

## Written evidence submitted by LCA Liverpool Community Advice

### **LCA REPORT ON THE USE OF FUNDING DURING THE COVID PANDEMIC**

This report is prepared in order to represent the views of LCA Liverpool Community Advice which is a large independent Help Charity based in the city and surrounding area of Merseyside. As you are aware the Merseyside area remains a focal point for social deprivation in the UK.

LCA was formed 5 years ago when CAB Citizens Advice unwisely chose to close their city centre operation and the current organisation was formed from the personnel who refused to allow this mistake to occur. This allows LCA to operate without the bureaucracy of a London centric organisation enabling it to be closer to the local needs.

The main free advice service delivery is based on the core help elements of Money & Debt, Housing & Eviction. Welfare Benefits with other smaller sectors of Energy Advice, Immigration, Consumer Rights, Mental Health et al. These are dispensed from our offices at Dale Street in Liverpool, Liverpool Family Court, Birkenhead County Court and other outlying Community Centres or partner charities.

The report's author is Gerald F. Rivett who is the current Chairman of LCA having been associated with it as a Trustee and Board Member for 9 years. The position is a purely voluntary one but during Covid has become very full time working closely with the CEO Kristian Khan. My experience prior to retiring has been at Board level with UK and non UK Plc organisations.

LCA has no restrictions on the correct use of the Report or the publication of its views and the name of the author as stated in the briefing notes.

### **LCA REPORT ON FUND USAGE AND SALIENT POINTS**

Included at the end of this report is a clear statement of the funds received in the period, their source, the amount of funding and purpose of use. However a brief synopsis of the processes involved will give a clearer picture of the challenges faced by the Charity Sector as well as showing the typical use of monies within the organisation.

The LCA submission wishes to make the readers aware of both the positives and negatives encountered in the past year. Reasons for requesting Government backed funds were simply in order to maintain a service delivery during the pandemic but more importantly to be available and in position to meet what will be a tsunami of demand from the public when various support mechanisms such as JRS are phased out. In Liverpool we are simply at the edge of the crater looking down into a building pressure point.

Government controls caused LCA to suffer acute income stream losses by the closing of the Court system for housing matters for a period of time and then when reopened a restriction allowing only 30% of normal client footfall to attend. Despite the use of JRS the organisation has continued the service as per the Housing Possession Contract at a loss. This simply is subsidising Government in order to give Access to Justice for all and LCA has to be the final safety net. To enable the service to be maintained an element of the free monies from funding have been used as purist cashflow but remain far from adequate. This is the largest issue faced by the organisation and despite representation to Robert Buckland no direct help has been forthcoming. Funding therefore has been spent simply on staying alive in cash terms.

Like a number of organisations in the Charity Sector one would have to admit that LCA was not sufficiently equipped to instantly operate a Remote Virtual Help Service mainly due to a lack of equipment. This formed an immediate need for funding use in the provision of home equipment such as Laptops, Printers, Mobile Phones et al to enable staff to operate as close to normal as possible. Whilst this has proved in part a success we took the decision to maintain an appointment only controlled Face to Face service as there is no substitute for personal contact when problem solving.

Specific funds were additionally used to develop the LCA website in order to distribute information on a greater scale and to continually update our developing remote contact system for clients. This has proved successful and can be viewed at [www.liverpoolcommunityadvice.org.uk](http://www.liverpoolcommunityadvice.org.uk)

Naturally in the course of our work we accumulate significant data on client issues and further funding was used to develop and enhance client case recording which has proved most useful. Turning this wealth of data into meaningful statistics has enabled LCA to strengthen its position with the media becoming a go to organisation for social impact news stories especially with the BBC. Funding in this area is paying dividends.

It would be very amiss of LCA not to mention and indeed pay tribute to the introduction of Furlough via the JRS Scheme. Without this monthly injection it is likely that LCA would now have ceased to exist in its present form. Little criticism can be levelled at this with the exception of the ruling that employees on Furlough could not volunteer to work for their employer. This in relation to the Charity sector is a

mistake and total waste of existing talent and experience. Trying to train new volunteers whilst operating an organisation in difficult times is a drain on management and staff alike.

Additionally one must comment about the Kickstart Scheme which qualifies as a direct Government funding method. The early error of not allowing organisations with under 30 applications to apply at the start has resulted in this potentially good scheme facing severe delays and loss of uptake. LCA were forced to join a consortium in order to get their 3 desired people and 9 months later due to DWP under performance we do not have them. This is a total waste of time and potential employment for young people as we are forced to make alternative arrangements. Sadly a very good initiative gone wrong.

This summarises what LCA has used the funding for in order to remain operational but the challenge of obtaining even more continues apace. As one can see from the attached itemised tables the one surprise was the mainly fast response of funding supply and approval system considering the potential over bearing bureaucracy this might have involved.

LCA is grateful to be included in the review and welcome any questions which may be forthcoming.

Gerald F. Rivett

LCA Chairman

<b>Funder</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Notes on Application Process</b>	<b>Date awarded</b>
<b>Liverpool City Region – Cares Fund</b> (administered via the office of the Metro Mayor)	£4,000	Financial capability support for key workers	Very straightforward	April 2020

<b>Lottery – Awards for All</b>	£9,862	Money Management LCA had a bid pending and AWA asked us to resubmit with a focus on addressing need brought about by the outbreak	Very easy and user friendly	June 2020
<b>First Ark (LIVV) –</b> drawn down from Big Society Capital, which in turn is funded by 4 banks	£10,000	To offset the losses being incurred on our Legal Aid contracts	Straightforward – funder approached us and we had to submit a brief business case	September 2020
<b>Liverpool City Council -</b> 'Voluntary Sector Support Grant'	£10,000	Working Capital	A very straightforward online form.	September 2020
<b>Lottery –</b> Community Fund (Part of the Coronavirus Community Support Fund; this was part of £750m that the Government pledged to the Voluntary sector through DCMS)	£9,536	Bereavement Support	Very easy and user friendly	October 2020
<b>Growth Fund Business Support –</b> administered by Social Investment Business (SIB) on behalf of	£10,000	Aim of fund was to buy in external support (LCA chose website development and building a new case	Straightforward – First Ark put LCA in touch with SIB. Needed to submit a business case, quote for	February 2021

Access. Access was set up by the Cabinet office (now DCMS)		recording system)	works and financial information	
<b>Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme</b>	£165,000	Furlough payments	Very straightforward – payments received within 6 working days following application	On going
<b>Total</b>	<b>£218,398</b>			

- In addition to the above, we have received approximately £23,684 from non-governmental sources
- We have not been billed for any Business Rates by LCC in this financial year (saving of approximately £7,620) – our Discretionary Relief is still in place
- LCC have not pursued any collection of our loan with them following the end of the payment holiday – a saving of approximately £7,500 in this financial year

Gerald F. Rivett – Chairman  
Kristian Khan - CEO

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