

# Social Impact Report 2020/21

## A Lifeline of Support



# Growing Stronger Communities

We partner with communities to build better futures together.

Our mission is growing stronger communities. We invest resources into projects that bring people together and change lives.

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## A year of challenge & change

Covid-19 was a challenge for us all in 2020/21 and communities across the North West have been disproportionately affected. Social isolation and an overriding sense of uncertainty threatened to entrench long-term societal issues across the places we support.

This made our mission of growing stronger communities more important than ever.

In 2020/21, we rose up to make the biggest impacts where they were needed most, adapting the way we support people and forging new connections to get things done. When the first lockdown happened, we stepped up – delivering immediate support for those in urgent need as well as interventions that really change lives over the long-term.

This report looks back at the services, projects and interventions we delivered, and provides insight into impacts achieved - both as a direct service deliverer and in partnership with like-minded organisations.

As always, evaluation, analysis and reflection are core to what we do. They provide essential insight into what we deliver, start discussions with existing and new partners, and help us to shape future services.

In order to cover the full breadth of our offer, we've approached this report in a different way to last year. We have chosen to focus on how our activities meet the different, evolving needs of all customers no matter what their age.

Fundamentally, we believe the legacy of Covid-19 should be about unity and hope for a better future. Our own hope is that this spirit of resilient togetherness is reflected in the 2020/21 report.

We would like to thank everyone on the team, our partners and communities for the inspiring and selfless way they have responded to new realities over these 12 challenging months.



**Sarah Jane Saunders**  
Chair



**Kate Shone**  
Managing Director



## Who we are

Torus Foundation is a registered charity and part of Torus, a growth and regeneration group with a strong social purpose and the North West's largest provider of affordable homes.

Our work is all about developing sustainable partnerships with people and places to create a platform for lasting change. We strive to create better connected, independent and sustainable neighbourhoods, supporting people to play an active part in strong local communities.

This broad-ranging mandate means we interact inclusively with people, stakeholders and neighbourhoods. It also means we work with a broad range of customers, supporting all ages and abilities to take up new life changes, to grow and to thrive.



## Funding

**In 2020/21, our total income was £3.4m (2019/20: £4.2m):**

Gift Aid	£1.2m
Donation from Torus	£0.8m
Income from charitable activities	£1.2m
Other income	£0.2m
<b>Total</b>	<b>£3.4m</b>



## Areas of focus

### Health & Wellbeing

Providing activities that support good health and wellbeing



### Employment & Skills

Supporting people into jobs and training opportunities



### Young people

Providing a safe environment and activities for young people



### Money Matters

Assisting people with money and benefits



### Go Digital

Helping people to get online



## Executive Summary

Our core purpose of standing **'for stronger communities'** has never been more relevant. We work across some of the country's most disadvantaged neighbourhoods; the global pandemic has only worsened some of the inequalities that exist within them.

However, against this challenging operational backdrop we have managed to deliver on our mandate: to provide essential services that directly support communities across Liverpool, St Helens and Warrington, to break down barriers and unlock opportunity.

We've also remained active as a positive force for change and economic stability. Although Covid-19 has been a singular disruptor, the challenges it has presented have been varied. We deliver services, projects and interventions to all age groups and each group has faced their own unique set of issues.

Almost all children saw their education disrupted in 2020/21, but it is the children from more deprived areas who have fallen the furthest behind with their learning. Ofcom's 2021 Technology Tracker found that one in five children did not have access to an appropriate device for their online home-learning needs.

Beyond this, young people in our communities have had to adapt to schools and most youth provisions shutting their doors under Government restrictions, including our own FireFit Hub. To combat this, we created a significant amount of digital content for FireFit Hub members and the general public, reaching out wherever possible to connect when it was most challenging to do so.

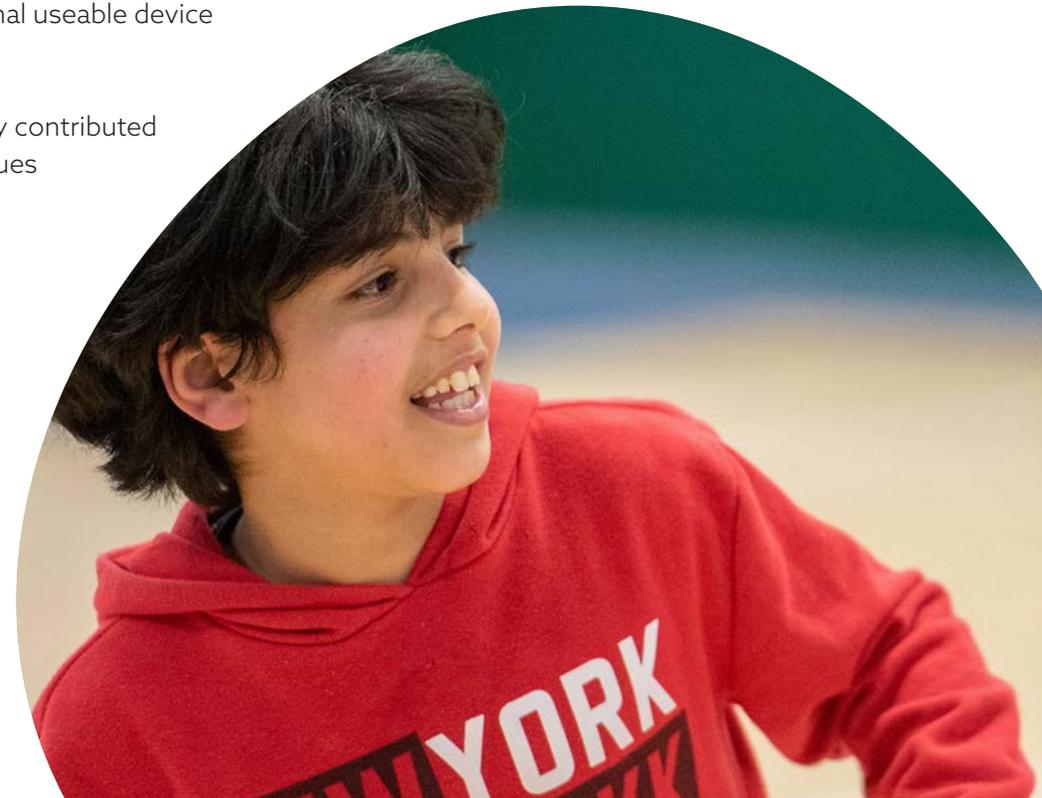
However, this shift to online services further emphasised the digital divide that exists between disadvantaged and more privileged households. A 2019 Ofcom survey found that 23.4% of five to 15-year-olds in the poorest households did not have access to both an educational useable device and to broadband.

Digital exclusion has undoubtedly contributed to rising health and wellbeing issues throughout the pandemic. The YouGov 2020 Personality Study revealed that 53% of Britons said that the crisis had harmed their mental health.

Moreover, the UK Household Longitudinal Survey also suggested that psychological distress was more prevalent amongst younger people (18 – 30), as well as older people who had been advised to shield.

Looking at the situation for people of working age, the furlough scheme helped ensure a large proportion jobs were protected.

Despite this protection, there was still a marked increase in job losses. Our data reflects this picture, with Universal Credit (UC) claims amongst the Torus tenant population increasing over the past year.



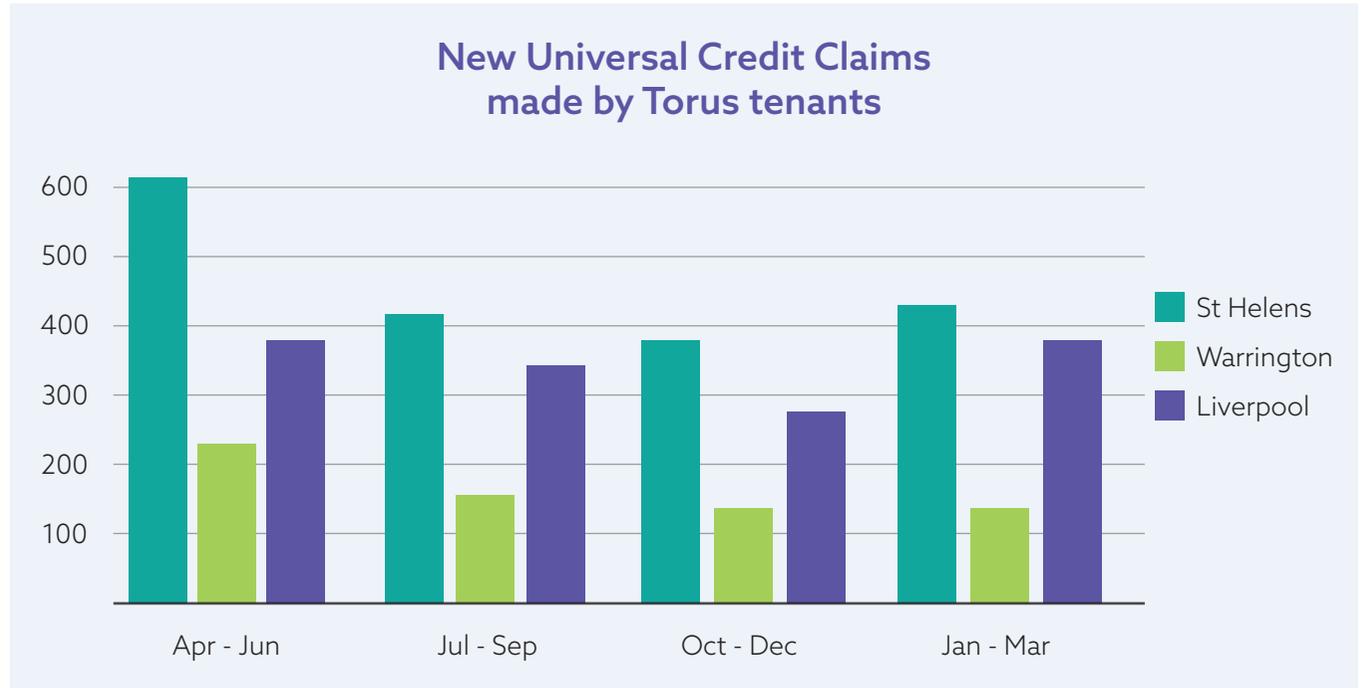
# Executive Summary

In St Helens, for example, 3.9% of all Torus tenants made a new claim for UC in the first quarter of the financial year. Whilst this was the highpoint of new claims, the new claims curve remained at higher than normal levels throughout the year.

Unemployment is especially difficult for our families when two-thirds of tenants living in social housing already have incomes in the bottom 40% income brackets (The Centre for Social Justice, 2018). For our over 55 customers, loneliness has been the biggest challenge. This is due to need for shielding coupled with these generations being the most uncomfortable with digital technology and therefore struggling to connect virtually (Elder, 2020).

Despite these adversities, the picture is becoming brighter as we move through April 2021 and beyond. Jobs adverts have returned to pre-pandemic levels and the number of 'payrolled jobs' are creeping back-up towards 2019 levels (Reuters, 2021). The vaccine rollout continues apace and with it comes a new wave of optimism and hope.

**The operating environment for 2021/22 already looks much brighter.**



The data clearly shows that UC claims remained at higher levels than would be normally expected throughout the year

# Navigating the pandemic

2020/21 called for a different kind of service delivery. We developed a three-step approach at the start of the pandemic to make sure we connected safely with customers and communities:

## 1 Stepping Out

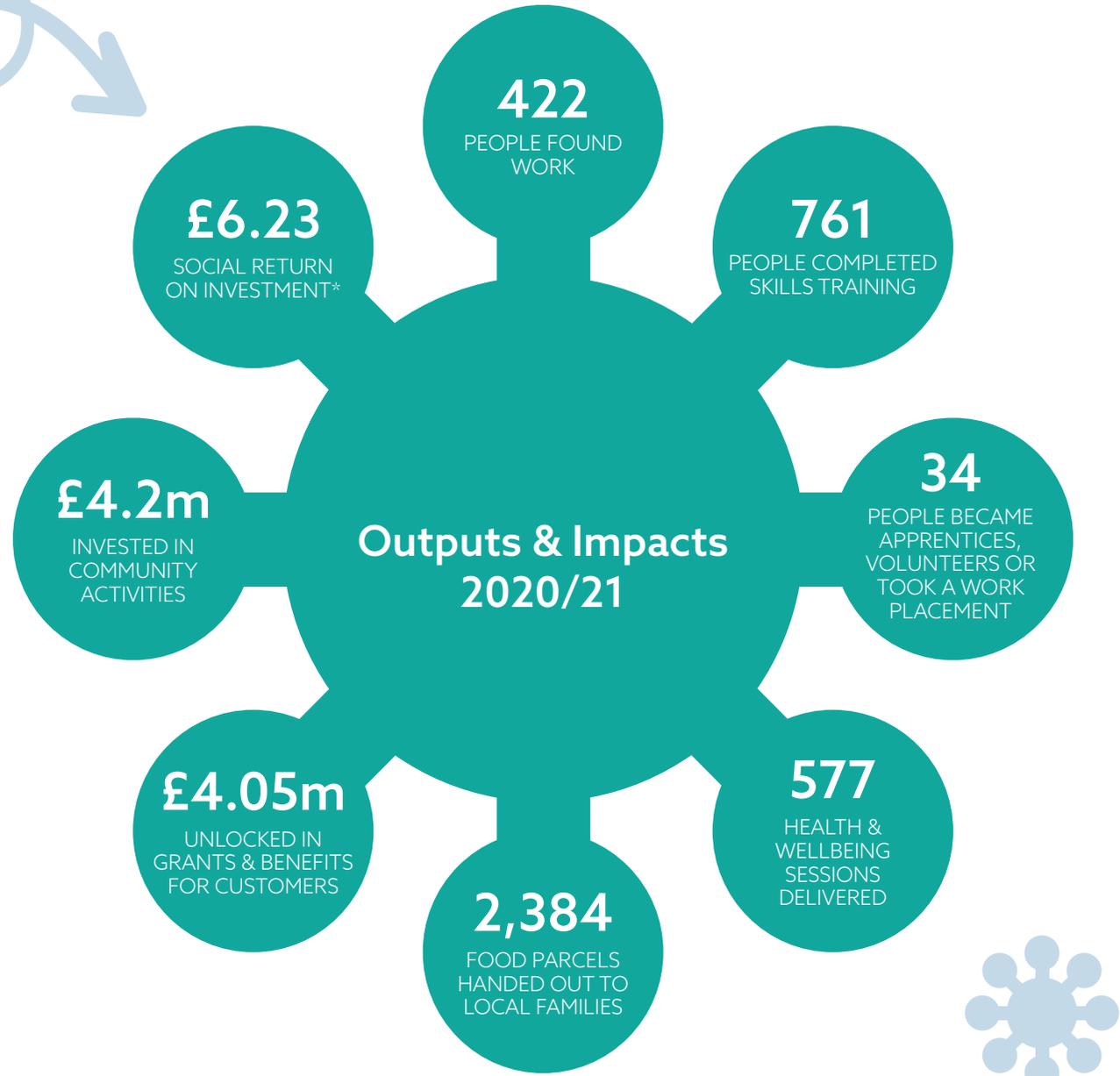
We took the difficult decision in March to temporarily cease face to face group activities, working in line with Government guidance.

## 2 Stepping In

We adapted to increasing calls for support by connecting virtually, wherever possible. Working with Torus teams, agencies and local partners, we strove to meet fast-changing needs.

## 3 Stepping Up

Fundamentally, we committed to reaching more people and to delivering a spectrum of essential services on the frontline. Working with agility, we launched new services as a fast, effective crisis responder whilst continuing core services to change lives.



\* Calculations based on the HACT database (Social Value Bank v4 2018) and externally verified by a member of The Social Audit Network.

# Lifelong Impacts

To ensure we deliver for all of our communities, we carry out activity to support every stage of life



**Pre-School Age**  
The Bedrock



Nourishment  
Through Food  
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**Young Adulthood**  
Life Challenges



IT and Holiday  
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ILM Access  
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Christmas  
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Build  
confidence  
Overcoming  
barriers  
Career  
aspirations



**Childhood Primary School Age**  
Learning

Confidence and  
aspirations develop

**Youth Secondary School Age**  
Responsibility



Security  
Strength  
Skills

# Goal Of Independence

Peace of Mind



## Families & Communities Togetherness

## Later Life Verve & Vigour



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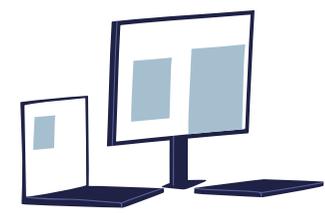
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## Pre-School Age

Early, formative experiences have lifelong impacts. This makes providing support in the first years of life a critical part of our work.

Partnering with children's centres is crucial in supporting families with pre-school age children. These facilities support improved parenting skills, leading to increased school readiness, identify child development issues early on and link families with other services for support and remediation.

Evidence also shows a link between families that engage with children's centres and lower rates of obesity in children. Early contact with other children also supports language development and goes on to impact educational attainment at a later age.

The global pandemic increased the importance of children's centres, as access to essential social contact and to nutritious food became increasingly difficult for many.

In 2020/21 we also provided local councils in Liverpool with additional resources to reach out and specifically target Torus tenants with children under five, encouraging them to register and then engage with local children's centres. During lockdown, centres were able to call tenants and provide one-to-one support as well as limited face-to-face delivery.

### The Headlines

**284**

additional families engaged with children's centres in Liverpool; engagement from Torus households rose by 27% to 58%

**204**

pre-school nursery packs were delivered; children's centres personalised these packs to families depending on children's ages and developmental stage. These would often contain toys to promote sensory development such as balls, tactile toys and chubby pencils. For older infants, packs would contain resources for parents to support their child's learning by undertaking activities at home.



## Christmas Fundraising Appeal

Spreading festive cheer across the heartlands - Liverpool, St Helens and Warrington.

### Goals

To reduce feelings of social isolation and ensure children are not excluded



### Fundamentals

**£5,353**

raised in 28 days by Torus Group and partners, with Torus Foundation match-funding £4,750

**158**

Christmas gifts for young children

**357**

gifts for those at risk of social isolation

The Christmas holiday period was very different for all of us in 2020, particularly for many of our Torus customers. Each Christmas, staff across Torus Group help to collect toys for families and gifts for older people who might otherwise be feeling lonely, forgotten and socially isolated.

Whilst we could not collect presents this year due to Covid-19 restrictions, staff continued their support. The Torus Group Christmas Fundraising Appeal was launched, raising over £5,300. As the fundraising went over target, funds were given to Cash4Kids, Warrington Borough Council Toy Appeal and St Helens Together to support their appeals.



## Primary School Age



For many children and young people, home is not always a safe and nurturing environment. In 2020/21, the key issues in our communities included lack of access to food, clothes and digital technology.

Covid-19 has also impacted emotional health and wellbeing. Isolation from peers and support networks, including school, have been a key factors; school closures have also caused many children to fall behind with their learning.

We supported children and young people with projects designed to supplement existing services. Our focus shifted during the initial months of the year, from welfare calls to one-to-one interventions and visits from our Outreach Team.

### The Headlines

27

hours of on-demand virtual content created to supplement learning, encourage physical activity and human connection

24

vulnerable young people provided with one-to-one support and mentoring

280

hours of outreach activity

## Staying Connected To School

Computer distribution, Warrington

### Goals

To help prevent children and young people falling behind with their education

### Fundamentals

58

digitally excluded families provided with Raspberry Pi Computer Systems

Raspberry Pi is an affordable computer that can be used for essential digital tasks.

Covid-19 exposed a stark digital divide in the UK, with 1.9 million households having no access to the Internet and tens of millions more reliant on pay-as-you-go services. As a result, many children lacked the technology needed to stay up to date with schoolwork.

Teachers across Warrington helped to identify those families whose children were unable to engage in online learning. The Foundation then stepped in, partnering with Warrington Wolves Charitable Foundation and CoderDojo Foundation to provide essential computer equipment.

Vicky was struggling to keep four children schooled and entertained without access to the Internet. She was given a new PC, which has made a huge difference.

Vicky now plans to improve her own IT skills and work towards customer service training and qualifications.

“

**The kids are beyond excited for having a computer to do school work on. We wanted to make sure that you know we really appreciate your work and support.**

Vicky, parent

”



# Primary School Age



## Holiday Camp Alternatives

Food distribution and youth activity across Liverpool, St Helens and Warrington

### Goals

To keep young people fed and engaged with wellbeing activities

### Fundamentals

**1,552**

contacts through 'Boredom Busters', virtual holiday clubs and other online activities

**303**

supermarket vouchers worth £20 distributed over the Easter holidays

**454**

activity bags and 180 meals delivered during the summer holiday

**490**

breakfast, lunch and game packs distributed in October

**503**

selection boxes and colouring packs handed out in December

This year, physical school holiday camps were not able to go ahead and alternative provision was needed. The impact of losing holiday camps was well documented in the press as they provide food security for many families when children are not at school, an issue that was brought to national attention by England footballer Marcus Rashford.

Torus families and the wider community who usually benefitted from school holiday camps were provided with food vouchers with breakfast and lunch items. Additionally, our in-school activities continued despite closures and our breakfast clubs in 9 schools still managed to benefit 831 children.

Beyond food provision, the team hosted virtual activity sessions and provided curated activity packs. These contained games, sports equipment and supplements for online activities.

**"It's been nice chatting to the staff again and not being forgotten about. I'm excited to be able to go back to the centre when I can."**

Youth Member

**"It's been good to see some familiar faces while promoting the online sessions we've created. It's been fun setting some sporty challenges and the kids were keen to give us more ideas today!"**

Anthony, Assistant Sports & Facilities Manager

“

**I'm still doing sports with the videos online. It's nice to talk to someone else outside the house.**

Youth Member

”



## Secondary School Age



The transition to adulthood is a pivotal time in people's lives. It covers the ages when aspirations become clear and are achieved through confidence and personal resilience. Physical and emotional changes happen, and many people enter the workplace for the first time.

It is well documented that the pandemic has hit this age group extremely hard. Restrictions have meant months of virtual learning, more time isolated from friends, and the cancelling of important social activities. Worryingly, 46% of parents and carers say their teen has shown signs of a new or worsening mental health condition since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020.

### The headlines

**1,552**

under 18s engaged with health and wellbeing activities\*

**519**

street-based contacts with young people

**£25,000**

Committed to invest per year for 4 years upon becoming a Founding Patron of Warrington Youth Zone

\* excluding support offered by FireFit Hub

## Warrington Youth Zone

Expanding youth provision further across our heartlands In 2020/21 we became a founding patron of Warrington Youth Zone. Currently under construction, Warrington Youth Zone is a brand-new youth charity that will be open to young people aged 7-19 and up to 25 for those with additional needs. By supporting the new charity, we are actively helping to provide young people with somewhere to go, something to do and someone to talk to.

The aim of the Youth Zone is to raise the aspirations, enhance prospects and improve health and wellbeing for young people in Warrington. It will do this by providing affordable access to a wide range of programmes, services and activities including sports, arts, music, media, dance, drama, mentoring and much more.

The Youth Zone will also have a dedicated enterprise and employability suite, which aims to equip young people who are not in education, employment or training with skills for the future.



# Secondary School Age



## Firefit Hub

Youth engagement and pathways of change, South Liverpool

## Goals

To provide engaging youth support services as well as sports and wellbeing opportunities for the wider community

## Fundamentals

**5,791**

people safely visited the Hub to take part in sporting activities or connect and relax

**918**

active members

**1,767**

Combined total views of our Friday night quiz that was produced as part of our digital content including fitness and arts & crafts videos

**27**

hours of on demand virtual content created

FireFit Hub is a cornerstone of Torus Foundation. Services are designed in collaboration with our members and partners, ensuring the facility inspires and empowers members and the broader community to reach their full potential.

A key stakeholder and pillar in the South Liverpool community, FireFit Hub is a place where young people feel safe and secure, have a sense of belonging, feel trusted, respected and listened to, and do not feel judged.

The trust in FireFit Hub is indicated by the local authority asking the Hub to deliver key coronavirus messaging to the L8 community when coronavirus cases were spiking. We were specifically tasked with taking the standard Governmental notices and reformatting them into an appearance and tone we knew tenants would respond to.

FireFit Hub's state of the art facilities include: 3G Astro Pitches, a Sports Hall and commercial office space with meeting rooms.

Khalel\* is a FireFit Hub member who is adapting to life in Liverpool after fleeing his home country and seeking asylum. Prior to lockdown, he would visit the Hub often for football and chill zone sessions. Then, we took the decision to follow Government advice and close our doors.

During the months of lockdown, FireFit's outreach team often saw Khalel out in the community. He mentioned how he was struggling and often felt down. The outreach team arranged for Khalel to attend the centre for one-to-one football sessions to keep him active and have time away from home.

Our outreach team also identified that Khalel was struggling with food and arranged for the family to receive a family sized food portion once a week. The team also arranged for gas and energy vouchers to be given to the family to support with bills. Khalel\* expressed how these things helped the family a lot and he was very appreciative of the support given. His low moods happen far less frequently now.

\* Not his real name



# Secondary School Age



## Street Contacts & Children In Need

Ensuring we connect with the L8 community and beyond Since September 2020 we have delivered a new programme that provides regular weekly outreach sessions in South Liverpool, funded by The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Children in Need. Initially the programme was designed to support young people into attending centre-based provision; due to the pandemic the programme has continued to offer wider street-based support for young people.

Our Youth Outreach Workers are an essential asset who spend their time engaging the L8 and wider community. When they are on their rounds, they will identify young people idling on the street or in local parks and engage with them if it's safe to do so. Once in conversation, a relationship is built through establishing interests and hobbies.

Interventions from this point are tailored to meet the needs of the young person. However, common outcomes include: sign posting to external services that provide additional support; delivery of street-based activities such as sport; encouraging, and when needing to, physically taking young people to a centre-based activity, whether that be at FireFit Hub or through and external provider.

During the first six months of the project, the following outputs have been achieved:

**280**  
outreach hours delivered

**519**  
street based contacts with young people

**322**  
individual young people engaged (83% males/17% females)

**65%**  
of those engaged, are from BAME communities



## Wellbeing Calls

Checking in on young FireFit members and tenants across our heartlands

### Goals

To keep track of tenant wellbeing and help us allocate services

### Fundamentals

**716**

Wellbeing Calls were made from FireFit to young members alone'

+

Additional resource to make the calls was funded by Liverpool company RS Clare, a globally recognised manufacturer keen to support their local community

During lockdown, wellbeing calls were made to parents/carers of junior FireFit members and other age groups, mostly children and the elderly. These calls allowed the team to promote the Hub's virtual programme, which included sport sessions, crafts and quizzes. If a member said they were struggling, the team would signpost them to further support.

One parent of a member who is autistic noted that **"It's been a tough year for us, and it's been really nice to have someone check in on us as a family."**

# Young Adulthood



Early adulthood is a time when some of our customers encounter serious barriers to happiness, health and fulfilment. Increased pressure, both financial and emotional, means people in this age group require secure employment to build stability and progress in life.

The pandemic intensified many pressures whilst making it more difficult to access support. In the first six months of the year, the number of people in paid employment in the UK dropped by over 650,000. The worst hit were people with insecure jobs and on low incomes, accounting for a high percentage of social housing tenants. Women in particular were struck hard due to the reduction of service industry roles and the added childcare responsibilities caused by school closures.

Those living in Torus communities are best placed to overcome 'life's challenges' when they have:

- **Security** a stable roof over their head and reliable source of food.
- **Skills** to feel fulfilled, build confidence and develop a career.
- **Strength** both physical and mental. To stay healthy and maintain resilience.

The spotlights in this chapter reflect how specific services and projects helped develop these faculties despite the difficulties of Covid-19, with delivery suspended or moved online. However, before going into these details, here are our overarching headlines for the year.

## The headlines

### 406

people were enrolled onto training courses

### 1196

people were helped to search for work and develop new skills

### 369

energy vouchers were provided, equivalent to the value of £18,081 (since January 2021)\*\*

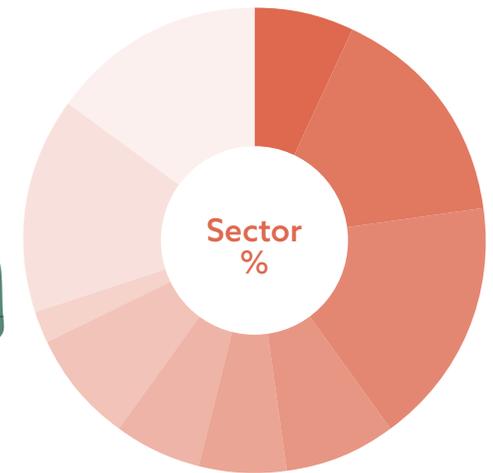
### 1,884

benefits advice referrals, delivering a £4,150,235.02 in total value to Torus tenants.

\*\* energy vouchers help to pay fuel bills during colder months and are provided to tenants in fuel poverty

## 422

people were supported into jobs; 50% of which were key worker roles



● Care	17%
● Warehouse	16%
● Construction/Trades	15%
● Other	15%
● Customer Service/ Retail	08%
● Professional	08%
● Cleaner	07%
● Driver	06%
● Hospitality	06%
● Security	02%

# Young Adulthood



## The Intermediary Labour Market (ILM) & Access to Work

Employment support for young people across the Liverpool City Region

### Goals

to create practical employment opportunities for young people aged between 16 and 24

### Fundamentals

23

people gained six-month paid training places

Focused

opportunities across a range of employers and sectors, including construction, life sciences and human resources

Young people are amongst the most affected by Covid-19 in terms of job prospects and access to training. 'Intermediary Labour Market' essentially means short term placements; ILM Access to Work was a European Social Fund (ESF) funded project designed to unlock practical employment opportunities for young people of working age. The programme offered six-month work experience placements across several sectors and paying a training allowance.

Vacancies were open to those who were not in employment, education or training and living in the Liverpool City Region. One beneficiary of the programme in 2020/21 was Elisabeth. Elisabeth was a Swimming Teacher until the pandemic forced her redundancy. Out of work and unsure of what to do next Elisabeth came to the ILM programme. She was successfully placed at Innovative Alliance, a training provider based in Knowsley, securing a six-month paid training placement.

Despite facing personal issues, Elisabeth managed to keep progressing through the placement thanks to regular one-to-one support from her Torus Foundation Employment & Skills Advisor, and the flexibility of both the programme and her employer.

Elisabeth now has a permanent position with Innovative Alliance.

**"I felt like I could go to my advisor if I needed to for additional support."**

Elisabeth, ILM Participant

**"ILM has done so much more for me than I ever expected. I have been introduced to a sector I wouldn't have previously considered for employment. My abilities and skills have been recognised and nurtured to enable me to grow during these 6 months leading to the amazing opportunity of permanent employment."**

Paddy completed an ILM placement at HMS and is now working as an Electrician. He said,

**"The training programmes are definitely worthwhile, whether you are qualified or not. I have gained new mates, a company van and a full-time job. I've also had the opportunity to build up a good reputation for myself within HMS. It has really changed my life, more than she will ever know."**

“

**My advisor has gone above her role and in times that are so difficult for all at present.**

Paddy, ILM Participant

”



# Young Adulthood



## Women in Construction

Breaking workplace barriers across the heartlands

### Goals

to provide women over the age of 19 with hands on insight into different aspects of the construction industry and learn transferable skills

### Fundamentals

**50+**

women have gained placements since March 19

**19+**

open to any Torus tenant aged 19 and over

**In**

partnership with St Helens Chamber of Commerce

From bricklaying to plastering, over 2 1/2 weeks female participants took part in practical sessions alongside classroom-based learning to learn transferable skills. Some participants joined with limited employment experience or low confidence; others embraced the chance to rediscover previous skills and potential.

One of the successful participants is Molly. Out of work, Molly realised she was losing some of her confidence and spoke to our Employment and Skills Team about wanting to build skills but not exactly knowing what was out there. Enrolled into Women in Construction, Molly got stuck into various construction-related tasks. As the course ended, she discovered the paid placements available through ILM Access to Work and undertook a six-month placement at HMS.

Molly applied to join HMS as an apprentice. After impressing the panel with her attitude, motivation and interest in working with the business, she has begun working full-time as an Apprentice Electrician.

Molly explains, **“I wanted to be motivated but I just didn’t know what it was I wanted to do. Since beginning that first step with Cath and the team, I can’t believe how far I’ve come along. I’m proud to call myself an Apprentice Electrician. I’d encourage others to forget timelines and to trust in your own progress.”**

“

**My life has completely changed in the year I’ve been supported by Torus Foundation and HMS**

Molly, Apprentice

”



# Adulthood



## New Leaf

Unlocking tenant potential across Warrington and Cheshire

## Goals

to help people into more meaningful and stable work or training through one-two-one mentoring, money advice, volunteering, mental health support and much more

## Fundamentals

**955**

people supported during the year; 199 under 25

**102**

people started work

**75**

people took up further education or training

**52**

people who had previously been 'economically inactive' started looking for work

**284**

people were provided with money advice

**49**

people completed volunteering placements

**187**

people received mental health support

**60**

people received support around starting their own businesses

**220**

training courses were completed

**60%**

of participants reported an increase in self-worth and 70% reported an increase in aspirations

Overall, New Leaf achieved 201% of targets for getting people into employment.

New Leaf is led by Torus Foundation and is part of the Building Better Opportunities (BBO) programme, funded by the European Social Fund and The National Lottery Community Fund.

Going into the Covid-19 pandemic, New Leaf had an active caseload of around 580 people.

For these people, the challenges they were facing became significantly different almost overnight: employment opportunities they were working towards disappeared, training courses were cancelled and support agencies stopped meeting.

Participants with families had to deal with additional stresses and participants living alone became much more isolated.

New Leaf continued recruiting new participants during the pandemic as the need for its services became increasingly apparent.



**new leaf**  
a torus foundation service



# Adulthood



## New Leaf

During the early months of the pandemic, the focus was on one-to-one telephone calls between participants and their mentors. For those with children, these calls were often the only 'adult' conversations in a week, giving them an opportunity to focus on themselves and their own wellbeing.

As recruitment in certain sectors restarted in the second half of 2020, New Leaf was able to direct participants towards industries with vacancies - highlighting the positive impact that many of these roles were having on the national efforts to get through the pandemic. Participants found employment in cleaning roles, logistics and roles relating to Coronavirus testing and vaccination. Between July and September 2020, 12 of the 21 participants who started a new job found employment in the cleaning, refuse or distribution industries.

One participant to go on and secure a dream job directly with the NHS was Reem from Winsford, who moved to the UK after leaving Jordan and securing Refugee Status. Reem needed to improve her English and gain UK-recognised qualifications; she also wanted to boost her self-confidence to achieve her dream of becoming an NHS nurse.

Reem worked hard to develop a healthcare focused CV with her mentor and completed a Job Seeking Course. This taught her best practices in looking for work, completing applications and preparing for interviews. In addition, Reem undertook a series of qualifications specific to career goals including English for Speakers of Other Languages and Mathematics.

New Leaf bought Reem a laptop with a camera so she could engage with remote training opportunities. She was also supported to manage her anxiety through the New Leaf mental health service provided by Making Space. As a result, Reem secured a part-time healthcare role with BUPA and went on to become a Bank Healthcare Assistant within the NHS. She intends to continue studying alongside her job so she can achieve her dream role as an NHS nurse.

Reem (pictured) says, **"New Leaf is incredible! It helped me to take a big step in my life by giving me more support than I ever expected. My mentor is one of the people who changed my life last year and I am very grateful. I couldn't have gotten my first job in healthcare without New Leaf."**



Additionally, New Leaf helped people like Julie: **"The staff were brilliant - they really listen to you. They gave great advice and helped me work through the options. They were really encouraging."**



**New Leaf has given me my life back... I can now see a future.**

Stephanie, New Leaf participant

# Adulthood



## RAISE Benefit Service

We commission Raise to support Torus residents across the heartlands with their money and debt management

### Goals

to provide free, confidential, high quality advice and training around welfare benefits, debt, and financial capability issues

### Fundamentals

A service funded in part by Torus Foundation

**1,569**

referrals

**£3,850,238**

in value gained for tenants through welfare and benefits advice

RAISE is an independent charity providing free, confidential, high quality advice and training around Welfare Benefits, Debt, and Money Management issues. In practice, its value can be seen in the story of Mrs J, who was referred for help with benefits when she was given a new tenancy with Torus.

Initially, Bedroom Tax implications reduced Miss J's Housing Benefit, despite her having three children in a three-bed home. RAISE stepped in to ensure full Housing Benefit was provided and this was backdated to the start of the tenancy so Miss J was not out of pocket.

The support team also identified that Miss J's youngest son had disabilities and successfully completed a Child DLA application.

Before RAISE became involved, Miss J was in financial hardship. Once the Child DLA became payable for the youngest child, Disabled and Severely Disabled Child Element became payable on Miss J's Tax Credits. We also completed a Carers' Allowance application, which will entitle Miss J to the Carers Premium on her ESA.

Following intensive support, we expect to increase Miss J's income by £312.67 per week. This has reduced a lot of Miss J's stress and anxiety about financial issues and allows her to move on with her life.



# Adulthood

## Financial Inclusion

Ensuring tenants across our heartlands can manage their finances

### Goals

to provide free, confidential, high quality advice and training around welfare benefits, debt, and financial capability issues

### Fundamentals

144

people engaged with the Supportive Energy service delivering an estimated saving of £6,252.54

£299,997.02

in value gained for tenants from 288 referrals

Household income levels across our heartland communities are typically lower than in the Midlands and southern half of the UK. The impact of the pandemic has added to the financial pressure faced by people across the region and this has been evidenced by an increased demand for our services.

The support on offer enables people to maintain their tenancies, feed their families and keep them warm and housed. The team also assists with debt management and affordable finance.

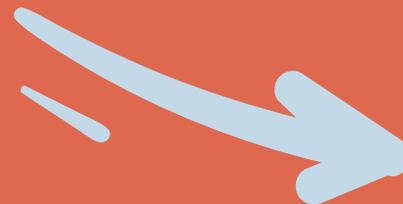
The delivery of this service is best represented by the case of Mr. B, who was referred to us by an Income Officer in January 2021. He was struggling financially and had no cooker or fridge/freezer as both had broken and he could not afford to replace them. When contact was made, he said that life was a constant uphill battle.

“

**I can't thank you enough, you are an amazing person. You have helped me out in so many ways.**

Mr B., Financial Inclusion recipient

”



**Following a long telephone conversation, we identified several issues we were able to help Mr. B in several ways, including:**

- Liverpool Citizen Support application completed on Mr B's behalf for help with white goods and financial assistance. He received a fridge/freezer, cooker and financial help with food, gas and electric. The value was £800.
- A referral to Energy Projects Plus and Supportive Energy was made, Mr B received £147 in energy vouchers to help with costs in the coldest months in the year.
- Referred Mr B to L6 Community Centre. Mr B is now using the Food Union and says it gives him access to a variety of good affordable food making his money stretch further. It has been a journey of support for Mr B and a full wrap around service has been provided to help get him back on his feet.

# Adulthood

## Digital Inclusion

Ensuring Torus communities can get online

### Goals

to increase the number of digitally included households across our neighborhoods

### Fundamentals

197

tablets distributed across Torus communities

200GB

of data given to tenants (typically equivalent to 67 months of data for an individual)

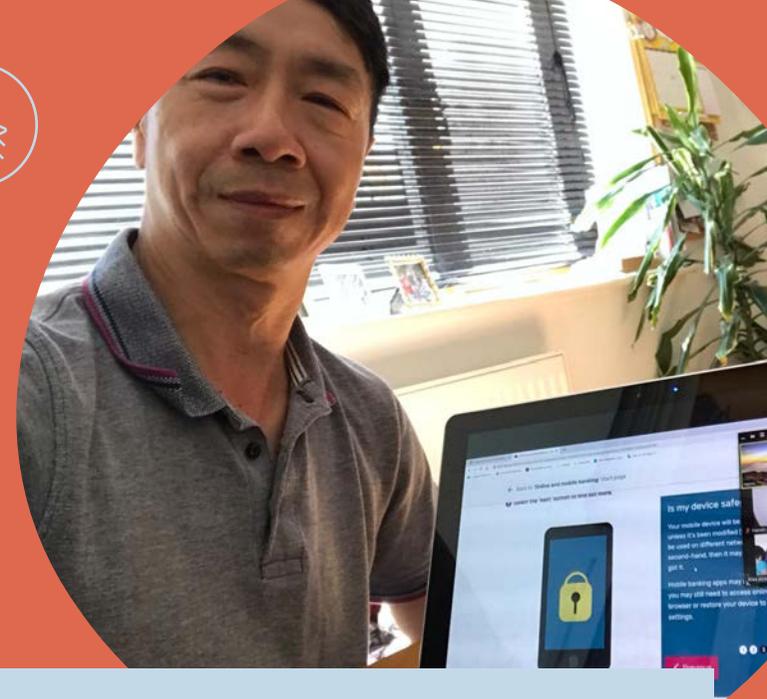
54

tenants into work and 80 into training following digital mentoring, kit and data

33

digital virtual hub sessions delivered

Exclusion from the internet and digital technology was present before the pandemic. It is not new. The pandemic has simply highlighted digital exclusion and poverty by removing alternative means of communication and making it essential to communicate and transact digitally.



Tenants now need technology to carry out many basic tasks: home working, accessing health care, connecting with family and friends, buying food, entertainment, finding a home and managing money.

To put the severity of digital exclusion into context: there are 1.9 million households in the UK without internet access and 4.7 million UK homes have struggled to afford their telecoms bills this year.

### In 2020/21, the team brought together several projects to deliver value for tenants:

- **Include IT Mersey**  
a BBO funded project since 2016 delivering entry level digital skills to job seekers in St Helens. Service users were given tablets and data to continue their training. 30 users who would not have been able to complete the course otherwise did so.
- **Get Yourself onLine**  
an emergency covid funded project from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. Allowed us to deliver 30 tablets and data to older and vulnerable tenants.
- **Tenant Voice**  
a project to maintain tenant involvement in Torus services digitally. 11 laptops were delivered to Tenant voice representatives.
- **Critical Connections**  
a lottery emergency covid funded (£30,553) project to help unemployed tenants gain digital skills and apply for work online during the pandemic. Resulted in 26 job starts and 46 people in employment related training.
- **Connection Communities**  
This project was delivered with emergency Covid funding from St Helens Council (£20,000). It tackled isolation and digital exclusion in the vulnerable and elderly population by distributing tablets and educating people on how to use them for video calls and basic services. 125 tablets were procured and 26 have been distributed - the remaining balance will be delivered to the community in 2021/22

# Adulthood



The value of our digital inclusion and employability services is clear to see in case studies.

## Impact for customers include:

Gary suffers from anxiety and depression and was finding it difficult to order his medication, this caused additional stress. Torus Foundation provided Gary with a tablet and the skills to use it so he can stay on top of his appointments, prescriptions and contact family. In response to the support, Gary said

**"I feel a bit more in control and less isolated. Using Facetime to stay in touch has made a difference because if I didn't, I would really struggle without contact as I'm quite isolated I feel closer to my family and more involved."**

John was referred to Torus Foundation by the Job Centre as he was at risk of losing his new job because his shift pattern had changed, and he could no longer rely on public transport to commute. He urgently needed a bike so that he could continue getting to and from work. He also needed PPE for his new role. Through the Foundation employability fund John received a bike, lock, helmet, lights, and PPE.

John also informed his advisor he could only afford a basic mobile phone and no internet access which made communicating over his rent and with the council difficult. Receiving a tablet and data through the Critical Connections project allowed John to contact Citizens Advice, Torus, debt collectors and St Helens Council, ensuring his tenancy was secure. John said **"I just want to say thank you for your help, it means a lot. Torus foundation helped, because in the past I've been passed from pillar to post, and you sorted some of my issues. Thank you for that."** John has now been offered a Team Leader position which gives him a permanent, full time contract.

“

**I'm very grateful for the support received from James and Cath at Torus Foundation.**

”

Gary, Torus resident

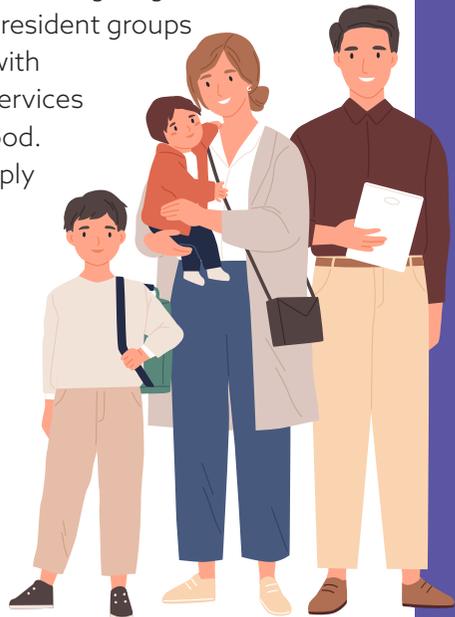


# Families and Communities

Building stronger communities is at the heart of our activity and is one of our key missions. Stronger communities build settled neighborhoods and create more desirable places to live and work. This year, more than ever, we knew we needed to work in partnership with communities to tackle local and regional challenges head on.

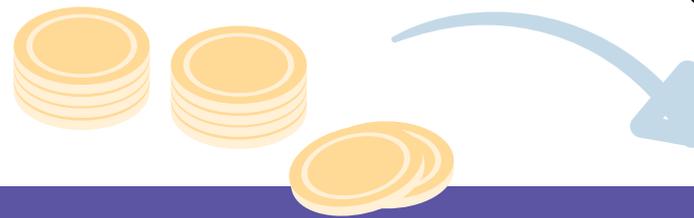
With the onset of the pandemic, our communities have faced challenges we could never anticipate, and we have had to develop quick, effective solutions in response.

One of our key tools for direct community support is the Community Investment Fund (CIF). CIF is allocated to develop projects that will benefit Torus tenants and their surrounding neighbourhoods. Constituted community or resident groups are invited to apply, along with organisations that deliver services within a Torus neighbourhood. Each entity is entitled to apply for a maximum of £3,000 (per financial year) and applications are reviewed monthly to ensure the fund is responsive.



In 2020/21 CIF funds were allocated to communities supporting COVID-19 recovery projects. During the year we invested £139,360.93 into 91 (75% of applications) community projects that we believe will deliver transformative outcomes for people and communities across the region.

**The average award was £1,270 and the projects supported covered all of our five focus areas.**



2020/21 projects were varied in the support they provided, although this year saw an increase in requests to support health and wellbeing activity, reflecting the growth in public awareness of the need to take care of our own physical and mental health. CIF funded projects have secured clear value and outputs for their communities.

### All projects are:

- **1. Iterative**  
launched and then refined and reshaped as needed to maximise impact
- **2. Co-operative**  
built on the principle of voluntary, trust-based engagement
- **3. Co-designed**  
developed collaboratively with people and places, based on listening, engaging and responding to need.

## Spotlight on the Community Investment Fund



### Supporting Factors

Supporting Factors is where women from across the North West can access counselling support around mental ill health, domestic violence, addictions, poverty and unemployment, giving them tools to build strong healthy familial and community relationships.

- The service supported **637 women** via online workshops
- **50 Care packages** were handed out
- **24 Craft and chat workshops** were delivered in the community
- **10 people** signed up and completed BSL (British sign language) level one
- **20 winter care backpacks** were given out to the homeless by the women's groups

### Dallam School

- Every child that needed a device to work from home was provided with one from school
- A set of iPads enabled teachers to work with a whole class at a time to show them how to access online learning in case of self-isolation and improved whole class teaching of ICT skills
- The school was able to comply with DfE guidelines: enabling pupils to access a blended curriculum and reducing the transmission of Covid-19

Autumn term assessment data showed that children had made greater than average progress and so they were starting to catch up on lost learning and become ready for the new school year ahead.

### Friends of Springfield Park

Children and families got involved in nature club sessions that addressed health and wellbeing. Local children were taught to overcome their worries and connect to their inner resilience by taking part in engaging, supportive, mindful workshops outside in nature.

The club used tried and tested methods from Positive Psychology and highly regarded wellbeing models to support children and families in the transition from lockdown and beyond. The project has led to an increased number of community members and parents using the park to practise wellbeing/mindfulness techniques.

## Later life



Residents in sheltered, extra care and supported living settings are still vibrant and important members of our communities, they may just need a little more support to maintain their way of life. Older generations are prone to social isolation which has been exacerbated in the last year. It is also no secret that this demographic is probably the least 'tech savvy', further putting them at risk of isolation.

We work with this age group to ensure they are both physically and mentally stimulated. Studies have shown that maintaining regular physical activity can help prevent many common diseases, such as heart disease and diabetes. Exercise improves immune function, which is important as seniors are at a higher risk of becoming sick.

Group activities were largely off limits in 2020/21. To combat this, a one-to-one support model was introduced during the first lockdown. At first one-to-one take up was low, however, we then rebranded as 'Coffee and a Chat' and saw an increase in engagement levels. Through these sessions Health and Wellbeing Officers were able to identify tenants with health needs and ensure they received an emergency supply of medication from their GP, a services tenants were unaware of.

Referrals were also made to GPs to request urgent medical reviews as some tenants were on incorrect medication or had not received appropriate rehab after operations.

One-to-ones will become a permanent part of the Health and Wellbeing offer as they are proving to be an effective method engaging and relationship building with customers. We have also been able to identify issues that are unlikely to have been disclosed in group sessions.

In addition to tailored support, we have also run specific targeted projects:



# Later life



## Feel Well Together

Engaging residents at 38 sheltered and extra care schemes across the heartlands

### Goals

to reduce social isolation and promote a feeling of belonging and community

### Fundamentals

277

older people supported

527

sessions delivered

3116

individual attendances



Customer satisfaction surveys indicate a positive response to activities

20

Community Connectors engaged

3500

wellbeing packs delivered

Funded by the National Lottery Reaching Communities Fund this project was delivered by Health and Wellbeing Officers, supported by 'Community Connectors'.

Sessions were delivered and tailored to the interests and abilities of individuals in each scheme and included chair-based exercises, balance classes, cook and taste sessions, craft and jewellery making and gardening. When Covid-19 lockdown occurred face to face delivery was restricted to the Extra Care Scheme only.

The Health and Wellbeing Team engaged with residents from the wider community, delivering wellbeing packs to around 1750 customers on two occasions. Packs included details of the full range of support available from Torus Foundation and activities such as colouring books, pencils, puzzle books and playing cards. The winter packs also included warm drinks, biscuits, card making kits, a variety of health and wellbeing information, and a Christmas card.



**The programme has given me something to get up for**

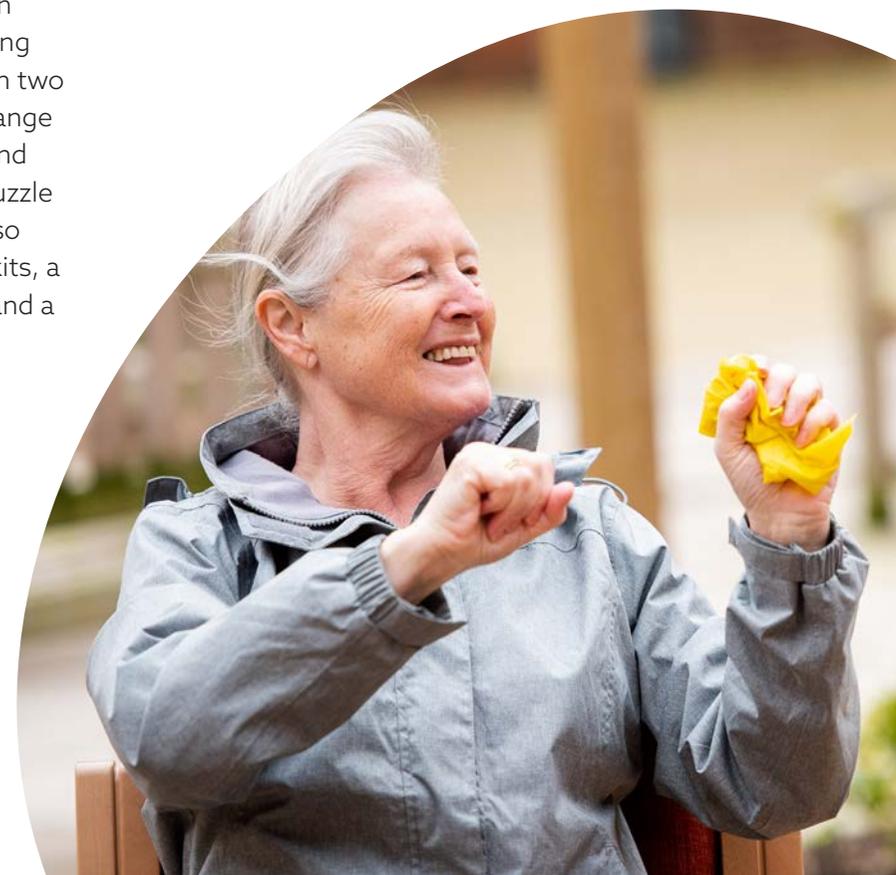
Torus resident



Feedback from residents was overwhelmingly positive, with many reporting being cheered up by receiving the packs. Feedback has included:

**"I love the sessions Torus Foundation have been putting on for tenants during this pandemic, if these sessions were not offered, I would be on a right downer."**

And **"I've not been excited to do any hobbies since my life changed so dramatically. So, thanks to Ann and the connectors for all their support."**





# Later life

## Let's March

Keeping people physically active across our extra care schemes

### Goal

to encourage physical activity and gentle exercise

### Fundamentals

51

customers took part

1

resident in Harpers Green who is 83 covered 56 miles

Customers were encouraged to complete laps of their scheme during March and were taking part daily. Feedback has been positive and as a result more pedometers have been purchased using Lottery Funding.



The project has since been rolled out across 38 sheltered and extra care schemes to encourage wider activity. Residents are being asked to record their daily steps and soon we will introduce a competition where residents from each scheme will total up there steps each week/month and see which scheme is doing the most steps.

Our Harpers Green walker said **"I enjoyed the walks, it got me up and out each day. I enjoyed walking to the different parks. I also taught the group the names of the birds that we would see."**

“

**I still cannot believe I walked 56 miles. I'm really enjoying the sessions.**

”

Let's March participant



## Partnerships

Over the last 12 months the work of the Foundation has been supported by many partners, their funding contributions totalling £445,038 enabled the continued delivery of our services and projects at a time when our communities have needed us most – Thank You to all of our supporters!

SOURCE OF FUNDING	USED FOR
Alpha RSL	Corporate Hire Equipment
Children in Need	Youth outreach project
Coop, Local community fund	Youth food poverty fund school holidays
Energy Saving Trust	Emergency fuel vouchers
Energy Saving Trust	Supportive Energy programme
ESF	IT Mersey digital inclusion
Home Office/Merseyside Sports Partnership	Sports Activators- diversionary activities
LCR Combined Authority	Tablets
Liverpool City Council, Food Pantries Fund	Food Poverty South Liverpool
IKEA Foundation Warrington	Flood Furniture Packs
Medicash	Food for Families
National Lottery, COVID-19 Fund	Community Connections
RS Claire	FireFit Hub Fee waiving
Sport England	Community meals
St Helens Council	200 tablets to older people
Steve Morgan Foundation	Re-engagement with youth at FireFit Hub
Steve Morgan Foundation	Emergency food hampers
Torus Christmas Fundraising appeal	Elderly/Young people at Christmas
Torus/HMS Crowdfunder's	Activity pack FireFit Hub members
Toxteth tab donation	Summer holiday activities
Vaillant	FireFit Hub Fee waiving

## Looking ahead

2020/21 has been a year of successful adjustment and we fully intend for 2021/22 to bring further positive changes. For us to provide maximum benefit to our communities it is essential that we don't stand still and remain active in our pursuit of new projects and delivering change.

2021/22 is already shaping up to be an exciting year. Building on the success of New Leaf, we are leading on a new initiative to increase support for those who have recently found themselves out of work. **'Springboard'** is a new employment and skills programme funded by European Social Fund (ESF) that will support people living in Warrington and Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester.

The project will provide one to one information, advice and guidance, training, mental health support, money advice and support to increase digital skills. There will also be a short-term subsidised wage for local small to medium enterprises to employ a percentage of the participants on programme.



# The Torus Group Purpose

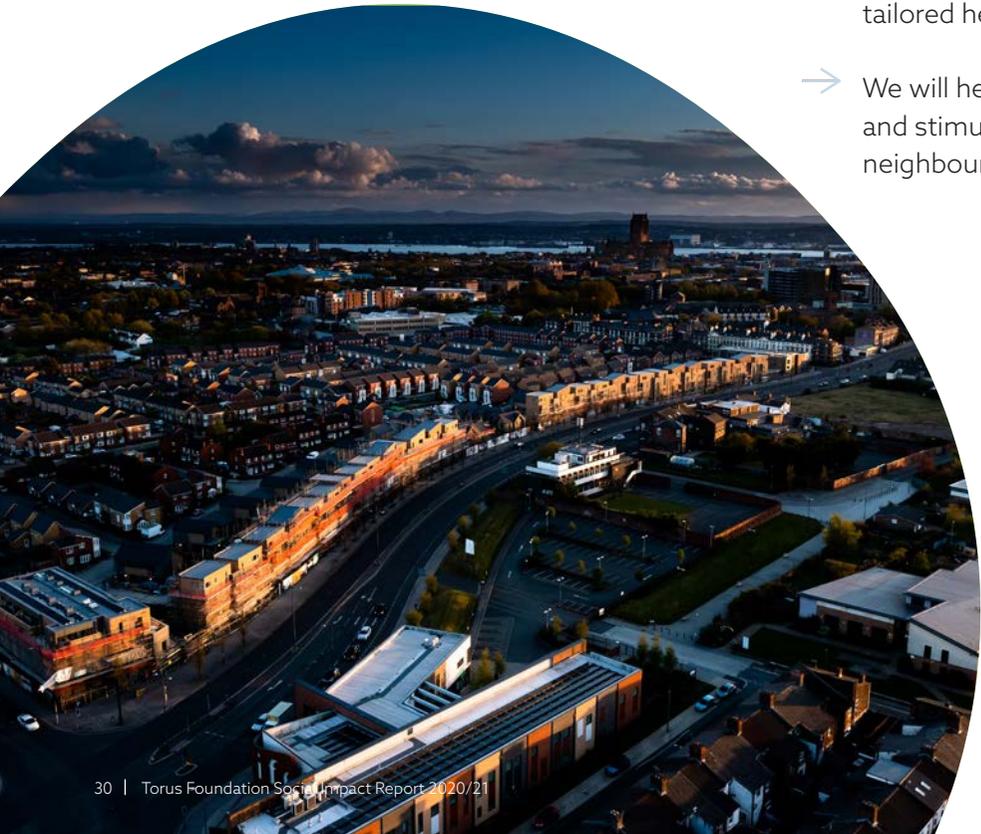
In 2020/21, Torus Foundation's mandate as a community anchor institution was set out in Torus' **Group Corporate Plan 2019-2024:**

## Investing in Place for the Long-Term

- We will support customers and communities, providing opportunities that enhance life skills, employment opportunities and health and wellbeing outcomes.

## Strong Communities

- We will improve skills and access to sustainable employment pathways
- We will provide free IT training to reduce the number of digitally excluded households
- We will tackle health inequalities by delivering tailored health and wellbeing projects
- We will help people to maximise income and stimulate economically active neighbourhoods



## Corporate Plan 2021-26

In June 2021, Torus launched a new five-year Corporate Plan. Entitled '**A New Day**' it is about achieving even bigger impacts in partnership with customers and communities over the next five years.

The plan introduces the six key themes of Safe, Healthy, Inclusive, Connected, Sustainable and Aspirational.

Working in combination, these characteristics will help to shape how Torus – and Torus Foundation – delivers its mission of '**growing stronger communities**'.



[www.torusnewday.co.uk](http://www.torusnewday.co.uk)



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