

# COVID-19 Belfast Community Response

Closing Report - August 2020



**Belfast**  
City Council



# Acknowledgement and Thanks

We would like to acknowledge and thank all agencies, staff and volunteers for their hard work and dedication to the community response in supporting those who needed help during the lockdown period. Below are some of the agencies who supported the community response in Belfast however there are many more agencies and volunteers who also assisted local communities during this time.



# Key Achievements

- Local communities were the **1st responders** across the city and mobilised resources, formed partnerships and recruited volunteers to support with localised responses



- Belfast Community Response Hub established within **9 days** (distribution Hub, customer helpline and remote contact centre)



- 9,770** calls handled by the Contact Centre
- 6,908** enquiries were in relation to food parcels
- 5,115** calls handled by local community run helplines
- 4,577** calls were made by the Contact Centre to residents to prepare them for the closure of the scheme and to signpost them on to community support where needed



- 930** welfare referrals were managed by the Area Teams (this included providing advice and signposting for prescription pick up, emotional support and emergency food)



- More than 30** staff provided with 'Big Word' training to improve communication with people who don't have English as their first language



- 107,407** food parcel's and hot food delivered over 16 weeks



- 50,533** food parcel's from Community Response Hub and **56,874** food parcels and hot food from Community Organisations

- 9,320** deliveries or prescription pick-ups were made on behalf of residents



- 1,273** resilience packs were provided



- Over £1.6 million** allocated (or in the process of being allocated) to Community Groups
- 134** community organisations received funding as part of community response
- At least 150** community organisations to receive funding to support the community recovery

- Weekly meetings took place at community level between key partners to co-ordinate and align resources, reduce duplication and maximise outcomes



# Belfast City Council Community Hub



DfC commence engagement with local authorities to establish local response hubs



Work is completed at speed to establish Belfast's Community Response Hub



Belfast's Community Response Helpline goes live and initial food deliveries are made



Regional stock limits are met, which caps the allocation for Belfast at 4,700 food parcels per week



Call back process commenced to prepare residents for the closure of the scheme and signpost to local community support



Self-referral food parcel scheme delivered by Belfast City Council ceases distribution and centre is stood down



Continued to provide weekly food parcels to around 900 shielding individuals by Red Cross via Inverary Community Centre



Food parcel scheme ends for all residents



# Grant Funded Allocated by Belfast City Council



**£120,000  
emergency  
response  
funding**  
allocated to  
9 strategic  
groups to  
provide urgent  
support



**£635,000  
community  
response funding**  
allocated to 9  
strategic groups-  
focusing on  
providing food,  
connectivity,  
financial advice  
and support



**£210,000  
thematic funding**  
allocated to 12  
groups to deliver  
on thematic  
areas such as  
food, mental  
health, BME,  
domestic violence,  
counselling, LGBT  
and others



**£486,000  
recovery  
funding** being  
allocated to  
9 strategic  
groups across  
Belfast to  
assist with  
recovery



**£150,000  
recovery  
summer  
funding micro  
grants** to be  
allocated to up  
to 150 grassroots  
organisations  
across Belfast  
to assist with  
recovery

# Making a Difference

“I’m incredibly proud of the agents and team leaders who conducted the contact work, the supervisors who pulled this altogether, the area team who dealt with those with more complex needs, the packers and dispatchers, the delivery drivers who knocked, waited, went upstairs, round back gardens, revisited day after day to ensure someone who was vulnerable got a food parcel.” **Community Response Lead.**

“The highlight for me was being able to make a difference to each individual who called. Some had severe difficulty accessing food, needed mental and physical health support or were just a bit lost about where to turn. And sometime a listening ear was all they needed, when they felt the effects of social isolation.” **Contact Hub Agent.**

“I was contacted by constituents who received a food box, to say thank you. Our communities have come together like no other time I’ve seen before to help those in need.” **Elected Member.**

“Within the hub, my role involved organising welfare support for individuals/families, this ranged from advice and support for mental health and emotional wellbeing to prescription pick-ups and food referrals. The highlights were how quick everyone was willing to help, the satisfaction of knowing we were helping people in need. Working in partnership is so important.” **Community Support Coordinator.**

“On behalf of the Department, I wanted to say thank you for all that you and your teams have done to support the COVID-19 emergency food box scheme and the wider Covid response.” **Department for Communities.**

“A social worker praised the delivery drivers. She said when delivering especially to the elderly they are giving them more time to get to the door. Thanks.” **Partner Agency.**

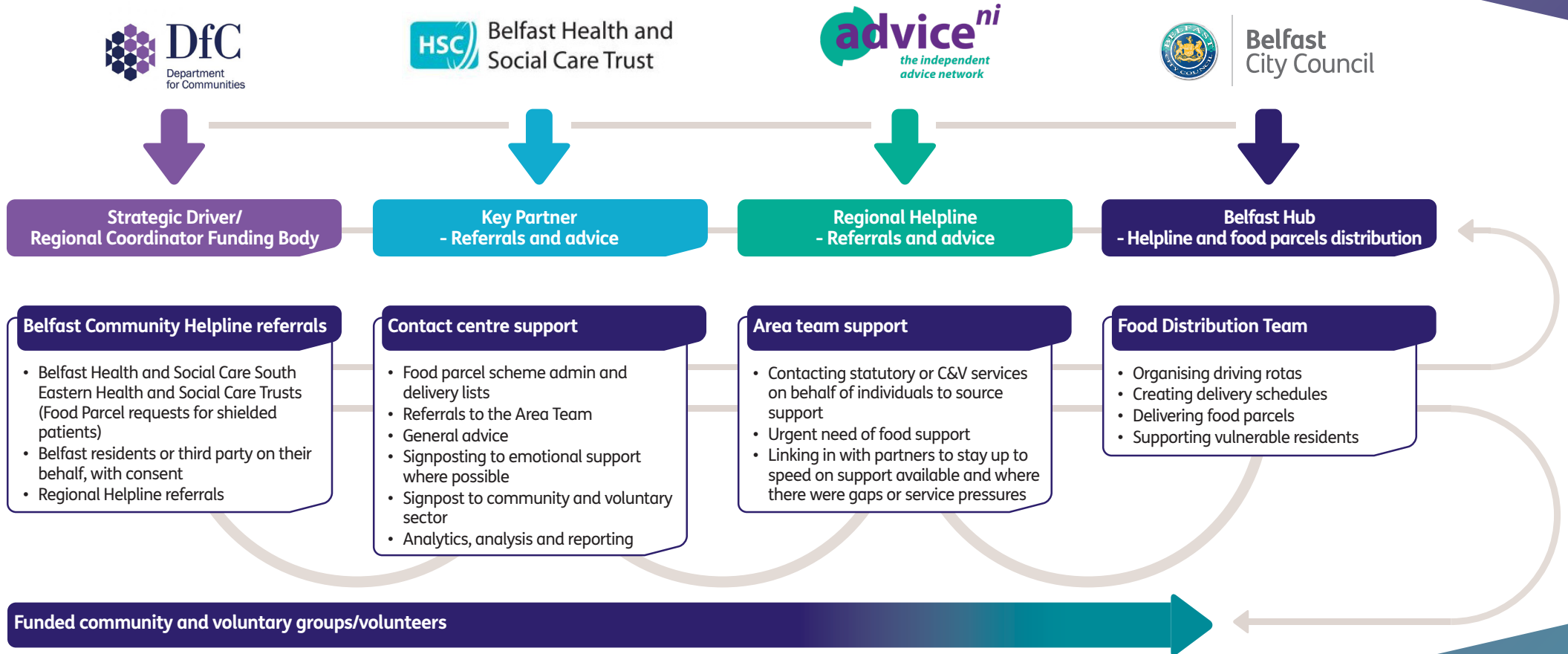
“These kind gestures help restore our faith in human nature and gave us a feeling of community spirit.” **Belfast Resident.**

“Thank you so very much for helping us access support, when we had nowhere else to turn to. You were very effective in making things happen we just can’t thank you enough.” **Belfast Resident.**

“The community sector were able to identify those most in need, were flexible and agile to the response and had a strong infrastructure to links with services that could support local communities. Going forward we want to build on the good work during the pandemic to further strengthen the community sector infrastructure and volunteering within local communities across Belfast.” **Community Group.**



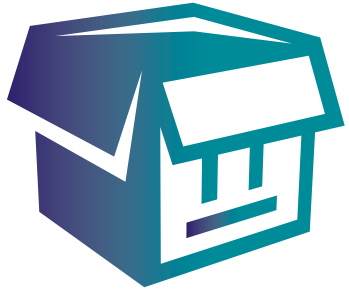
# Community Response Process



- Directly supported individuals and families in Belfast to receive timely support in relation to a wide range of needs such as food, emergency response, emotional wellbeing, prescription pick-ups and by providing general and specialist advice
- Continuing to provide ongoing support to local communities in Belfast



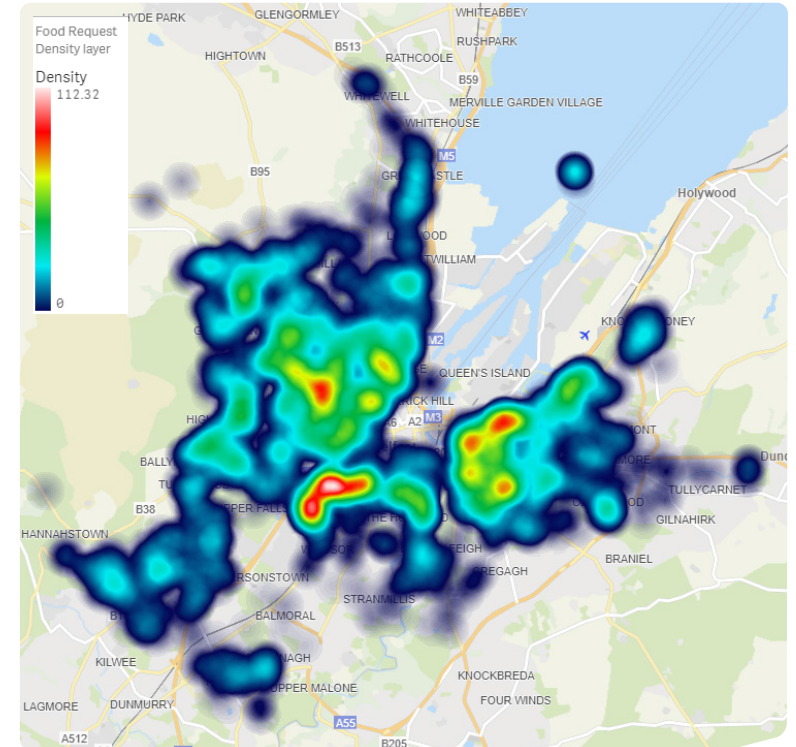
# Food Distribution for Community Hub



- Between the 8 April and 31 June, there were a total of **6,980** requests for food parcels processed by the contact centre and a total of **50,533** food parcel deliveries made to vulnerable residents in Belfast via the community response hub. The heat map on the right hand side, shows the distribution of food requests across the city.



- Approximately **5,000** food parcels were delivered each week to residents across Belfast.





# Contact Centre

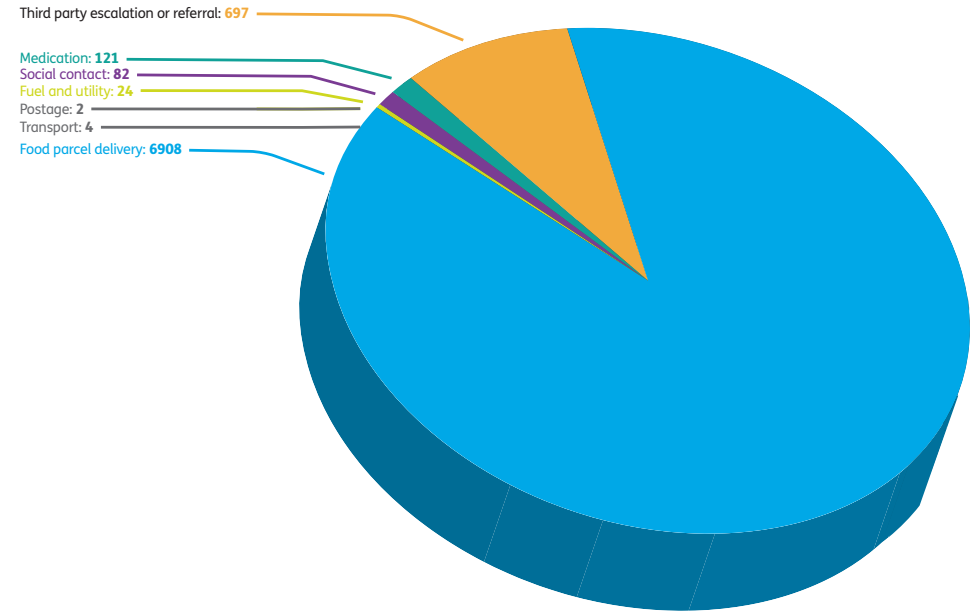


- Between the 8 April and 31 July 2020, the contact centre handled **9,770** calls in regards to the community response. From these calls, **7,838** requests for support were recorded and dealt with, 88% were in relation to food request enquires this also included residents calling to find out date of deliveries, clarification on missed deliveries, and customers cancelling deliveries.



- In addition, to the calls the contact centre also dealt with emails. At the peak of the crisis around **300-600** emails were processed each day.

## Total welfare referrals in CRM

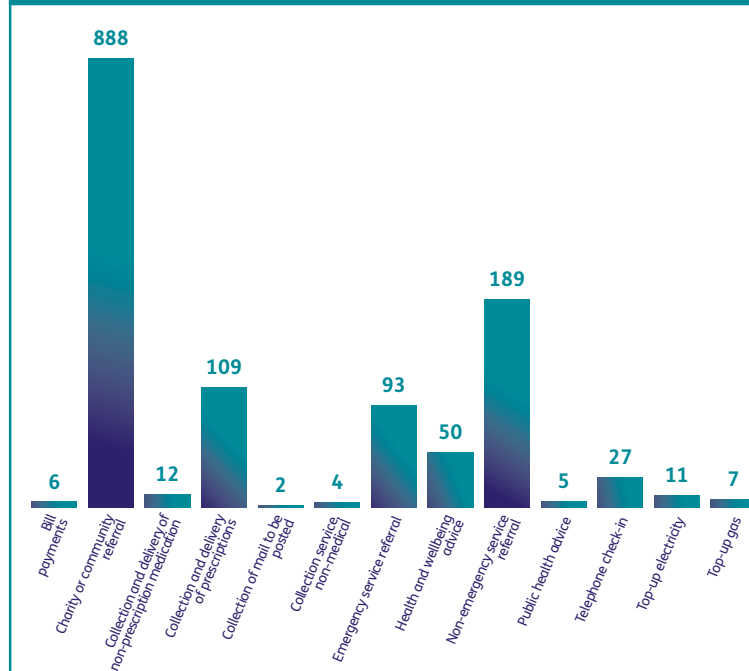


# Area Team



- Between the 10 April until the 31 July, there were **930** welfare referrals supported by the 4 Area Teams (North, South, East and West).
- The majority of referrals were for charity or community support (43%), non emergency service support (20%), collection and/or delivery of prescriptions (11%) and emergency/crisis support (10%).
- On receipt of a referral staff within the Area Support Teams would then work closely with both statutory and community and voluntary partners to make sure that the person's needs were met in a timely and effective manner. Knowledge of services and relationships with service providers have developed and grown as a result and this is something we will continue to build on as we move into recovery.



## Total welfare referrals in CRM



# Grant Funding



- A total of £1,601,000 grant funding has been made available to community and voluntary organisations to support residents across Belfast.
- Of the £1,601,000, £1,115,300 has been contributed from the Council and £485,700 has come from the Department for Communities.

Area of expenditure	 Belfast City Council Council contribution	 Department for Communities DfC contribution	Total
Covid-19 Community Support Fund	£149,300	£485,700	£635,000
Thematic Funding	£210,000	0	£210,000
Emergency Response Funding	£120,000	0	£120,000
Recovery Funding Strategic (Current)	£486,000	0	£486,000
Recovery Summer Funding Micro Grants (Current)	£150,000	0	£150,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,115,300</b>	<b>£485,700</b>	<b>£1,601,000</b>

# Strategic and Thematic Funded Partners - Key Achievements



**134**

Local groups funded to provide community response



**56,874**

Food parcels or hot meals provided



**212**

Emergency payments made



**5,115**

Calls/referrals to local community helplines received



**1,273**

Resilience packs provided



**320**

Deliveries or pick-ups made on behalf of shielding residents



**190**

Education Chrome Books provided

# Lessons Learned



**There has been significant learning captured as part of the emergency response, which will shape our recovery plans:**

- Ability to be responsive to local needs by empowering communities

- The importance of effective relationships between council, statutory and community partners to support agile service delivery

- The significant capacity, support and reach available at community level both funded staff and programmes and through volunteering

- The opportunity to work with partners to embed an area based approach to identifying and addressing local needs and priorities

- Having a community infrastructure that is robust with established relationships has been important in delivering a partnership community response

# Next Steps



Looking ahead, as we develop our plans for the City's recovery, we will work with communities and city partners to further develop community confidence, capacity and resilience across neighbourhoods through a range of programmes of support, including:

- Developing integrated services at a local level (area working model)

- Working with communities and city partners to identify specific area recovery priorities, which will give focus to our recovery plans

- Continue to build community capacity, working with the sector and partners to bring forward a new community support framework for Belfast, which will build upon the skills, knowledge, capacity and resilience already demonstrated

- Resourcing the sector to deliver and create community wealth - maximising opportunities presented by investments in the city to stimulate the local economy, support local supply chains, create community wealth and deliver social and economic value

- Supporting local businesses – retaining and creating jobs

- Investing in the regeneration of our neighbourhoods



**Stay Safe Belfast**



**Belfast**  
City Council