [service name] has secured a 5 year Big Lottery grant which has stabilised the organisation and will cover 50% of projected running costs over that period.”

(Funded organisation)

- 2.35. Compared to sustainable funding, **sustainability of service** was reported by a slightly higher number of the organisations in receipt of the Special Fund, particularly where it had been invested in staff and volunteer training (20 organisations, 64%). This has allowed the organisations to get better value out of staff training by being able to retain staff in more stable employment and supporting volunteers, especially in maintaining telephone helplines through full training and supervision, which has ensured better quality and continuity of service. There were also examples of more specialist training for volunteers including training to provide supervision (to other volunteers) and a qualification in substance misuse.

“The funding has also meant that we could afford to train more volunteers and as a result we are now more stable than we have ever been.”

(Funded organisation)

- 2.36. Despite the benefits of the Special Fund, **no organisation felt confident in its on-going sustainability**. This is explored further in section 3, but even the monitoring information showed that all organisations were acutely aware of the impact that the austerity measures introduced by the coalition government during 2010/11 would have on the budgets of statutory and charitable bodies that currently provide their funding.

“[Service name] is very aware of our reliance on central government funding. At present nearly 50% of our funding comes from central government funding streams. Given the present economic scale back of government spending we are aware of the potential risk this poses to our organisation.”

(Funded organisation)

3. What difference have the funds made?

3.1. This section looks at the impact of the Special Funds on service users, funded organisations and the sexual violence sector more widely.

Making a difference to service users

3.2. We begin this section by presenting the voices of users since the Special Fund was designed to ultimately enable VCS services to be continued to be provided to survivors of sexual violence.

3.3. In addition, many users themselves commented on having ‘found their voice’ through the use of services enabled, at least in part, by the Special Fund and we wish to reflect that in this report.

3.4. The sample of 19 users from across the eight case studies is relatively small and as a self-selected group is not representative but illustrative of the difference that the sort of services directly or indirectly funded by the Special Fund make to users.

It has contributed to my own recovery, mentally, physically and spiritually, without [organisation] I would be a very different person. It is essential and life saving.

(Service User, Case Study E)

...before I came out [talked about abuse] I suffered from depression and I was on medication and I'm no longer needing to take medication...that's a massive change. So I feel much better, I can cope with stress much better. I'm more productive at work.

(Service User, Case Study H)

I knew that I had to do something about it to make myself feel better, to get better and feel better about myself. So, I know that it was scary at first, but it helped me a lot. Because at first when I came here I didn't know whether I'd be able to speak about it, it took me a little while, because it was stuck inside me that long that I couldn't actually...it was like I was choking on my words, I couldn't get them out. And then I could, I could get it all out. So...it was new to me you know because they'd been stuck in there for so long. But it helped me to feel better, and I've done quite a lot of work over the four years.

(Service User, Case Study F)

I never knew how sad I was, I never knew how unsafe I was, I never knew how great the world was...bloody awesome! There is all this fun stuff to do and I had no idea. I thought that what life was about for women was being really bloody miserable all the time and that was as good as it got.

(Service User, Case Study C)

Flipping kept us, probably kept us, stopped us from taking more overdoses when I felt really bad. Kept us just real, they've made us realise that I'm not, I'm not mad, I'm not stupid. That what happened wasn't my fault.

(Service User, Case Study D)

I've finally felt like I've stopped running, I can just stop and deal with things and I don't have to kind of run away from things anymore....it's just that feeling of being safe, and understood.

(Service User, Case Study F)

I'm over my suicidal phase and I think [organisation] supported me to come out of it – I think about how I was trying to cope with things before and I know I think a lot more positively now. I can put some distance between me then and me now – it's very different! They give you dignity, security and believe you can change your life.

(Service User, Case Study B)

I have started my life again, I knew I could but I needed the support to know it was worth it. They gave me that support.

(Service User, Case Study C)

Users' backgrounds

3.5. At least 12 users had experienced sexual violence as children or young people⁷ and many were addressing long-term issues; 90 per cent were over 30 years of age. All the interviewees had or were using either individual (n=16) or group counselling/therapy (n=4), whilst ten had used more than one type of provision at a service; the most common combination was individual counselling and ISVA (n=6). Seven people had used helplines; three to make initial contact with the service and who had then made no further use of it.

⁷ Six interviewees chose not to disclose information about their experiences of sexual violence.

- 3.6. Almost half of the interviewees (n=9) had used services for more than two years – a period greater than the Special Fund, and where relevant the Emergency Fund – and given the complex funding of some organisations, it would be difficult to claim direct benefits for users from the Funds. Nevertheless, the Funds clearly have made services available for people to access by enabling their continuation, which as we have seen from the previous section, would otherwise have been in doubt.

Benefits from using the services

- 3.7. Every interviewee talked of perceived benefits from their use of services and was appreciative of the help they had received.
- 3.8. Eleven interviewees had received or were receiving treatment for mental health issues and most commented on **improvement to their health, well-being and sense of safety** which they attributed to use of services.

“I feel so dramatically better than I did.”

(Service User, Case Study C)

“[It’s] the first time I felt like I was okay and I was, I felt safe. I think that’s what I needed, I felt safe.”

(Service User, Case Study F)

“I know that sometimes on a Wednesday after an appointment I can feel better mentally and stronger and...could have a day where I’m feeling quite suicidal, come in here on a Wednesday and then within an hour I can, all them like thoughts have gone. Or they’ve eased, just by talking to somebody.”

(Service User, Case Study D)

“I no longer have depression.”

(Service User, Case Study H)

- 3.9. Two people talked about alcohol and drug use as a coping strategy and how they had been able to change this.

“...before I'd like drink most nights. Sometimes every night just to get to sleep, and that started changing about January time, whereas now if I can't get to sleep and I'm having a bad time then I'll get up and have one...I know that the alcohol isn't helping and making me a better person.”

(Service User, Case Study F)

“I don't remember a great deal from when I'm about 16 until I was about 28-29 I think, cause I just got hammered for years and lived in (region of the UK) where drug culture is rife and just did...lots and lots of...just whatever was around, I would do, and was constantly drunk, you know, for years, and I never, I don't consider in a way that I had a drink problem because I didn't, that was the symptom, you know, the problem was this, and the drink was masking it...I have no reason to want to do any of that stuff now.”

(Service User, Case Study C)

- 3.10. The effect of **changing family relationships** was mentioned by six people mostly in the context of having talked with family members about their experiences. Three women felt they were mothering in a more positive way:

“One of my children has become more confident too, he's come out of his shell and I have greater confidence too, I know I can bring up my children well – it's a huge difference.”

(Service User, Case Study C)

- 3.11. Some felt better equipped to deal with members of their family of origin as a consequence of the support they had received. In one case disclosure had created turmoil in her family of origin which was compounded by the woman leaving her husband with whom she had had an arranged marriage.

“...it just all snowballed, and it went from ‘I just want somebody to listen’ to ‘right now I’m going to do something about it’. And it has torn the family apart, but to a certain extent it’s also brought my brothers and sisters closer together. And made me evaluate all my relationships. And two weeks ago I left my husband because, not because he was doing that kind of abuse to me but he was still that controlling and the verbal abuse and everything, so there’s still the abuse. So it made me look at everything and everyone in my life.”

(Service User, Case Study F)

- 3.12. Five women talked of being able to leave current relationships that were violent or abusive:

“Life’s changed you know. I’ve come out of a violent relationship, I’ve come to terms with things that happened when I was a child, no I haven’t I’m working on that and, I swear, I’ve had a lot of very unsafe relationships.”

(Service User, Case Study F)

- 3.13. **Improved self-confidence or self-esteem** was talked about by ten people and how this had enabled them to make changes in their lives.

“I feel more able to actually do things than...I didn’t think that I would. I’ve got so much more confidence and I do feel better about myself. I’ve done things that I never thought I’d be able to do.”

(Service User, Case Study F)

“[the service] raised my self esteem. They’ve enabled me to take control of my life back.”

(Service User, Case Study A)

3.14. Several interviewees identified the **support as ‘life changing’**:

“It’s probably been the most transforming period of my life actually, and [organisation] has been a huge part of that.”

(Service User, Case Study G)

“I feel like if it wasn’t actually for this service I wouldn’t be the person I am today. That’s how I feel, I really strongly feel like that. That I wouldn’t be where I am now...because it can change your life. And it’s changed mine.”

(Service User, Case Study F)

3.15. In terms of helping users into **employment and skills**, some people talked of retraining and one woman had started a social enterprise working with marginalised women providing flexible employment, education and a social and community space.

Key features of the services

3.16. Users identified a number of features of organisations they viewed as having contributed to the perceived benefits. These can be grouped into relationships with staff, mix of services and organisational ethos; although these are linked they are dealt with separately below.

3.17. The ability of **counselling staff** to build relationships with users – to create a therapeutic alliance – was frequently mentioned:

“She never judges, she just listens and she doesn’t make us feel guilty.”

(Service User, Case Study D)

“She is very genuine, and open, and just honest. And she made me feel very warm, she’s very warm, and she made me feel very relaxed and she didn’t judge me, and she’s understanding, she’s very empathic. And it helped me.”

(Service User, Case Study F)

- 3.18. All of the case study organisations provide a mix of services, therefore being able to **respond flexibly to the needs of users**, which interviewees commented on positively.

“The service does not cut you loose either when you get to that stage [ending counselling] they invite you for a review and the option is there to return and to use the helpline whenever you want.”

(Service User, Case Study H)

“I always feel informed and then the ISVA at the time was always speaking on the phone to me and very much about maintaining contact. I had a very smooth handover from an ISVA to a counsellor.”

(Service User, Case Study C)

- 3.19. Users also commented on the understanding and organisational ethos of services which is **user-focused** and recognises and accepts that service users often need a long term intervention.

“She knew it would take a long time for me to trust her.”

(Service User, Case Study F)

“I think...the reason it was really good for me is because I know that they spent time working out what was the right approach... for me. I mean, [counsellor] would explain to me how it worked and so she’s “after the assessment we come together as a team

and we discuss how it's going to work and what sort of approach is best". And you know, the approach they came up with for me, I can't imagine that it could have been done better."

(Service User, Case Study C)

3.20. Almost all of the interviewees (n=17) had used other services prior to the case study organisations. These services included mental health in- and out-patient, PCT/GP counselling, occupational health counselling, private counselling/therapy, Relate, VCS domestic violence services, Victim Support and university counselling services. Ten people were directly referred to the case study organisations from these services because of their specialist nature.

3.21. Service users made direct comparisons with non-specialist services, with interviewees commenting on important factors relating to accessibility and being **free or donation only** as the cost of private services, even when able to offer specialist support, was prohibitive for some users. Waiting times were shorter than services provided by the NHS; some users reported having to wait several months for NHS appointments.

"The main thing is the counselling, it's good they are very well trained and experienced in sexual violence but the access to the service was also fast."

(Service User, Case Study C)

"It's free and local, I had previous counselling that I paid for but I couldn't afford it anymore."

(Service User, Case Study E)

3.22. The physical environment and location of services was important to service users:

“You know the rooms feel kind of cosy, if you see someone at a surgery, you’re in like a treatment room. You’re already...it doesn’t feel as relaxed as it does in here, just from the physical surroundings. It’s better.”

(Service User, Case Study F)

3.23. The location of and physical access at two centres were raised by some users; these are both shared buildings and concerns over anonymity and confidentiality were raised but interviewees felt staff and services had systems in place to help users feel safe.

3.24. The **knowledge and expertise** of the VCS sexual violence organisations was highly valued by interviewees, who compared the services they had used favourably with their experiences elsewhere. The two aspects of the services that came across time and time again as most important to users were the **quality of the service** – and particularly the counselling provided and that they were **specialist organisations**.

“I developed an eating disorder when I was about 14 and I was sent off to a psychiatrist...then I saw a psychologist... then I went to university and I saw someone at Relate because I thought, you know, I was having problems with boyfriends. I saw two counsellors through the university at different times... then I saw someone through my GP surgery here. I approached a private person but didn’t take to her all...it just never got anywhere. The special in-depth knowledge that Rape Crisis have got, of how this all fits together with everything else in your life, no one else can match.”

(Service User, Case Study C)

- 3.25. These findings show how users do experience the voluntary sector offer as different to the statutory or private sector, with the implication that **the Special Fund has provided access to high quality, specialist sexual violence services that are not available elsewhere.**

User feedback

- 3.26. Collecting and responding to user feedback is an important sign of quality and almost all of the interviewees (n=18) reported that they had been informed about the organisations complaints procedure at the outset of their use of services although most were unable to recall it and only a few had discussed issues about the service with staff. Similarly 18 users had been asked to provide user feedback to services and/or had regular reviews as part of an evaluation.

“I have fed back on some small things that have bothered me, and the counselling. I’m happy to do this and they want my feedback.”

(Service User, Case Study H)

“In the group the facilitator was very poor...I did say at the time...[the organisation] were mortified. I have no qualms about complaining, it would be taken seriously.”

(Service User, Case Study E)

- 3.27. Our evaluation showed that many organisations encountered challenges in obtaining and recording feedback information from clients in a way that was sensitive but also robust. The special nature of the confidential, client-counsellor relationship requires the processes of collecting information from the client to be re-designed to make sure that service development can take place in-line with client needs.

Good practice example: Collection and use of user feedback data

Coventry Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre

Coventry Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre (CRASAC) have developed a range of ways of collecting client feedback and embed feedback into their strategic plan. As a result, their attitude towards evaluation is not a feeling of having to meet external targets, but of setting their own definition of what success means for their service.

Going beyond the 'happiness sheet', CRASAC have a range of ways for clients to feedback. These cater for the different needs of clients: some ask for quick and anonymous comments, while others offer opportunities for service users to be more involved in feedback and service change.

Evaluations methods include:

- Evaluation forms completed before and after service use, including Likert scales and opportunities for qualitative comments
- Anonymous comments boxes
- A service user representative
- Regular focus groups with service user groups, CRASAC are currently developing a Youth Advisory group
- Opportunities for services users to join the management committee

These different methods are imaginative, engaging and encourage constructive feedback from clients, which can lead to meaningful service change: *'Having all the other different methods...the constructive feedback that means we can change the service knowing hand on heart that we're changing it to meet their needs more fully.'*

Additionally, staff and volunteers are asked for feedback on how services are working and ideas for improvement – and they are vocal in response. Development days with staff and volunteers are used to inform CRASAC's strategic plan and this means that these ideas are used at every level of CRASAC's operation.

CRASAC are keen to work with an external evaluator. External perspectives ensure that their work is aligned with wider local priorities and sources of funding. In their view, external evaluation can *'check that everything we do contributes to coherent outcomes that are embedded in our strategic plan...and that those outcomes also reflect outcomes that our statutory partners have to adhere in terms of targets.'*

Making a difference to funded organisations

3.28. This section assesses the impact of the Special Fund on funded organisations by identifying the outcomes that have been achieved and exploring how the Funds have contributed to realising them.

Preventing closure and continuing services

3.29. The most frequently perceived benefit of the Funds amongst organisations was **preventing closure and providing continuity** of service. Confirming the findings from the monitoring data, early stage interviews⁸ revealed that 16 organisations felt the Special Fund had prevented the closure of their organisation, seeing it as a *'lifeline'*. A further 21 organisations stated that the Fund enabled them to continue to provide services or prevented their reduction.

⁸ We conducted telephone interviews with the 'lead staff member' in all funded organisations in April/May 2010 to explore the responses to the six month monitoring forms in more detail.

- 3.30. Case study research revealed a similar picture. Interviews with management staff, chairs and partners identified how the Funds responded to a crisis in funding. The Funds therefore prevented the closure of services and **prevented service users from feeling there was ‘nowhere else to go’**.

“In all honesty, I mean it’s probably the only thing that has kept us open, um, in terms of you know running the centre or service. I mean it enables us to continue – and I’m sure you are aware of all the amazing activities that take place, you know the counselling, the helpline, the befriending. So it enabled us to stay open in order to provide those activities to the, you know, the people that need them.”

(Chair, Case Study E).

“One of the big benefits has been that we’ve been able to reassure clients that thought we weren’t continuing because they thought we were in financial trouble...they thought we were finishing and there was nowhere else for them to go.”

(Chair, Case Study D)

- 3.31. Depth research also revealed that funded organisations felt that the Funds **maintained the quality of their specialist services**. An example is highlighted below.

“It was maintaining that lifeline. It was particularly important for the women. Because...as a counsellor the one thing that I try and do for the work is to help to build a solid and trusting relationship. This is so vital for the work to be done well. And it takes a long time to do especially with this type of client group.”

(Staff Member, Case Study E)

3.32. Looking a little deeper into the benefits provided by the Funds reveals that it has brought **short term stability** to the majority of organisations, which in some cases did not exist prior to the GEO Funds.

“There is a definite feeling of stability that was not there before...and operating at a crisis mode...and without the SF we wouldn’t have had capacity. It is completely key and you cannot operate this service under that sort of stress.”

(Funded organisation)

“It has totally stabilised the organisation and allowed us to grow.”

(Funded organisation)

3.33. Findings from interviews suggest that, to an extent, this stability was due to that organisations being able to **recruit desperately needed staff** and/or pay staff salaries. Without the Funds there might have been staff redundancies or overworked fatigued staff, which would have meant that organisations would not have been able to meet their targets or provide full, quality services to their users.

“Prior to receiving this funding the two full time members of staff had to work up to 60 hours a week to hold things together.”

(Funded organisation)

“End of day abuse is [about] not keeping promises to people and as an organisation we cannot make false promises. You cannot start and stop the services. It is like we are going to abuse them [service users].”

(Funded organisation)

Enhancing existing services

3.34. Organisations also reported that their receipt of the Special Fund had enabled them to enhance the services they currently delivered.

“Because we have the Fund, we can take a breath and take a look around and expand our services.”

(Funded organisation)

3.35. In particular, case studies revealed that the ‘respite’ for organisations as a result of the Funds had led them to **enhance service delivery** in the following ways.

- **Separating the various functions** within the organisation (developmental roles, staff and services), which allowed core staff and counsellors to increase their capacity to deliver the specific services for which they were responsible.
- **Enabling more professionalised processes** such as improved administrative capacity, financial management and legal understanding.
- Creating a **higher local profile** for the service, in particular through seeing the Special Fund as an opportunity to build networks.
- **Increasing the capacity to ‘see more people’**, for example by providing longer opening hours, increasing referrals, reducing waiting lists or greater outreach.
- Widened access to further funding sources and/or greater leverage, through increasing capacity and/or partnership working.

3.36. The case study research and semi-structured interviews provided examples of how the Special Fund/s has enabled these enhancements to take place. In particular they demonstrate how the **contribution to core costs** has improved the capacity for organisations to deliver better services. The next sections look at each way the Funds have made a difference in more detail.

Separating functions

- 3.37. Case studies and interviews revealed that Special Fund monies allowed organisations to **separate core staff** from developmental or administrative functions, freeing them to concentrate on delivering their specialist services (the helpline/counselling etc). It also allowed organisations to allocate their resources more efficiently and contributed to a more productive, service delivery focused environment.

“I am [as coordinator] here for two days a week behind the desk which means I am overseeing everything; so people do not have to worry about doing that.”

(Funded organisation)

“Now the volunteers are able to see the clients—before everybody had to do a bit of everything.”

(Funded organisation)

- 3.38. Four of the eight case studies demonstrated these changes by using the Special Fund monies to separate organisational development and counselling roles.

“Until the Special Fund I was a part time counsellor...and it was ‘slash development worker’ because that’s what the job spec is but to be honest in the part time role here you don’t actually get to much development work I think it’s something, you know, that...that I’ve discovered. Since November last year, well two years now, 2009, that’s when the Special Fund sort of kicked in...I gave up my other part time counselling job and came here full time.”

(Staff Member, Case Study A)

“My colleague who was full time sometimes had to take more responsibility – because she was here every day – allocating referrals, doing referral meetings with clients, doing the training, doing the development, doing all the awareness-raising...It [the Special Fund] meant that that’s been more shared now.”

(Staff Member, Case Study A)

- 3.39. In many cases, **development roles** were seen as having the specific responsibilities for enhancing the service through improved delivery, scoping funding opportunities and building external relationships.

“I came to this role...because [before the Special Fund] there’s no funding in place to co-ordinate the work in a constructive, forward thinking, professional way. So essentially the skills that were needed here were to re-engage, look at the volunteers, look at the systems in place, look at things like expenses policies, look at safeguarding policies, look at how case notes were kept, how people were contacting each other with clients, and that sort of thing. Then on top of that, the banking, control and accountability...and we still look at securing further funding whilst progressing what I consider to be the essentials.”

(Staff Member, Case Study B)

- 3.40. Interviews with organisations also showed how **volunteers play a critical role** in maintaining services and providing extra resources to under-staffed organisations. The Funds allowed approximately 22 organisations to maintain and sometimes enhance volunteers’ services and training. In turn, the investment, as a result of the Fund, not only allowed organisations to continue providing services that volunteers run, but also made many of the volunteers feel valued and an integral part of the organisation.

“We feel safer as an organisation and are not going to close in the next six months so the morale of volunteers has come up... We are able to work on the volunteers skills more... we have more time to spend time with them and give them more supervision. It helps survivors phoning in.”

(Funded organisation)

“Volunteer training and recruitment is a benefit [of the Fund] – I carry a caseload and the clinical supervisor is also on board, so volunteer training is helping to cope with demand – we need paid counsellors though.”

(Funded organisation)

Good practice example: Increasing capacity through volunteering

Basingstoke Rape and Sexual Abuse Crisis Centre

Basingstoke Rape and Sexual Abuse Crisis Centre (BRASACC) used the Special Fund to train an existing volunteer counsellor to become a second supervisor. For a relatively small outlay (less than £2,500), the organisation has increased its capacity to train, support and supervise volunteers. By bringing these skills in-house, BRASACC has also improved its sustainability.

A second supervisor has increased the amount of support offered to the existing crisis line and face-to-face counselling and BRASACC is now offering supervision sessions twice monthly. This increased supervision allows counsellors to provide better quality support their clients and ensure they meet the requirements of BACP accreditation.

Increased supervision hours have created capacity for the organisation to take on more volunteer counsellors, and in fact it is the newly trained supervisor who has taken responsibility for the training of all new volunteers. In addition, the supervisor is able to offer in-house professional development and on-going training as and when required.

Finally, by investing in a volunteer the organisation has not only made a significant contribution to her professional development, but also secured those skills for their organisation into the future. They recognise that *“the skills that she is acquiring as a result of this funding will benefit BRASACC for many years to come”*.

Professionalising processes

3.41. The Special Fund, through providing core funding, released staff capacity to create more **professionalised processes**. Examples include improvements to administrative capacity, better financial management and governance arrangements. One case study site provided some insightful detail on these processes. What seems clear is that the Special Fund provided the space for these changes to happen.

Good practice example: Improving Processes (Case Study B)

Volunteer support and communication

“With the volunteers I’m always there on the Monday and Tuesday so they know I’m there, I’m the one who makes them a drink while they settle down and do their paperwork. I’m always around afterwards, even if it’s an hour after we close in case there are any issues there which I’ll then get in touch with my clinical supervisor to bring in if I think that additional support might be needed”.

“I’ve brought in a newsletter, just telling them: this new policy is in place, these are the dates I’d like this done, this is the way the systems going to be for filing, this is where your files are now located etc. Theirs is pure commitment and without their commitment I wouldn’t have a job. It’s balancing.”

Reporting

“With the management committee, I had set up progress reports, so as well as some timesheets telling them what I’d been doing, it’s important to pull out progress or issues”.

Governance arrangements

“There were problems with the structure of management meetings. So I instigated an agenda, and minutes which I agreed to type and distribute. I minuted the meeting. I also got some stuff on roles and responsibilities for all the different roles in the team, I know that they’ve probably been doing another role, but I don’t think they fully understood what they were taking on. So I got some background information and put a pack together. They’re only basics. This is the role of a treasurer; this is what you’re taking on as secretary etc”.

Financial decision making

“By attending management meetings, which I’d never been allowed to go before, I was able to say these are the requirements we need to do for accounting: so I’d been and got my information and my prices and everything first, checked the Charity Commission about the legal requirements. I then printed it all off for them to read. So basically, they’re not doing the work. I’m arming them with the information to then make those decisions because the timescale (length of post) is forever against me.”

Building local profile

- 3.42. In carrying out the evaluation, we discovered a widely held view that a knock-on effect of receiving government funding was the **kudos and credibility** that funded organisations have gained from it. Government funding, it seems, indicates to local partners and other partners a certain sense of stability and standing in that **organisations must be ‘credible’** for government agencies to acknowledge their value, which in turn raises their profile further.

“The fact that it is government funding really helps. Every funder you go to asks you where you get the funding.”

(Funded organisation)

“Once we got money from GEO, we now know we can support victims for x amount of time, and word spread around. Everybody knew then they could send people to us on a definite basis.”

(Funded organisation)

- 3.43. A few organisations indicated that they invested in local publicity when the Fund was received which also helped to enhance their profile locally.

“[It has] allowed us to do things like publicity, which has been important...in terms of partnership working. That has helped.”

(Funded organisation)

- 3.44. The case studies also revealed that the Special Funds’ coverage of core costs and support for local profile building has led some services to receive an **increase in referrals**.

“Word of mouth has increased we are receiving more referrals from statutory services, GPs and social workers, those within the system. Varieties of sources, local services and drop in centres etc.”

(Chair, Case Study G)

3.45. For many, the increase was directly attributable to their ability to increase their capacity (through more volunteers or development workers) to meet with local partners, make connections and raise awareness of specialist sexual violence services. For example one service explained.

“We’ve gone from four clients in February to 30 sessions in May, which has meant that we’ve engaged our volunteers, I’ve got better relationships. I’ve also got first name contacts with people at one of the mental health units; we’ve got a patient from there.”

(Staff Member, Case Study B)

Increase in service capacity

3.46. The role of the Special Funds in providing core costs has also led to an increase in **service capacity**. This has enabled organisations to free **specialist counselling staff and volunteers to ‘see more people’**. Some examples of increased case loads, opening hours and services were highlighted through the case studies.

“...my caseload before was meant to be six women a week and I think my colleague who’s full time was meant to see 12 women a week, in theory she sees about 20 and I see about ten but that’s been able to increase so we’re turning away less women.”

(Staff Member, Case Study A)

“Being able to extend the hours for the helpline and support groups, the feedback is good there. People are finding this very rewarding, but it is expensive to provide.”

(Chair, Case Study G)

“So some of our clients are referred into group therapy to particularly concentrate on relationship building and social confidence building so that works well and of course the Special Fund has been key in continuing to be able to fund our women’s survivors therapy group.”

(Staff Member, Case Study F)

- 3.47. One way that services have been increasing capacity has been to invest the Funds into **better coordination**, be that through volunteer coordination or helpline coordinators. These individuals are seen to provide some stability and examples were highlighted during the learning event and case study research.

“We used it [the Special Fund] to fund my post and the post of a new development worker. Also from last September I was able to increase my hours from 7 to 14 hours to coordinate the helpline, train volunteers and increase hours. I’m very grateful for the Fund.”

(Staff Member Case Study H)

- 3.48. Funded organisations were also able to **address their waiting lists** and in some cases reduce service users waiting times. The impact on users in this respect is important.

“Immediate effect on waiting list is that it has been nearly halved.”

(Funded organisation)

“When you don’t have money for core funding, what we ended up with was a waiting list of nearly a year of people wanting to come here, and it was increasing by the day. That is totally unacceptable and that was such a worry. And we know we are the best service around. There was a huge push to get rid of that waiting list, which would have meant reducing the time people [formerly on the waiting list] are in counselling and that is not acceptable to me.”

(Funded organisation)

- 3.49. Nevertheless, interviews showed that there were some organisations that were unable to enhance their services because despite receiving the Special Funds they were still dealing with funding shortages or facing capacity issues.

“We would love to expand because there is plenty of evidence that there are lots of things we can be doing and training other organisations and develop, etc. Lot more work to be done but we cannot develop and we are in the most appalling premises.”

(Funded organisation)

- 3.50. Another albeit indirect benefit that has resulted from the Special Funds is the opportunity to focus on **outreach efforts to improve access to existing services**. Before the funding these opportunities were limited because of the sort of staff capacity constraints that have been discussed above.
- 3.51. Fifteen funded organisations commented on the **ability to extend outreach work with specific ‘harder to reach’ groups** – such as male survivors of sexual abuse, BAMER communities and young people. One organisation has been able to provide a dedicated counselling service that is specifically geared and publicised for Asian women. Most of the other organisations **provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services and information** to the African/African Caribbean, Asian, and Eastern European communities and the Special Fund has helped maintain these.

- 3.52. Several organisations stressed that providing culturally appropriate services for Asian communities seemed to be particularly important, as women from these communities frequently have to deal with **the dual issues of shame and abuse**. Organisations found that employing Asian counsellors greatly helped in reaching out to these populations, although it was often best to use counsellors who did not live within the communities in order to provide women with a sense of safety, security, and anonymity.

“Our worker speaks several Asian languages fluently. It has been helpful for her to live outside and not be related to members of the communities she works with, although coming from a similar cultural background.”

(Funded organisation)

Partnership working and funding

- 3.53. Relationship building with local commissioners and other organisations was a key area to maintaining services and plays an important role in an organisation’s sustainability. Many of the organisations were fully aware of the need to draw in longer term funding at a local level and have worked tirelessly to develop relationships and partnerships. Monitoring information, interviews and case studies have all indicated that some service managers and development workers have **more time to devote to building relationships with partners** as a result of the Special Funds.
- 3.54. Staff from organisations felt that there was more time to network, liaise, develop and maintain partnerships, and build on strong links with other providers in terms of services they can offer. This in turn has helped some organisations to apply for and in some cases lever in other sources of funding.

“The healthier your finances look, the more attractive you are to other funders. So we are starting this year in a very good position – managed to get the government hardship fund.”

(Funded organisation)

“(Interviewer) so you mentioned the sexual offences strategy board, what’s changed about the way you relate?”

(Organisation) We’ll actually attend, we go around the table and update on how quickly our referrals were going up.”

(Staff Member, Case Study B)

“So we used the special Funding this year and it has given us a good foundation to lever funds for the next financial year 2010/2011. It acts as a reference and a cushion.”

(Staff Member, Case Study C)

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE: Building a positive relationship with the statutory sector

Southampton Rape Crisis

Southampton Rape Crisis (SRC) currently participate in a number of formal and informal partnerships to achieve mutual goals:

- Working with schools to ensure all young people in Southampton can participate in the Star Education project;
- Improving signposting to their service through awareness raising within the NHS and VCS mental health providers;
- Informally sharing skills with the SARC, for example staff who speak languages other than English when needed by a client at either organisation;
- Providing training to Police Special Offences Investigation Trained (SOIT) ensures both partners are working to same protocol and standards, and means all victims of sexual offences in Southampton are made aware of SRC’s services.

Partnership working still poses challenges and increasingly public sector budgets cuts are impacting on the statutory funds available to partners. However SRC see partnership working as key to securing local funding: *'Our local funding is secured predominantly as a result of our excellent working relationship with our partners in the city'*.

SRC has developed a reputation as a credible service provider, and essential to this has been robust management of grants they have received in the past. This reputation builds confidence amongst statutory partners.

Being ambitious and extending services has helped them work more closely with partners, for example winning a contract to provide an ISVA service which meant that SRC developed a relationship with the police, as well as growing their networks with other services.

Experience had taught SRC that statutory bodies were often unaware of their service, and so a willingness to be proactive and promote services to individual staff in other organisations has been crucial to successful partnership working.

Making a difference to the sector

3.55. This section examines what difference the Funds have made to the sexual violence VCS and explores how the Funds have been realised in relation to the expectations of national partners and funded organisations.

The expectations from the Funds

3.56. In the interim report, the evaluation showed how partners from within the sector felt that both the Emergency and the Special Fund were established in response to findings from the Women's Resource Centre (WRC) and RCEW research in 2008.

“I would say that the Emergency Fund came after a detailed piece of work to map the sector, which provided evidence of what we had been saying for a long time – that rape crisis centres were closing year after year and the sector was historically underfunded. Also it was not in a position to compete locally – due to lack of capacity. The Emergency Fund came about when we decided enough is enough. We had been very inward looking as centres, and when we realised as a network that we needed to work together collectively and campaign – it took us a number of years, and we’d ask for government funding for a long time.”

(VCS umbrella body)

3.57. As such, organisations affiliated to RCEW were eligible to apply to the Emergency Fund, based on research evidence on need and the remit of Ministers. However, this prompted debate over the position of sexual violence services for outside the remit for RCEW. Eligibility for the Special Fund was subsequently widened to include organisations affiliated to the Survivors Trust (ST) in addition to RCEW members.

3.58. Widening the eligibility criteria for the Special Fund, to include organisations working solely with men and those not offering women-only spaces has been contentious, because sexual violence organisations have grown from a gendered understanding of sexual violence, as one partner explains.

“Our position is not that we do not want services for men – I am a close ally of the service that exists in [place name] that supports men – but we have a gendered understanding, an equality understanding, about why the sexual violence sector for women has been historically under-funded. This is all about inequality and the fact that priorities for women never become priorities in a wider context.”

(VCS umbrella body)

3.59. Despite significant political differences and beliefs in the rationale for the Funds between RCEW and TST, the GEO felt that as ‘a sector’ both organisations are committed to working to provide services for survivors. The two umbrella organisations appeared to agree with this pragmatic approach, as the national partner interviews confirmed.

“We have our political differences but we have a task in hand.”

(VCS umbrella body)

One sector or several?

3.60. Overall, the evaluation has found that there is a mixed picture on the impacts of the Special Funds on the capacity of the sexual violence VCS. On one hand, the design and allocation of the Funds seems to have entrenched some of the deep political differences between the national umbrella bodies. As one partner explained.

“...from my perspective there was disconnect in the terms of reference, in the background and rationale for the Special Fund...men survivors definitely need support, but hard fought for, small pieces of money; it was a kick in the teeth.”

(VCS umbrella body)

3.61. The differences in the ways that umbrella bodies view the Funds also highlights some differences between funded organisations in terms of their underlying ethos and aims. For example, case study research highlighted that some funded organisations were strongly centred in providing “*specialist support services for women*”. However with the changing context in the eligibility of the Fund these services expressed concern that they may ‘miss out’ on future funding as a ‘sector’ because the monies were being spread amongst less specialist services. These services also felt that eligibility for

the Combined Fund has drifted from the original aims of the Funds which, as originally stated by the GEO were to protect services which meet a government priority of making ‘a more equitable society by tackling violence against women and girls’.

Outcomes for the sectors

- 3.62. While it seems the Special Fund may have re-emphasised the diversity of the sector, the combined outcomes for the funded organisations (outlined earlier) have **raised the profile and capacity of the sector to deliver**. As one VCS umbrella body and local partner explained.

“The most important thing is that we haven’t had a member close since 2008. The Emergency Fund did provide centres that otherwise would not have had enough money to survive. That has passed onto the Special Fund and now the Combined Fund.”

(VCS umbrella body)

“It did protect organisations that were very vulnerable and I think it sent a very positive message...at least I think organisations felt valued.”

(Partner, Case Study A)

- 3.63. Case studies also revealed that local partners similarly felt that the Funds had **improved local profile** for specialist sexual violence services, and therefore for the sector.

“I think it is kind of useful to have a central fund for SV because it supports the argument for funding at a local authority level.”

(Partner, Case Study A)

“Securing the Special Fund money – it then means that you can then see the council and PCT funding as match funding...I think if it can be played out as a combined responsibility, if the local councils and PCTs aren’t contributing then actually the central government funding could be withdrawn, but it’s not about councils or PCTs helping to find the overall costs. But actually that, that mix works well. So, there is more of a kind of carrot and stick.”

(Partner, Case Study A)

- 3.64. Local partners and funders also reported that they were keen to support sexual violence organisations that were already supported. The Special Fund was therefore important in **maintaining a sector of established specialist providers** and that in the long term it costs more to re-open an organisation that has closed.

“It’s much easier to...to work with an existing organisation and... and boost it up than kind of have an organisation close and then try and restart.”

(Partner, Case Study A)

- 3.65. The sectors can also be said to have benefited from the Special Fund having freed up the **time and motivation** for funded organisations to be more involved with each other and the sector(s) as a whole to develop proactive projects. As one local partner explained.

“We have very regular contact with Rape Crisis and we helped set up their [name] Project, we got funding for that locally... when they develop a new initiative like family therapy, that works, we’ve been really supportive about that and help link them in with families and help, support, so get some funding their way for that.”

(Partner, Case Study C)

3.66. In addition, organisations that received capacity building support from RCEW from the Emergency Fund underspend also reported positive benefits.

“The [capacity building] support from RCEW has been invaluable. It has helped with the structure and governance of our organisation and provided support around management, recruitment of trustees and...raised the profile of the organisation. It has helped us with joining up across the network making us feel we are not alone.”

(Staff Member, Case Study G)

3.67. Indeed following the June 2010 Learning Event (held as part of the evaluation) the evaluation team witnessed an **appetite for and benefit in bringing together funded organisations** to share good practice, network and learn from each other about overcoming local funding challenges. Some feedback from the event explains the added value.

“Networking is always valuable for us, as is bringing together the various organisations into one room to share the common purpose. Knowledge sharing is always beneficial particularly when you learn the so many difficulties are experienced by others and learning different approaches to tackle these issues.”

(Event participant)

“For me it was the networking, putting faces to names, getting a stronger sense of how people are managing the Special Fund.”

(Event participant)

Services for men

- 3.68. Case study research found that while the Special Fund has been awarded to services for men, in some respects men's services are on the margins of a marginalised sector. Whilst there are significantly more female than male survivors, the rape and sexual assault of boys and men is viewed as more improbable than it is of girls and women leading to a very marginalised position for services for men.
- 3.69. Somewhat conversely, and possibly due to the misinterpretation of the Gender Equality Duty by some local funders, some women only organisations have been encouraged by other funders and potential funders to offer services to men, although this may not be consistent with their ethos and gendered understanding of sexual violence. Some organisations have responded to this issue by providing services for women and men in separate spaces and/or times, some by focusing on preventative services with men, and others remaining as women only organisations and trying to build an understanding about why this is important.

Sustainability

- 3.70. While the Funds have allowed VCS sexual violence organisations to feel more stable, they have **not necessarily enabled sustainability** in all cases. This is due to a number of factors. Interviews with 37 funded organisation showed that 26 had been successful in obtaining other funding, but others, have identified the following **challenges to securing local funding**.

- There being no incentive/targets at a local level.

“Well we hardly get anything; we don't get targets on reducing sexual violence, so it's difficult to make a business case as to why you want to keep increasing the funding for the service. The police have a target on detection rates for serious sexual assaults but we as a district authority do not.”

(Partner, Case Study E)

- Local agencies not seeing funding as their responsibility.

“We have such a big role in talking through good practice, but there is no formal support. Raising the profile, attend meetings but no formal support. They hold back and don’t fund. Counselling we take on from GPs, CAMH teams gateway workers, DAT agencies.”

(Funded organisation)

- A tendency to focus more attention and funding on **domestic violence support services** rather than sexual violence support services

“[Organisation name] is funded. I would say at the moment, reasonably well...and also I suppose because there’s been that focus on domestic violence for...with the coordinated community response model, and so there’s been that focus and stuff. There’s probably, I would say...so there’s the lack of funds, embarrassment is the wrong word but I think it’s the [quietly] ‘oh, it’s sexual violence.’”

(Partner, Case Study E)

- Some negative stereotypes of the VCS.

“I think that people have a perception of them [the service], and you know that they’re not managed properly because they are VCS – but actually they are, and they need to put that forward more.”

(Partner, Case Study E)

3.71. The case studies also revealed that local partners were generally disappointed that the Funds **could not provide the sustainable core funding** to allow services – and thus the sectors – to increase in size. This relates quite clearly to the fact that the Funds cannot be used for service

development but are about the maintenance of existing provision. However, without longer term funding the sector(s) are likely to remain characterised by relatively small organisations that are existing ‘hand to mouth’ and unlikely to reach their potential. One local partner explains this below.

“None of them want to stay the size they are...they would all like to be able to reach out to all those vulnerable people that they know they’re not getting to. They would all like to play a role in prevention and education. But they just don’t have the capacity. And if you give them something sustainable that says, “Right...we’ll fund them for x years,” and just build around it... then there’s enough potential there.”

(Partner, Case Study A)

- 3.72. The role of central government funding to sustain the sexual violence sector(s) was seen as increasingly important when at local level there is a **transition from grant funding to joint commissioning models**. Local partners felt that if core costs could be covered by something like the Special Fund, this gave them the security to work with local funders to negotiate how they could best provide outcomes for local users. The statement below explains.

“I think that providing infrastructure support can point to the way that the contribution that we’re giving as a council is directly resulting x number of women, in terms of counselling support. So it’s actually easier to actually link the funding that you’re doing to more tangible outcomes. If they don’t have that core funding then obviously the money that we’re giving has to go into that kind of overall infrastructure, which means you don’t see the overall output, and that becomes a negative cycle.”

(Partner, Case Study A)

4. Conclusions

Impact of the Special Funds

- 4.1. The main impact of the Special Funds has been to **provide continuity of services for users by preventing closure** of VCS sexual violence organisations.
- 4.2. The use of the Funds to recruit and retain staff, and attract and train volunteers, has thus enabled **specialist and distinctive** sexual violence services to stay open and provide **high quality, free, user-focused services**.
- 4.3. The employment of skilled staff, longer opening hours and targeted outreach work, mean the **services are better meeting demand**, with a subsequent reduction in waiting lists and increased diversity of service users.
- 4.4. This continuity of provision, which would not have been possible without the Special Funds, has resulted in important **outcomes for service users**. These include raised confidence and self esteem, improvement in physical and mental health, feeling safe and secure, and being able to 'sort out' family relationships and housing, and (re) enter employment and training.
- 4.5. The Special Funds have also increased the capacity of VCS sexual violence organisations resulting in more professionalised administrative, financial and legal processes. The extra organisational capacity has also freed up some staff time to engage in local partnership working and seek longer term funding.
- 4.6. The Funds have encouraged networking and sharing of good practice within the sexual violence VCS. However, there is little evidence that the Funds have helped promote a more coherent and sustainable sector nationally and may have embedded some of the divisions that already existed. Our research suggests it may be constructive to consider a number of sectors within what is current referred to as the 'sexual violence VCS'.

Learning about funding and sustainability

- 4.7. The Special Funds were designed to alleviate short term funding crises in the sexual violence VCS by building organisational capacity and providing continuity of services for users.
- 4.8. The evaluation has shown that the Funds have met these objectives, but has also raised questions about the sustainability of the sector if it relies on short term funding to lurch from crisis to crisis.
- 4.9. Many of the national partners from government departments and national VCS organisations, who were interviewed early in the evaluation, raised concerns about the longer sustainability of the sector in providing sexual violence services.
- 4.10. There was a range of views about the relationship between the Special Funds and the ability to secure longer term funding. Some partners felt the Funds were too short term to address sustainability at all. Others hoped that the Funds would provide the short term stability from which to seek longer term funding. A few government officials were concerned that funding from central government would reduce the incentive to seek local statutory or charitable funding.
- 4.11. The evaluation has provided a very clear picture of the distinct role of the Special Funds and how this learning can be transferred to inform future funding decisions.
- 4.12. Organisations valued the Special Funds as core funding in that it could be used to support the organisational capacity to provide a range of services. Unlike a lot of other funding, particularly from local authorities and PCTs that commission rather than grant aid VCS organisations, it was not tied to specific projects or service outcomes.

4.13. Not only is this sort of core funding more flexible, it can also provide the capacity and leverage for other, long term funding. The Special Funds started to play this role through:

- Releasing staff time for building better contacts with statutory organisations through local partnerships;
- Increasing the profile and credibility of the VCS organisations to funders;
- Improving the professionalism of the organisations' processes;
- Allowing staff time to write tenders and funding applications.

4.14. These indirect effects of the Special Funds resulted in organisations securing other funding – usually for specific projects lasting between one and three years.

Implications for government support

4.15. In relation to some partners' concerns about central government funding of VCS sexual violence services 'crowding out' local funding, the evaluation has found that the reverse is true: **central government funding encourages and levers in local funding.**

4.16. This suggests a **distinctive role for central government** funding of covering core costs to ensure there is a **consistent infrastructure of VCS sexual violence services** across the country, providing continuity of free (or donation only), accessible and high quality services for users.

4.17. This would ensure **equality of access to services** and avoid a 'postcode lottery' from different local policies and priorities. Organisations could then **negotiate local funding** and in-kind support with local statutory agencies and charities to fund specific services that reflect local priorities, circumstances and user needs.


- 4.18. For this role to be effective in *sustaining* VCS sexual violence services, any central **government funding needs to be longer term** than for a year. Although the Special Funds have shown the *potential* of government funding, it will only result in leveraging additional long term funding if it is secure enough for organisations to be seen as stable and credible enough to be commissioned to provide services to vulnerable people.
- 4.19. In terms of **value for money**, the evaluation has identified a clear **business case for long term investment in a sustainable sector infrastructure**. Benefits from such an investment include:
- Enabling a distinctive service that cannot be provided by more generic organisations;
 - Encouraging volunteering which both reduces the costs of the services in comparison with statutory services and puts the idea of the ‘Big Society’ into practice;
 - Levering in long term funding from local statutory organisations and charities, through grant aid and commissioning;
 - Reducing costs to the ‘public purse’ in relation to poor health, welfare benefits, housing benefits etc. through an effective approach which results in positive user outcomes.

Appendix I: Organisations which received emergency fund support (08/09)

Barnsley Sexual Abuse & Rape Crisis Helpline (BSARCH)
Cambridge Rape Crisis Centre
Chester Sexual Violence Support Service
Coventry Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre
Croydon Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre
Essex CARA (Centre for Action on Rape & Abuse)
Eva Rape Crisis Service
Gloucestershire Rape Crisis Centre
Hull Rape Crisis
Oxford Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre
Peterborough Rape Crisis Counselling Group
Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre (Merseyside)
Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Centre (North Wales)
Rape Crisis (Wycombe, Chiltern & South Bucks)
Savana Stoke-on-Trent
The Rape & Sexual Abuse Counselling Centre (Darlington & County Durham)
Tyneside Rape Crisis Centre
Watford Rape Crisis
West Cumbria Rape Crisis
Worcestershire Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre

Appendix 2: Organisations which received special fund support (09/10)

Aylesbury Vale Rape Crisis
Basingstoke Rape and Sexual Abuse Crisis Centre
Bradford Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Survivors Service
Cambridge Rape Crisis Centre
Cornwall Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre
Coventry Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre
Crisis Point
Croydon Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre
Doncaster Rape and Sexual Abuse Crisis Centre
Family Matters
First Step
Gloucestershire Rape Crisis Centre
Guildford Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Centre
Lantern Project
New Pathways
One in Four
Oxford Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre
Peterborough Rape Crisis Counselling Group
Quetzal
Coventry Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Centre
Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre (Merseyside)
Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Centre (North Wales)
Rape Crisis (Wycombe, Chiltern and South Bucks)
Rugby RoSA



Safeline
SALT South West
SARAC (Sexual and Domestic Abuse and Rape Advice Centre)
SHE (Survivors Helping Each other)
Sheffield Rape and Sexual Abuse Crisis Centre
Southampton Rape Crisis Centre
Supporting Survivors of Abuse
Survivors UK
Survivors Network
Tyneside Rape Crisis Centre
Watford Rape Crisis
West Cumbria Rape Crisis
Women's Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre (Cornwall)
Worcestershire Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre

Appendix 3: Anonymised case studies

Case Study A

Case A was experiencing significant financial difficulties and used its Special Fund monies to support its counselling service and cover core costs. As a result it has seen an increase in clients, and improved access and profile amongst local partners.

Case A is a long established medium sized organisation with fewer than 8 full time equivalent paid staff and a similar number of frontline volunteers. Located in a metropolitan borough it also serves a number of adjoining areas and a rural county council.

As an organisation it has a number of long term partnerships with local statutory organisations with whom they work at both a strategic and operational level. Case A receives some funding from partners and more recently from charities and a national statutory body.

Before receiving the Special Fund, Case A had accrued a financial deficit. The organisation therefore used Special Fund monies to part fund its counselling service, in order to increase staff time, and fund core costs for the entire organisation.

What have been the benefits of the Special Fund?

In terms of benefits, the staff felt that the Fund “*did exactly what it needed to do for us. It has totally stabilised the organisation and allowed us to grow as we have managed to attract other funding [for projects]*”. Further benefits include.

- **Counselling provision was increased and the organisation was able to respond more quickly to service users.** As a result there are fewer clients on the waiting list and waiting times are shorter. The increase in counselling hours has meant a counsellor was available each working day so calls from users are responded to on a daily basis.

- **The organisation has also focussed on, and been successful at, making services more accessible to BAME women.** Counselling staff reported professional benefits from having a greater number of colleagues in relation to sharing the training, development and awareness-raising work the organisation undertakes through their commitment to such work, and the requirement imposed by some local funders. Subsequently the profile of the organisation has been maintained and stronger relationships with professionals in other organisations/sectors have been established.
- **The fund has “protected the service” for a period of time:** as an organisation which was vulnerable to closure the receipt of the Special Fund sent a very positive message to Partners about the need to maintain sexual violence services.
- **Ensuring the continuation of an established service:** was important to partners since it is easier to work with and expand an existing organisation than to reopen or start a new one.
- **Securing local funding:** with core costs provided by central government, local funders felt they could direct money at service delivery. This meant funding could be attached to tangible outcomes and thus be more accountable, allowing the partner to justify spending on VCS sexual violence services – often through a model of matched funding.

Challenges

- **A continuing challenge is achieving long-term stability:** as one interviewee explained “there is always a shortfall’ despite having multiple funders. However, having several funders is demanding in terms of accounting, reporting and “managing the paperwork”.
- **Changes in local strategic planning** for Violence Against Women and Girls services, in a response to the previous administration’s national strategy (2009), has resulted in the organisation being excluded from a key local forum. It was unknown if this was temporary but the organisation is proactively seeking to rejoin local strategic groups.

- **Securing central government funding for specialist sexual violence services:** The creation of the Combined Fund was not viewed positively by the organisation and was seen as reducing the availability of central funding to specialist sexual violence services.
- **Meeting demand:** The organisation is caught in the dilemma of having to balance 'advertising' of its services with the potential of increased demand that they are then unlikely to be able to meet. The nearby SARC had recently narrowed its criteria for access and resulting in an increase in referrals. Similarly there had also been an increase in referrals from NHS services.

Future priorities

The organisation's success in obtaining funding has resulted in **expanded services and new premises are needed** as a result. A major priority is to maintain the expansion and find suitable accommodation.

A number of the local core funders are moving from grant-giving to commissioning. The organisation have invested time and energy into **ensuring that they know someone from each funding body**, which is demanding on staff but important for future sustainability.

Case Study B

Case B used the Special Fund to employ a coordinator. The coordinator was able to implement changes and make improvements across the organisation. Although the coordinator was able to dedicate time to fundraising, further or core funding wasn't found and this meant that the coordinator post ended with the Special Fund monies.

Case study B is of a small organisation with fewer than three full time equivalent paid staff but has over 10 part-time frontline volunteers.

It is located in a unitary authority and also serves a neighbouring county council, however it has no links to the statutory sector. It functions in a relatively isolated manner with its limited partnership working being with other VCS organisations.

Prior to receiving the Special Fund, the organisation received small amounts of funding from various charities and had no paid staff.

What have been the benefits of the Special Fund?

The most evident impact of the Special Fund for this organisation was that it was able to stay open *'It would be closed there now without question'* (Staff Member). The fund was used to employ a coordinator, which resulted in a number of benefits:

- **There were improvements to how the service was run.** The coordinator was able to re-engage volunteers and recruit new ones, which helped the organisation to respond to helpline calls more quickly and take on more referrals. Both paid staff and volunteers had increased access to practice-related training and a changes to opening hours meant that there was greater flexibility in session times available to counselling clients. Service users show how highly valued the service is: *"They were very kind and inviting, I thought that these people were keen to listen and that they would support me. Especially around my specific needs – I really was at a bad point in my life."* (Service user)
- **The security of one year's funding gave the organisation the resources to look for core funding and further funding.** The coordinator had received fund-raising training to help them make the most of the opportunity. However, at the time of the completion of the evaluation, funding had yet to be secured.
- **The increase in networking and attendance at a local forum by the coordinator also helped raise the profile of the organisation with other partners.** They also found that being in receipt of central government funding raised the organisations status particularly within the statutory sector.

- **The coordinator was also able to do a significant amount of work in respect of the organisation's governance and policies.** This provides more solid foundation for the organisation, on which partnerships can be established.

Challenges

- **Maintaining the momentum of improvement:** the coordinator instigated considerable change in the organisation during their period of employment and they put in place a number of practices with the intention of the trustees and volunteers being able to carry these forward. Keeping up the changes may prove a challenge given that at the end of the coordinator post, the organisation will be left with no paid staff.
- **It is unclear whether the legacy of the coordinator is enough to sustain the organisation's presence.** There had previously been little willingness within the organisation to engage with statutory sector and/or funders and it is unlikely that in the relatively short period of time the coordinator had been able to establish sustainable partnership or profile of the organisation.
- **The organisation has no established building** or space to work in and this made it reliant on hiring rooms from other voluntary organisations. Without more and longer term funding it remains a challenge to find suitable, stable accommodation.

Future priorities

In the longer term, the organisation had some important aspirations. Work **with young people in schools and youth organisations** was regarded as an important area for future development. There had previously not been any system for **obtaining feedback or evaluation from clients** – although monitoring data had been collected. Designing a method for gathering feedback or evaluation was being discussed within the organisation whilst the coordinator was in post, but nothing had yet been firmly established.

Case Study C

Case C used the Special Fund to part-fund a number of services, including the area's ISVA. The Fund has strengthened the organisation significantly for a time, but long term stability remains in question.

Located within and serving a unitary authority, Case study C is of a relatively large organisation with over eight paid full time equivalent staff and more than 10 part time volunteers. It proactively engages at a strategic and operational level with a number of local partners and has successfully gained funding from several statutory sources. The organisation is represented on several local and regional forums and local partners are very supportive of the organisation, which they view as a professional and effective service.

What have been the benefits of the Special Fund?

The telephone helpline, individual and group therapy, and the ISVA service were all part funded by the Special Fund along with some core costs. The organisation has felt the benefits of the Special Fund across the board:

- **The organisation was able to maintain current staffing levels and avoid the threat of redundancies and reduced staff resource.** This was especially important as the organisation has an ethos of investing heavily in the training, development and supervision of staff. The retention of staff is important to maintain stability within the team and for service users.
- **The number of clients accessing services has increased;** however, waiting lists have not been reduced as demand has grown in tandem.
- **The organisation already had strong multi-agency links** however these have continued to strengthen. The organisation now has a strategy to establish community and corporate partnerships in place to help them '*position ourselves in a very competitive environment*'. Raising funds is seen as '*about profile, our vision and values*' as well as money and so profile and fundraising are closely linked: '*we are not about transaction fundraising but relationship fundraising.*' (Staff Member)

- The organisation has been able to attract funding from other sources for the financial year 2010/11.

This adds up to not only the maintenance but the improvement of a valuable service. The service users interviewed were positive about their experience of the organisation:

'I became aware of the counselling after seeing the ISVA; she recommended it and it made sense. I like the way they approach things – it's tailored to you as an individual. The ISVA was exactly what I wanted and more, it was better than I expected.'

Challenges

- **Whilst the Special Fund was crucial in securing benefits for the year it was received, staff recognise 'there is no benefit to us now'.** Finding funding for core services to support these benefits: 'you can often find funds for new services or things that are developmental, but it's often very hard to find funding for kind of maintaining core services'. (Staff Member)
- **Maintaining strong networking, within a changing local and national context** was viewed as crucial to gaining more funding in order to ensure that a breadth of provision continues to be available to users as this is seen as 'what works well' with survivors. Sustaining the public face of the organisation and balancing its openness, both internally and externally is challenging. It is time-consuming and:

'...requires a high degree of skill to understand what is necessary to maintain the partnership and stay true to our ethos within that. There is a need to both be clear about what our role is, and to be quite clear about our independence.'

(Staff Member)

Future Priorities

Priorities for the organisation are to **maintain the current level of services and to reduce the waiting list**. Making services more accessible to BAMER communities and people with mental health needs is also an area where the organisation wants to develop.

There are also further priorities around **developing the formal and informal evaluation and feedback** from service users and implementing a clearer review process for counselling clients. There is a commitment to producing reliable outcomes based evaluation which local partners viewed as strengthening the organisations ability to obtain funding; as one reported *'their reliable collection and intelligence informs our commissioning'*.

Case Study D

Case D used the Special Fund to pay for core costs, particularly those relating to staff and volunteers such as training, supervision and salaries, as well as part funding some services. This has enabled to service to continue running and meeting the needs of a number of rural communities. However, sustainable funding and stable accommodation remain key challenges for the organisation.

Case D is located within a rural county council and serves a number of district councils. It is a small organisation with fewer than 3 full time equivalent staff and more than 10 part time volunteers. The organisation has links with some statutory services and other voluntary sector organisations, and staff have some input into three local forums and strategy groups. Aside from the Special Fund other funding has been gained from a charitable trust and a relatively small amount from one local statutory body.

What have been the benefits of the Special Fund?

The service was facing closure and so the Special Fund was used to cover core costs, including essentials such as expenses, training and supervision of volunteers and staff salaries. The advocacy, counselling and helpline provision were also part-funded.

- **Continuity of services** was therefore a key impact and the Special Funds were instrumental in keeping this service open: *'[we] were on the verge of shutting, you know, within a couple of months if they hadn't received that funding... it has enabled us to carry on the service.'* (Staff Member). Service user views bring the importance of this to the foreground: one user reported that the service for her was *'like a lifeline if you like...it's invaluable.'*
- The continuity of all aspects of services has allowed a focus to be placed on **raising the profile of the organisation** and maintaining its reputation as an essential service.

Challenges

- A persistent challenge is drawing in **more funding** and at the time of the evaluation several applications had been made to a range of bodies.
- The model used for service **delivery to geographically dispersed population** poses a challenge in providing confidential services in suitable venues. A network of working spaces rented from other organisations has been established. Whilst offering their service users discrete access within small communities, this arrangement requires continuous negotiation and funding.
- **Limited capacity to grow:** the service provides training to staff in partner organisations and is proactive in working to raise public awareness of sexual violence and of the organisation. However the organisation has limited capacity to do this with so few paid staff.

Future Priorities

The organisation is actively developing the service to work **with children** from the age of twelve. This is of particular importance as a children's charity, with whom they had worked closely is withdrawing its services. This has involved staff undertaking additional training.

In addition they are eager to **strengthen existing partnerships** when capacity and resources allow. A reorganisation within the local authority had made it difficult to build and sustain relationships with officers and partnerships with other voluntary sector organisations with whom they compete for funding have created tensions. This is particularly the case with non-specialist organisations that are taking on sexual violence work and have a different organisational ethos. This has created some issues over what is considered appropriate practice amongst local statutory agencies.

Case Study E

Case E has used the Special Fund to pay some core costs, including facilities, as well as contributing towards many of the services offered by the organisation. By sustaining the organisation's services for the duration of the fund, the extra support has helped the organisation develop its partnership working.

Case E is a moderately sized organisation with between 3 and 7 full time equivalent paid staff and a team of frontline volunteers. It is located within a county council and serves a number of district councils. It has a small number of informal partnerships with statutory and other voluntary sector organisations, mostly other specialist sexual violence services.

No additional funding has been gained during the period of the Special Fund, although the organisation has been successful in an application to the Combined Fund.

What have been the benefits of the Special Fund?

The Special Fund was used for core costs – including rent for office space and counselling rooms – and contributed to the provision of a breadth of services including individual counselling, group therapy, advocacy, the helpline, befriending, work with young people and a BAMER outreach worker.

- **The Special Fund prevented permanent closure of the organisation** and enabled a range of services to continue to be provided for survivors who need them. One service user reported this is an '*absolutely essential service*' and asserted their view of the organisation as a public service priority: '*[it is] imperative that funding is ring-fenced and is lavishly provided because they are saving the NHS a lot of money*'.

- **The organisation has been able to continue some of its partnership working**, including providing training to other professionals as a revenue stream. Partnership working has also led to a potentially productive relationship with a key local authority officer being established; the officer is relatively new in post and has a remit to support organisations such as Case E to obtain funding and is *'fighting their corner'*.

Challenges

- **The organisation has 'a constant battle to get funding'** and finds it difficult to maintain staff morale when 'we are constantly up "against the wire" where funding is concerned.' (Staff Member) Although they have been able to secure Combined Fund support, the organisation expressed concern regarding the broadening of eligibility criteria for funding, such as the Combined Fund, as non-specialists *'who do this work on the side'* can apply.
- **Servicing BAMER communities is a challenge:** the organisation is committed to providing services which are accessible and sensitive to the needs of Asian and African-Caribbean women, and yet recruiting staff who are qualified to deliver this service, or can be trained, is challenging. The use of interpreters was found to be inappropriate which further narrows their options to offering services to these communities.
- Although recently more developed, the organisation has found **partnership working problematic** for a number of reasons:
 - It has been difficult to split time between the dual priorities of partnership working and frontline work.
 - The demands of externally set targets and reporting often outweigh the benefits brought by funding available through service level agreements they have entered into.
 - The organisation's ethos and practices, particularly around the boundaries of confidentiality, are not always shared by potential partners.
 - Historically the county authority has funded domestic violence services whilst sexual violence is felt to have been marginalised. This is a challenging environment for the organisation to work effectively within.

Future Priorities

Access to the Combined Fund has given the organisation a degree of stability for the coming year. A key priority in this time is to improve their **methods volume of user feedback gathered** with the view to continuing to provide a high quality service to their users.

Case Study F

Case F used the Special Fund to meet a shortfall in core costs, in addition to contributing towards project work and maintaining existing services. As a result the organisation has maintained its offer to service users, been able to handle growing demand for their helpline services and been able to provide more stable employment for its staff. The organisation has been an influential partner locally, but faces a challenge to maintaining this activity in straitened times.

Case F is a relatively large organisation with over 8 full time equivalent paid staff and more than 10 part time volunteers. It is located within a metropolitan borough which it serves in addition to an adjoining county council area.

It proactively engages, at both a strategic and operational level, with a number of local and regional partners in the statutory sector. Case F is represented on several local and regional forums and strategy groups, and has gained funding from local and national statutory bodies and charities.

What have been the benefits of the Special Fund?

The Fund was used to cover core costs, including an extension of the paid hours of some staff, and to fund a volunteer project, the helpline and part-fund a therapy group.

- **The Fund helped keep services open.** The organisation had a shortfall for core costs and the funding helped secure these aspects thus sustaining the organisation and service delivery. *‘I am incredibly grateful that these services survived directly as a result of this funding – if the Equalities Office hadn’t come up with this, it would have been catastrophic’* (Staff Member).
- **The Fund helped the organisation deal with growth.** In recent years there had been an increase in the number of calls to the helpline and the fund enabled there to be a substantial increase in the number of hours it was staffed (by volunteers) each week and thus significantly more calls were answered.
- **Staff job security and hours were improved.** Redundancies were avoided and the service manager post was again able to be full-time benefiting the organisation in terms of overall management, strategic development and in securing other funds for additional projects.

All of the service users interviewed were positive about their experiences of the service:

“When I rang up they were really helpful...It was just because I’d had a flashback about something, and I’d, because it had been opened it felt more raw than it had done in the past. Um and I was quite upset and I was crying and stuff and they were really you know calming me down.” (Service user)

Challenges

- **In the longer term, whilst the Special Fund has been beneficial ‘nothing’s really changed for us’.** The need for a more ‘sustained model of funding that is funded at the appropriate level’ was identified and current arrangements are *‘sustaining us in crisis [which] won’t help – we can’t develop any further’* (Staff Members)

- **Managing a cocktail of funding is time and resource intensive.** Not only is time needed to successfully bid and win funding but when successful, managing several different and fragmented funding streams at any one time is challenging. Providing data in different formats to each funding body requires an effective and efficient data management system which has been established but the organisation is dependant on a volunteer who has the knowledge and skills to do this.
- **Continuing to have a strategic influence.** A sexual violence strategic group has been established in the local authority, in which Case F was very influential, and this has moved sexual violence up the agenda and increased recognition of it as an issue. Maintaining this and the organisation's role in it is challenging in the context of complex partnership structures, the capacity of the organisation and translating new national strategies into practice locally when there are few targets or incentives for other agencies to engage with sexual violence.

Future Priorities

Being able to provide a range of services works well in meeting the complex needs of survivors and reducing or losing one aspect would be detrimental to users. Therefore the organisation's priority is to continue to proactively seek funding to ensure they can provide services that meet needs of users throughout their therapeutic journey, and that they target under-represented groups.

The organisation has an accredited training programme for unpaid staff and is committed to **retaining staff through training and development.**

Case Study G

Case Study G is of a small organisation that has used the Special Fund to cover core costs, including the manager's salary and volunteer training, and to part fund direct delivery of all its services. The stability this has brought to Case G has enabled the development of a more professional and confident organisation. The next step for the organisation is to develop its partnership working as well as seeking more sustainable funding.

Located within a unitary authority and serving both it and the surrounding county council, Case G is a small organisation with fewer than three full time equivalent paid staff and fewer than 10 full time equivalent volunteers. It has begun to proactively engage with a number of local and regional partners in the statutory sector and has productive partnerships with other local voluntary organisations. In addition to the Special Fund it receives a grant from the unitary authority and from a charity.

What have the benefits of the Special Fund been?

The Fund was used to cover core costs, including the manager's salary and volunteer training, and to part fund direct delivery of all its services.

- The fund enabled the organisation to situate itself in the **'right position' to be effective in raising its profile with partners**, especially the local authority and other VCS services, and create an open dialogue with a range of statutory agencies. A part-time administrator has improved the public image of the organisation by being able to answer and respond to phone calls more frequently and quickly and this has had an impact, as a local partner reported: *'It made it an organisation that's worth investing in...it allowed them to get their capacity together. And it gave them a bit of capacity to do the things they need to do as...a VCS organisation.'*

- **The organisation is running more smoothly and dealing with growth.** More referrals are being made to the service, waiting times for service users are being reduced, volunteer recruitment and training was developed, there was an increase in the number of people able to access services and specific work with BAMER women is being developed. *‘We work hard to project the image of a confident organisation which clients can trust to hold their difficult emotions at a time of great turbulence in their lives.’* (Staff Member)
- **For service users, the continuity and improvement of the service had a personal impact.** For example, one service user said:

‘also it’s [group therapy] made me realise why it’s important to carry on and...um that I do have the strength I guess to, you know, I’ve got this far and I can carry on and it’s, it’s...um something I really have to do for myself.’ (Service User)

Challenges

- **Building capacity for partnership working.** Being more active in partnerships and in the wider community is limited by the staff time available to engage with networks. They also are only now beginning to develop their knowledge and experience of the local political landscape that will in future enable them to make good local relationships: *‘[we] have yet to build a solid relationship with PCT commissioners and we are somewhat unsure where to start.’* (Staff Member). Additionally, as part of the organisation’s development a working relationship is being developed with the SARC, however the success of this is dependent on having more paid staff time.
- **Finding a strategic voice:** Whilst the organisation works closely with other services on an operational level it is *‘hard to get a voice on the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership’*. However, the local authority recently undertook a strategic review of domestic and sexual violence services subsequently there are opportunities for Case G to be involved in existing ‘mature’ partnerships.

- **Ensuring the continuity of service** is crucial to service users and a challenge for the organisation; evidence from internal evaluation shows that women use Case G's services for an average of seven years and this is significantly longer than most funding periods. The creation of the Combined Fund is not viewed positively: *'In terms of sustainability of the sector making pots of money smaller and more competitive does nothing to support the work of the organisations such as ours'*. Competition within the local women's sector has been detrimental to the unity and partnerships which organisations have been working hard to establish.

Future Priorities

Increasing the accessibility of the service to BAMER women who are currently significantly underrepresented has been identified as a priority: *'we are doing a lot of outreach to try and address that'* (Staff Member). The organisation is involved in an innovative project for a particular group of marginalised and excluded women. However this does pose a challenge in relation to the differing practices around the boundaries of confidentiality and client autonomy between the organisation and their partner organisations which are generic women's services.

The need to develop **prevention work with children** and young people was identified by one member of staff, partly in response to the high incidence of young people experiencing sexual violence.

Case Study H

Case Study H is of an organisation that has used the Special Fund to maintain the helpline service, and cover core costs including the salary of their volunteer co-ordinator. The service has been kept open and improved investment in volunteers has supported the helpline service in particular. Improving professionalism and partnership working is a priority going forward, with that view that this will improve the organisation's ability to compete for public sector contracts.

Case H is located in a metropolitan borough and serves both this areas and an adjoining borough. The organisation is long established, but small with fewer than three full time equivalent paid staff and a small number of frontline volunteers. Case H has some long term partnerships with local statutory organisations including health partners. In addition to the Special Funds, the organisation received funding on an annual basis from the local authority and the PCT is funding a time-limited project.

What have been the benefits of the Special Fund?

The Special Fund was used to cover core costs, including extending the working hours of one member of staff, and to maintain the helpline.

Maintenance of service has been the main impact and benefit.

- **The Fund ensured that the service did not close nor make a significant reduction in services:** *'the fact that the Special Fund was a crisis fund, and we were in crisis. And if we hadn't got it probably would not be here, certainly not doing as much as we're doing now.'* (Staff Member)
- **The organisation has been able to extend the role of the volunteer coordinator,** who manages the helpline, which not only maintained service delivery but allowed for a slight increase in the opening hours and *'the role volunteers play has been validated.'* (Staff Member)

- **The service is specialised and offers an alternative to generalist support providers**, and as such is sought by many survivors:

'I was looking for somebody who was really specialised in sort of abuse counselling because I had tried some private counselling and twice in fact in the last...couple of years and just really hadn't worked, hadn't sort of found the right person and...and I think the helpline was a really good, a sort of an acute time, like I needed some help straight away so I was looking for that part as well I suppose and something easy to contact.' (Service User)

Challenges

- **'Financially it is always a challenge'** and the security provided by the grant from the local authority is under threat due to standstill budgets and may be reduced further inline with government cuts. However if the funding does continue there was some consideration of moving to three year funding cycle, which would offer security to an organisation that has in the past been *'too reluctant to commit to anything when you cannot know about future funding'* (Staff Member).
- There is some partnership working but **the absence of a local sexual violence strategic or operational groups results in the organisation being 'insular'**. Similarly the staff have limited capacity to undertake partnership work so the organisation is reactive: *'we do as much as we can to actually deliver a service and it doesn't leave us much time to do anything else at all. And that's our biggest problem, time – which equals money, if you like.'* (Staff Member)
- **Finding a balance between autonomy and partnership.** Some staff have informal working relationships with professionals in other services and there have been attempts to initiate a 'consortium' with other small VCS organisations. Moreover concern over the 'loss of autonomy and boundaries' was expressed in relation to partnership working especially with statutory agencies. On the other hand there is an acute awareness of external pressure to: *'skill-up, be more professional... We're all short of professional skills; we find that we're being encouraged to...implement quality systems so that we can apply for contracts.'* (Staff Member)

Future Priorities

The organisation is undergoing a period of internal change, including **consideration of management and governance structures and practices.**

The organisation wants to develop a more robust system of evaluation and feedback from users and to move **to a more outcomes based, quality assessment approach.**

A need to **increase staff development opportunities** and provide more support for staff is also recognised: *'There's a lot of pressure, you know the work itself is extremely exhausting and stressful'* (Staff Member).

Appendix 4: Commentary on user feedback

All organisations kept some kind of monitoring data, for example, gender was recorded by all mixed-sex services, and only one organisation did not record client ages. However the **consistency and coverage of data varied significantly between organisations and within services**, for example helpline services tended to be unmonitored. The main gaps in data collected regarded sexual orientation (not collected by 16 organisations, 53%) and religious beliefs (not collected by 26 organisations, 87%).

Evaluation and feedback of at least one service was sought by 27 of the 30 organisations. The percentage of their clients who gave feedback ranged from 9–100%, with a slight majority towards lower end of this scale (57% of all organisations received feedback from <50% of their clients, with two thirds of these falling between 20–40%).

The 12 month monitoring data suggests that **most organisations kept both paper and electronic records of client feedback**, though there are no comments to suggest what process they use. Around 28 organisations kept paper records of client feedback (93%), while 22 (73%) used a database.

Challenges to data collection

Approximately half of the organisations (14) referred to a difficulty in obtaining monitoring and evaluation information from clients, or were not collecting data. The key reason for this was a feeling that it was inappropriate to request information within **the context of a client – counsellor relationship**.

The client – counsellor relationship meant that many organisations only recorded monitoring information that a client chose to disclose rather than to directly ask for it. Although this was the case for many counselling services, it was particularly difficult to collect information on helpline users. This was due to the increase anonymity of contact by phone, and the ad hoc way in which the service can be used that does not necessarily lead to a consistent client – counsellor relationship.

A similar problem was presented by the collection of feedback. This problem was compounded by the informal relationship some clients have with services: they may stop using the service such as counselling without notifying the organisation, or may not ever provide full contact details. Even when contact details are available, **issues of confidentiality** made it difficult for organisations to pro-actively seek feedback from clients about their experience of the service.

We do not want to insist on feedback at the price of losing the therapeutic relationship. [Service name] does appreciate that outcomes are important and we do our utmost to gain access to this information.



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