

The Somerset Fund

Bringing passionate people
together to change the world on
their doorstep



Your impact report for 2019-20

Thank you

The Somerset Fund was established in late 2018 with the ambition of inspiring more local businesses and families to give generously to support small, local charities. Thanks to your support, a year on, we've been able to fund a wide range of local good causes and raised almost £70,000.

The outbreak of coronavirus sadly forced us to postpone our planned second round of grants in March, with many of the 50 groups that applied for grants no longer able to deliver their activities as planned. We are currently providing significant, urgent funding for local groups helping the most vulnerable through our Somerset Coronavirus Appeal. Once things have stabilised later in the year, your donations will be used to support a wealth of fantastic projects across the county.

In the meantime, I wanted to share this report to bring to life the difference your support has made so far. I hope it is an uplifting and inspiring read at what is an incredibly difficult time.

You might not have heard of any of the groups we've supported, and that's not unusual. They're often led by volunteers; passionate people who want to make life better for people in need and keep their communities strong.

They're the unsung heroes of our county. They work under the radar to give their time, talent and expertise to make Somerset a place where everyone can thrive.

That's why your donations - and The Somerset Fund - are so crucial. Thanks to you, we can provide vital funding and support for those unsung heroes. Thanks to you, we can amplify their voices and shine a spotlight on the amazing work they do. Thanks to you, they can change more lives in Somerset every day.

Best wishes and stay well,

Justin Sargent
Chief Executive



The difference your donations have made this year

Thanks to your support, we've been able to fund a wonderful array of grassroots good causes doing amazing work in our communities. We know it's tough for them to find the funds they need to keep going, and often just a small amount of money can make a huge difference, so you can be sure that every pound you give goes a long way.

2019-20 at a glance

£26,541
of grants made

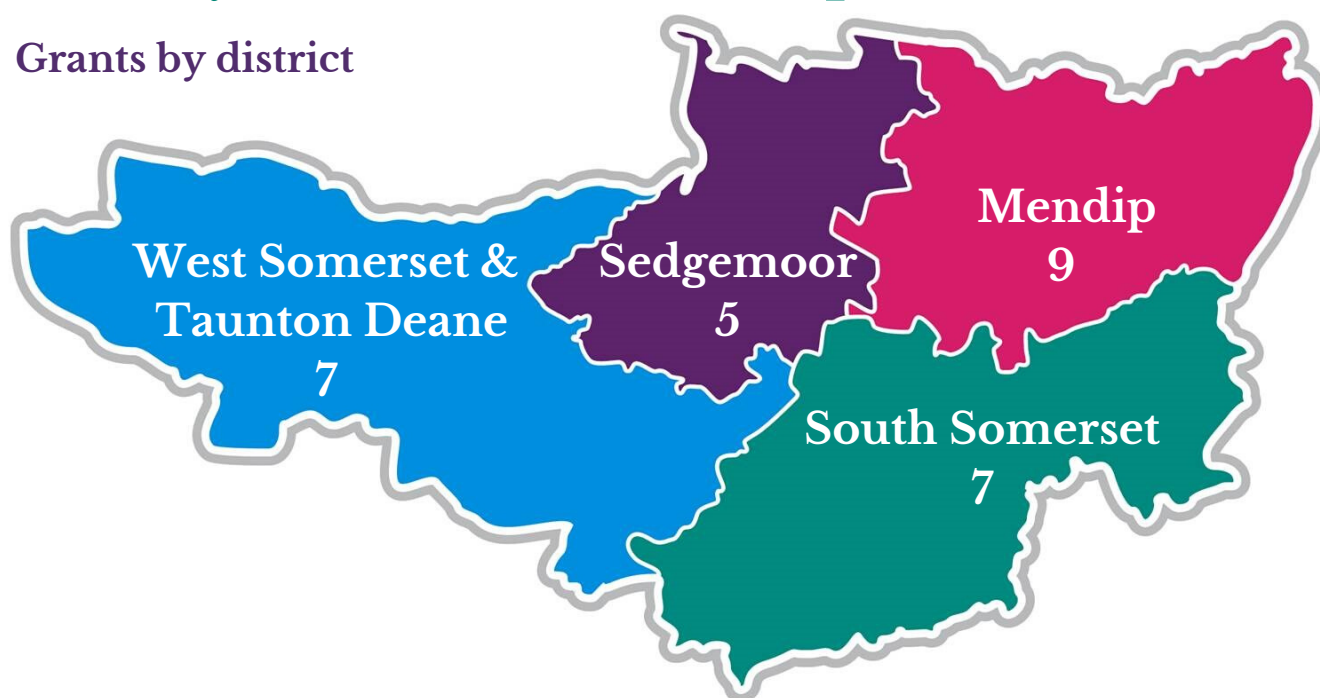
supporting
28
good causes

£68,168
raised, including
matched funding

£930
average grant
awarded

Where your donations were spent

Grants by district



More than just money



40% of those who applied for grants from us also received advice and support on project development, governance or connections to other groups or sources of funding

Grants made in 2019-20

Mendip

- **Active & In Touch – £1,000:** weekly social groups for people in Frome and surrounding villages who are lonely and isolated
 - **Frome Birth Talk – £1,500:** funding to increase the number of weekly counselling sessions offered for those experiencing post-natal depression
 - **Frome's Missing Links – £1,500:** proposals for new safe cycle routes around Frome
 - **Glastonbury Sea Cadets – £750:** renovation of cadet unit and outdoor learning centre
 - **Glastonbury FM – £1,000:** community radio license fee
 - **Houndwood Community Group – £250:** gazebo for community events
 - **Purple Elephant – £1,000:** summer holiday activities and a toy library for disadvantaged children and families in Frome
 - **Street Men's Shed – £1,000:** refurbishment of new Men's Shed for isolated older people in Street
 - **Young People Frome – £1,000:** activity programme for disadvantaged young people
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Somerset Fund stories - Purple Elephant



Sue Willis from Purple Elephant told us about their summer holiday activities for local children, helping to support local families and make memories at what can be a tough time for many.

“I started Purple Elephant five years ago with a passion to help local families in Frome who weren’t able to take advantage of the opportunities locally and make things more equal.

A lot of families struggle in the school holidays. Some struggle to feed their families every day. All our activities are open to everyone, but the people we are really trying to support are those facing a challenge in their lives; those on very low incomes, with children with special needs, or with challenging lives.

Funding from The Somerset Fund helped us to run our summer activities programme and Toy Library. The children’s activities are free or very low cost and provide a range of sessions: from creative activities to help the kids be imaginative, to getting them into the outdoors, or taking them on a day trip away from home.

For parents, it’s a chance to get out of the house and come somewhere relaxing and supportive. It can help take their minds off the challenges of the day. If a stretched mum of four comes along, she can spend some dedicated one-to-one time with one of her children, helping to strengthen that bond, and our support workers can make sure the others are well looked after. They can also provide gentle support to parents who may be struggling with those important early years parenting skills.

For those who can’t drive or who struggle to afford activities for their kids, having something on their doorstep is crucial. We also provide lunches every day, making sure those struggling families can have a wholesome, healthy meal. A lot of parents tell us our activities are a godsend."

Somerset Fund stories - Frome Birth Talk



Frome Birth Talk provides support groups and counselling services for new mums, providing a lifeline for those experiencing post-natal depression or struggling with maternal mental health.

Lucy McMahon, a Trustee at Frome Birth Talk, told us about the group and what it means to women in Frome.

“We provide a counselling service and wellbeing groups and activities for pregnant women and women in the first year of motherhood.

Becoming a new mum is an enormous gear shift, no matter how much you prepare for it, and a lot of people experience a really tough, emotional time. Not only can your hormones change enormously, you'll find that you're very tired – probably more than you ever have been before.

It's a time of life when an awful lot of people discover they need to talk about their emotions. It's very normal to feel low, even though only a small (yet significant) percentage of women become more seriously unwell.

Our threshold is low; people can self-refer to us when they feel the need, with the potential to prevent things getting worse. We try to practice early intervention at a time when cuts are being made. We bring women together on a small scale to talk about how hard it can be and let them know that it's okay to find it hard.

We're there to form important friendships and provide a support network through our regular groups and activities, and the counselling service is there to provide a specialised listening service where it's needed.

Funding from The Somerset Fund helped us increase our provision of four sessions of professional counselling a week to ten sessions, and we've done this by using two student counsellors.

Across the board our clients tell us our counselling service makes a huge difference: it helps them realise it's okay to feel the way they are feeling, and that they can talk about it and look for help if they need it.

They don't have to be alone."

Sedgemoor

- **1st Huntspill Scouts – £1,250:** support to repair and re-clad their scout hut
 - **Cheddar Community Partnership – £1,500:** emotional wellbeing for children and young people in Cheddar
 - **In Charley's Memory – £1,500:** one-to-one counselling sessions for young people with mental health problems in Sedgemoor
 - **Shipham FC – £1,215:** storage container for equipment for junior team
 - **Spaxton Junior FC – £750:** creation of a new shelter at the training ground
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Somerset Fund stories - Spaxton Junior FC



Spaxton Junior Football Club provides young people aged 6-16 in the rural village of Spaxton, near Bridgwater, the opportunity to play youth football.

We spoke to volunteer Sue Compton about how funding from The Somerset Fund has helped the club bring families and the community together.

"Around sixty young people actively use the club, and we offer football for all. We are inclusive, with mixed teams, and try to make sure that everyone who wants to play can play. We also encourage those who don't want to play to come along to cheer us on.

We don't focus on winning, we focus on everyone getting an equal chance. It's not about individuals scoring a goal, it's about the club scoring a goal.

It can get quite cold, standing on the side of a pitch, so we decided to make and serve hot drinks from a converted shipping container. The grant from The Somerset Fund helped pay for the groundworks.

We've got a generator and various other bits of equipment, including a little grill and a kettle. We sell hot drinks and bacon rolls, which keeps everyone happy - and it's bringing in a bit of funding for the club, too!

A lot of people have commented on how nice it is to have a warm drink whilst standing at the side of the pitch. It's created much more of a sense of community and we've found that parents who are visiting don't just sit and wait in their car anymore, they come to the sidelines, because they know they can watch the match with a hot drink. It's made such a difference! Recently we've noticed that instead of just mum or dad, whole families are coming to the club - siblings too! And that's just lovely.

We're so thankful to the businesses that have helped us by donating to The Somerset Fund. It really does help and makes a huge difference to small community organisations and clubs like us. We're very, very grateful."

Somerset Fund stories - 1st Huntspill Scouts



1st Huntspill Scouts provides opportunities for around 50 young people in Highbridge to take part in a wide range of activities indoors and outdoors, building new skills, confidence and curiosity.

Anita Williams, a Volunteer, told us how The Somerset Fund supported their much-loved scout hut.

“We’re quite an active Scout group; we go camping and out of the hut as often as we can, so the children have the opportunity to explore with people who are there to guide and support them.

Some of our children are shy and feel they need to stick with a particular buddy when they first come along; we work hard to reinforce their confidence and ability to make new friends.

Something that’s great about going to Scouts is that children get to try things on their own without their parents or activities that their parents might not be able to do with them.

We know that Highbridge has high levels of deprivation, so we make sure money is never a barrier to any child who wants to come along. We’ll also try to fund places on camping trips for children whose parents can’t afford it, and kit them out with everything they need, because we know how beneficial it will be for them to take part.

My own children have been coming to Scouts since they were about five and a half. My oldest is now seventeen and I can really see how much it has helped their confidence and social skills.

Our hut is a traditional wooden framed hut with timber cladding which needed replacing. The grant from The Somerset Fund helped to buy the timber and paint, and also meant we could afford to replace some broken doors to the hut, meaning it will be accessible for people of all abilities.

The way The Somerset Fund supporters have helped us is wonderful and has really made a difference to the fabric of the hut. Not only does it look so much better, it’ll be much warmer and cosier for years to come.”

South Somerset

- **Bayford Mission Hall –£400:** running costs for a small hall serving the community of Bayford on the outskirts of Wincanton
 - **Chard & Crewkerne After Stroke Group – £750:** funding to cover the costs of collecting members to enable them to attend a stroke support group
 - **Hamdon Youth Group – £500:** funding for local youth club to run activities for young people
 - **Hardington Mandeville Hall – £1500:** funding towards the installation of a hearing loop system
 - **Henstridge Youth Club - £676:** youth club sessions for young people aged 11 - 15
 - **Somerton Scout Group – £1,000:** camping equipment for local scout group
 - **St Andrews Scouts, Yeovil – £1,000:** marquee for scout group hiking and camping trips
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Somerset Fund stories - Chard & Crewkerne After Stroke Group



Chard & Crewkerne After Stroke Group provide a weekly support group that brings together around 20 local people who have experienced a stroke.

Volunteer Kate tells us what funding from The Somerset Fund means to her and those she supports.

Having a stroke can impact physical mobility, cognitive ability speech and memory. Lack of mobility can be quite isolating for a wheelchair user. Getting out and about is a real problem and things like cooking and housework become very problematic. Our members have all been through the same thing so have a shared experience - we are a social group as much as anything.

We start our session with physical exercise and exercises aimed specifically at stroke sufferers which are designed to repair the pathways in the brain. We usually do some written work, gentle maths and English, subjects relevant to everyday tasks such as shopping and managing bills.

We sometimes see dramatic improvements over time, in speech and confidence. People who arrive at the group shortly after a stroke are still coming to terms with their new limitations and talking with other sufferers and discussing how each individual copes can be a great relief. Suffering a stroke can make you feel as if your real life is over but seeing that other people in the same boat are still going on holiday. still going to the pub or mowing the lawn is very reassuring.

We're very local - some of us have known each other for years and have shared memories so I think that small and local is our great strength. The grant helped to pay for transporting our clients to the group meetings and helped us keep going for another year. I would say to those who donate to The Somerset Fund that what you are doing is marvellous and helps us to make a big difference.

Somerset Fund stories - Bayford Mission Hall



The community in Bayford purchased their former church hall for the whole community.

Volunteer and local resident Thomas Case tells us how funding is helping to sustain this important community space.

The hall is used for coffee mornings, training sessions and when there's an election it becomes a polling station. Once a month we hold a village community lunch in there. It attracts predominantly older people but it's a great way to socialise and there's a real sense of community there.

We're trying to engender more of a sense of community. We're a relatively small village, 300 people, many of whom are retired. We do have a pub in the village, but there are a lot of older people who don't necessarily want to sit in a pub in the evening.

Our hall puts on community events that offer another way for neighbours to get to know one another. We held a harvest festival in October, and a lot of people came to that. It was an auction of locally grown produce and a good night was had by all. People met neighbours for the first time that they'd been living next to for two years!

So, we've helped bring people together. Communities create a support network; once people talk and get to know each other, they tend to help one another and look out for one another, which is a nice thing.

The grant from The Somerset Fund purchased online booking software so that people can book the hall for their functions, and we also bought a device that we can use to remotely control the heating in the hall.

The grant was very much appreciated. Making a donation to a small charity not only means the money is probably much more appreciated, but it almost certainly means your donation will make more of a difference."



West Somerset and Taunton Deane

- **10Radio – £500:** support for a community radio station in West Somerset to deliver outreach work
 - **2BU – £1,000:** peer support group for LGBT young people in Taunton
 - **Brushford Parish Hall – £1,000:** cooking course for older men living alone or caring for others to improve health, diet and nutrition
 - **Equilibrium – £1,500:** running a specialist bi-polar support groups for those with a diagnosis and their carers
 - **Somerset Community Care Matters – £1,000:** funding to provide one-to-one advice and support for people with disabilities
 - **Stoke St Gregory Allotments – £500:** funding to connect community allotments to a mains water supply
 - **West Buckland Pre-School – £1,000:** funding to help maintain local pre-school facility for isolated village
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Somerset Fund stories - Equilibrium



Equilibrium has been providing specialist peer-support for people living with bi-polar disorder for almost 30 years.

Long-term Volunteer leader Phil Cracknell tells us how The Somerset Fund has supported the group to continue their vital work.

"Bipolar disorder can be frightening and exhausting. The world often falls completely upside down when you receive a diagnosis. Not only is your health in jeopardy, but so is your financial situation, your relationships and even your employment may be compromised.

We help people learn how to manage the condition and to recognise and manage symptoms more effectively. We look at tools and techniques to manage extreme mood swings, the consequences of mania and depression, and help people learn to manage their condition. We work very closely with carers, too, and our group is run entirely by people with bipolar disorder, though we work in conjunction with GPs and other health professionals.

I've had bipolar disorder for over 20 years. Our strength is that only people with the condition really know what the experience is like. We're not able to provide a cure, but we can, perhaps for the first time, provide opportunities for stabilisation, to improve employment prospects and personal relationships.

If we can keep an individual stable, they don't have to return to a psychiatric hospital, which can be so disrupting and very frightening for many people. Our hope is that those diagnosed can lead a happy and fulfilling life, even if it may not seem that now.

We've been providing that support, for 28 years now, to hundreds - if not thousands - of people. We never get as much money as we would like and we have to manage funds very carefully, but we find enough to keep us going. The work I do is important and I'm not banking on retiring just yet – I'm fully committed to helping more people."

Somerset Fund stories - Stoke St. Gregory Allotments



Stoke St Gregory is a small village and an isolated rural community seven miles outside Taunton.

Graham Gleed tells us about the long campaign to get an allotment for the village and how it has given the community so much more than green fingers.

"Many years ago, back in the 1960s, our village allotment was turned into housing. Since then, there has been considerable interest in re-introducing one, but we struggled to find a plot of land until recently.

The allotment serves the whole community and a wide range of people have taken plots: from retired people through to young families. It's a group of people who would otherwise very rarely see each other or talk to one another – let alone on a day-to-day basis.

When we started, we didn't just want this to be an allotment: we wanted it to be a community space. We also set up a community orchard, planting a couple of dozen apple and pear trees that will benefit the community for years to come. There has also been enthusiasm to start a bee-keeping group. It's so much more than just an allotment.

Our village shop has just closed and the pub is up for sale, so our other project is to create a community shop and pub. We'll supply the shop with sustainable, short supply chain produce such as honey, chutneys, fruit and vegetables, and flowers.

Robin Ferret (pictured) was the father of the project and the backbone of the effort. He was the person who pushed for the allotment from the start. Robin manages the site and spends a considerable amount of time there. It's had such a positive impact on him.

We're an isolated rural community in the bottom 50% of the deprivation index. We need to make our village sustainable in the broadest sense of the word. We're faced with an ageing population, with very little for young people to do in the village, so it's great to see kids running around the community orchard, or pulling up carrots. The older people are also getting great benefit from the work they're doing on their plots.

The people who have donated to The Somerset Fund can see that projects such as ours have a very positive impact on the community - it would be a much poorer place without our allotments."

Our wonderful supporters

We're particularly grateful to Somerset County Council for partnering with us to help us bring our vision for The Somerset Fund to life.



Their funding enabled us to start-up the Fund and provides 50% matched funding for every donation, which means our supporters make an even bigger impact in our communities.

Thank you

- Abbey Manor Charitable Trust
- Bristol & West Endowment (Quartet Community Foundation)
- Mr & Mrs Virgin
- Crewkerne Running Club
- Level Up South West Ltd
- Mogers Drewett
- Rebecca Pow MP
- Somerset County Council
- Stantec
- Stokes Partners
- Tauntfield Ltd
- Venetia Hoare & Hamish Leng

We're also hugely grateful to our other individual donors who wish to remain anonymous.



The lucky winner of Stantec's raffle receives a signed rugby shirt in aid of The Somerset Fund



Staff at Somerset County Council on their Somerset-themed dress down day



Stokes Partners hand over a cheque to Laura Blake from SCF with funds raised by their sponsorship of the Crewkerne 10k run



Spaxton Junior FC



Active & In Touch

Thank you

for changing lives in Somerset

We hope you'll consider continuing your support of The Somerset Fund. You can also help us to make an even bigger difference by spreading the word and encouraging others to support our work.



Hamdon Youth Club



Street Men's Shed

Contact us:

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