

Written Evidence submitted by Evangelical Alliance UK

1. The Evangelical Alliance UK is the largest and oldest body representing the UK's two million evangelical Christians. Established in 1846, today we work across a diverse constituency of over 18,000 individual members, as well as 3,000 churches and 500 organisations. The Evangelical Alliance is the founding member of the World Evangelical Alliance, which unites evangelical alliances based in different countries around the world, representing anywhere from 300 million to a billion evangelical Christians. This global reach reflects the influence of evangelical faith, which can also be seen in the huge social and ethnic diversity in British evangelical churches.
2. We recently contacted our member organisations and churches to see whether they had received funding through the government's charity funding packages over the past year. We received a number of responses on what funding churches and Christian organisations had received from the Government regarding frontline work. Very few churches and organisations applied/received funding through the schemes as they often didn't fall under the remit of 'frontline charities', or deliver specific work in the strands identified.
3. Churches have however been active over the past year in providing for their community, often as an extension of their existing work, and which has been supported through church funding streams and considerable volunteer time. Most member organisations and churches have not sought, or were not aware of, the availability of emergency funding. Considerable frontline activity occurs through informal networks or at the periphery of formal church and charitable activity. Therefore, it is often insufficiently structured to receive grants or other funding from government.
4. Grants have been awarded to drop-in youth services (from the Youth Covid-19 Support Fund) and businesses associated with the church (such as bookshops). Respondents stated that some of the application forms were not very user-friendly and often required specialised knowledge to complete. St Olav Christian Bookshop Chichester was able to receive support from the Culture Recovery Fund Grant (£28,000), without this funding the bookshop would close.

5. Christian charities have been able to receive funding through the Homelessness Fund. Nearly 30 charities related to churches and Christian causes have been able to support homeless people in their communities through this fund. Many problems were exacerbated for homeless people during the pandemic. Places in homeless shelters were very limited due to social distancing and the inability to share facilities. Many drop-in centres had to be closed in order to adapt their facilities for social distancing.
6. Barnabus (in Manchester) is a member organisation who were able to receive funding from the Homelessness Fund. During the pandemic they have referred rough sleepers to hotels and other accommodation as well as providing essential items and emotional support. They have delivered 40,000 meals to vulnerable people and people experiencing homelessness during the past year.
7. The Winchester Churches Nightshelter received £33,346 for ensuite bathrooms in bedrooms to prevent spread from shared bathrooms. Christian charities who have benefitted from this grant often work on issues associated with homelessness such as modern slavery, domestic abuse and trafficking.
8. The majority of these organisations are not associated with the church and do not receive the regular donations the church does. Though some of these charities have been able to use church facilities to host their services. Therefore, Government support for homeless charities have been crucial in order to keep running crucial frontline services.
9. The vast majority of churches have been able to maintain frontline services through giving from their congregations. Donations have generally been maintained at the same level through the pandemic, though some have suffered from the lack of in-person donations. Generally churches have not received funding for frontline services but they have been able to reach out to their communities through food banks, mental health helplines and children's play groups. The church has been able to provide a wide range of support for communities through the donations of congregants that has been a significant part of frontline support during the pandemic.
10. While the funding that the government has provided to frontline charities has clearly been welcomed by those who have received it, it has not reached the vast majority of churches involved in delivering frontline services or informal community support.

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