



Carers Act Transformation Support Fund (CATS)

Rounds 1 & 2 Evaluation Report





Summary

About

The Carers Act Transformation Support Fund (CATS) gave voluntary sector organisations involved in local implementation of the Act the opportunity to apply for small grants to improve their capacity to do so, via improvements to systems or technology rather than delivering direct services or support to carers.

Awards

A total of **£448,011** has been awarded to 38 unique¹ organisations across 23 local authorities, benefitting 50 organisations². The average award per beneficiary organisation was £9k.

Impact

The feedback provided by organisations was overwhelmingly positive and demonstrates the impact this fund has had on organisational increased efficiencies; staff skills; staff morale; and carer involvement and engagement.

Approach

The Fund's flexible, light-touch and supportive approach is valued by organisations.

Context

Launched in June 2018, the main purpose of this short-term funding from the Scottish Government was to develop local capacity through improvements to systems or technology. It was expected that transformation costs would centre on IT hardware/software, accounting, data collection, data protection and recording and associated templates, paperwork and procedures. Grants of up to £10,000 were available through this fund for single applications, with larger awards being considered for collaborative approaches where economies of scale, wider sector benefit and innovation could be demonstrated.

¹ Some organisations received funding in both rounds

² Some applications were collaborative bids therefore more organisations benefitted



The amount available for distribution was £455k, with all grants awarded to be spent by recipients by 31 March 2019. Applicants were asked to demonstrate the impact the investment would have on:

- The carer support services they were commissioned to deliver
- The wider carers support services
- Their contribution to outcomes from the Carers Act Theory of Change **(see appendix 1)**

A total of 34 applications were received and assessed 32 of which fully met the eligibility criteria. Following the assessment process 28 applications totalling £337,000 were supported.

Keen to ensure that all the money set aside for this fund is distributed to eligible voluntary sector organisations, a second round was opened in October 2018 with a focus on the purchase of hardware/software. In this second round a total of 34 applications, including four ineligible ones, were received. This time 19 applications totalling £111,000 were supported.

The total value of the 68 applications received was £548,645 and grants totalling £448,000 were awarded to 38 unique organisations.

To complement this CATS investment, a bespoke two-day 'Digital Accelerator' programme was offered to grant recipients, which provided the space for organisations to explore ways in which they can get the most from the investment. It looked at leadership; culture; utilising data; flexible technology; cyber threats and resilience; and service design.

This report documents the information gathered via our final evaluation survey, which was distributed to all 38 organisations that received CATS funding in rounds one and two. The purpose of this survey was twofold:

- To capture information on the impact this Scottish Government funding has made to organisations in relation to their role in the implementation of the Act
- To capture their feedback on the CATS Fund application process.



Responses were received from 36 organisations. The report is divided into the following sections:

1 CATS Facts

2 Funded Activity

3 Fund Impact and Outcomes

4 Fund Management Process

5 Success Stories

6 Lessons Learned

7 SCVO Recommendations

8 Conclusion

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1 CATS Facts

92%

of respondents said that the CATS fund was extremely helpful in meeting their organisational needs

94%

of respondents said that the application process was 'easy' or 'very easy'

All 11

Digital Accelerator participants provided positive feedback

89%

of respondents reported unexpected positive achievements



2 Funded Activity

A number of examples were included in the guidance issued to illustrate to potential CATS applicants the scope of activity that could be funded, and it was clear from the applications that organisations were focussed on what would support them in the implementation of the Act with funding requested for:

Tablets and iPads...

to aid carer involvement in drawing up support plans and encouraging more interactivity. The provision of mobile devices supported outreach service delivery, particularly in rural areas.

CRM systems...

to aid the collection and retrieval of data necessary not only for Carer Census reports but also for reporting to local authorities, other stakeholders and to aid wider organisational efficiencies.

Website design and refresh...

to aid the carer in navigating support available and to maximise social media channels, helping with carer engagement.

AV equipment...

to support more efficient connectivity to staff and carers and to support delivery of information sessions.

Consultancy services...

to audit existing system capabilities and to implement improvements. There were several collaborative applications, including the scoping and purchasing of a CRM system for use across seven carer centres demonstrating the benefits to organisations of coming together to recognise common needs, achieving value for money and benefits to the wider sector.





3 Fund impact and outcomes

A wide range of activities were funded through CATS and 92% of respondents reported that this funding was extremely helpful in meeting their organisational needs. The feedback provided by organisations relating to how this Scottish Government investment has supported them in the implementation of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 was overwhelmingly positive and demonstrates the impact this fund has had on organisational increased efficiencies; staff skills; staff morale; carer involvement and engagement; Some comments received are highlighted below.





Impact on organisations

Carers of West Dunbartonshire

The new on-line data management system helps us address issues such as gaps in carer profile information, being more efficient as we input information only once, meeting our GDPR responsibilities and supporting transition from young adult carer services to adult carer services. The increase in efficiency has allowed us to dedicate more time delivering the day to day support to carers. It means that the carer case now contains every aspect of support which the carer has/is accessing as well as identified outcomes.

Perth & Kinross Association of Voluntary Service – Carers Hub

The database has allowed us increased efficiency around reporting to our funders and also around completing and submitting the Carers Census spreadsheet every 6 months as we have established what information is required for these and have set this up within the database so these figures are easily accessible. The local authority is the biggest funder for our adult carers service and have clear indicators they want us to report on regularly which we can now do at the press of a button.

Western Isles Community Care Forum

Our computer equipment was so out-dated we couldn't even open some attachments we were being sent (namely the template for the Carers Census). We are now up to date with programmes and the IT Training that we received was invaluable... In a nutshell, it feels as if we have been brought out of the dark ages, technology wise!

VOCAL

We have seen a significant impact on efficiency and time spent collating, aggregating and reporting on data. We have mapped the data required for the Carer Census to an equivalent excel sheet within our system, which can then be submitted directly to Scottish Government. This reduces the need for copying, pasting or manually inputting data into a separate file. The CATS investment has saved VOCAL an estimated 56 hours of staff time per submission. This equates to a financial saving of approximately £2.5 – £3k per annum.

MECOPP

Where previously we had ten separate methods of case recording and service user file storage within the organisation, we now have a single unified system for securely recording, reporting and retrieving service user information. This has significantly impacted the performance of services within MECOPP in a number of positive ways.



Impact on staff

The Advocacy Project

The CATS investment has allowed us to conduct drop in/surgery sessions for carers. Using the tablets allows us to access and discuss the information with the carers whilst providing guidance in real time. This has led to an increase in the carer's levels of involvement as it is an interactive process where they can access the information and ask questions at the same time.

Unity

Staff morale has gone up and staff feel much more confident when dealing with carers and their individual issues. Carers having more time with staff in the centre and out in the community.

Highland Community Care Forum

It is too early yet to clearly state the different that the CATS fund has had on individual Carers. From an organisation point of view, it has meant that the staff no longer 'double work' as in having to enter the same information twice. This has had a huge benefit on staff morale and the detail of information that is collected as part of the Adult Carer Support Planning process. Having a CRM that is fully Act and Carer Census compliant is beneficial to adult Carers throughout Highland, Commissioners and the organisation.



Impact on carer engagement

Edinburgh Young Carers Centre

The CATS investment has helped us to make changes to the way that we identify our organisation's needs and re-assess our approach to communicating and engaging with the young people we support and also with how staff plan and communicate internally. In thinking about the best use of the funding it has generated conversations and ideas about how our time and resources can be optimised and specifically, how digital resources can help us to do this.

The Haven

The CATS investment has enhanced and increased the carer involvement work we are undertaking and provided additional involvement opportunities for our carers to participate in engagement activities. Our carers have really valued being part of this project and their involvement in the website redesign process has enhanced their feeling of belonging and being meaningfully involved. We will continue to involve carers in review and consultation exercises as we refine and expand the information on the website.

North Argyll Carers Centre

Having a fit for purpose CRM system enables us the one stop shop capturing all aspects of the support journey from registration, carer support planning, review, access to training and activities being recorded, respite recorded and importantly being joined up enabling a real efficiency of working that now enables workers to spend more face time with the carers. We have further noted changes in times spent with carers as we can work more efficiently with mobile kit we have purchased. As we are working from a conversation-based approach to have mobile kit to support this approach is positive and can enable information to be captured more efficiently and less obtrusively than lots of paperwork. The carer can feel more relaxed as the focus is on information and relationship building and can be captured more subtly.



Carers Act Theory of Change Outcomes

Survey respondents were asked to comment on the level of contribution to specific outcomes of the Carers Act Theory of Change that the CATS fund has made. It is recognised by SCVO and Scottish Government that full contribution to these outcomes may not be realised until further down the line and in some cases will require further input from other sources, however from the responses we received the CATS fund has, at this early stage, made positive contributions. For example:

Increased proportion of carers who feel better informed and more empowered about issues relevant to their caring role

- **19** organisations reported that CATS investment has enabled them to fully contribute to this outcome and
- **15** organisations reporting partial contribution

Increased proportion of carers feel more able to manage their caring role

- **13** organisations reported that CATS investment has enabled them to fully contribute to this outcome and
- **22** organisations reporting partial contribution

Increased numbers of population providing care are identified

- **10** organisations reported that CATS investment has enabled them to fully contribute to this outcome and
- **20** organisations reporting partial contribution

Unexpected Benefits

In addition to the outcomes that organisations hoped for via CATS funding **89% of respondents** reported unexpected benefits demonstrating the added value investment in organisational infrastructure has had. Some of the feedback received included:

- Mobile devices have saved on staff travel time and costs
- Positive impact on environmental footprint
- Being able access our data and demonstrate GDPR awareness assisted in a successful tender bid
- Regular connection between organisations around Charity Log has now been made
- More collaborative working among staff and sharing of learning



4 Fund management process

SCVO's approach to managing this Scottish Government fund built on its track record of successful fund management and our aim was to ensure that:

- The application process was accessible
- Applicants were provided with guidance and support to complete the application form
- Reporting requirements were proportionate
- The funder – grantee relationship established trust and open communication



Feedback from respondents indicate that 94% felt the application process was easy or very easy with comments supporting a positive overall experience:

Borders Carers Centre

Application process was straightforward and SCVO were helpful. A well supported process and very welcome funding that has created future sustainability.

The Advocacy Project

Very easy to apply, regular communications and support. Consideration given to practical use of funding as opposed to criteria being restrictive.

Stirling Carers Centre

Straightforward, clear, transparent. Any questions were addressed promptly and we felt comfortable getting in touch with SCVO if we had any queries.

PKAVS Carers Hub

Application and reporting processes are very straightforward and not too time consuming. The additional support/guidance/information available via telephone contact is also very useful.

Western isles Community Care Forum

It was very easy because the staff at the CATS fund were so helpful. We were able to contact them at any time for advice and nothing was too much trouble for them. Very approachable and very friendly. A pleasure to deal with.



Engaging with organisations

Our engagement strategy recognised the need to ensure we reached all voluntary sector organisations that could benefit from the fund. We promoted the fund via:

- SCVO’s social media channels, website, bulletins, networks and TFN
- National carer organisation channels
- Direct contact with all Carer Centres
- Third Sector Interface Network and Social Enterprise Network

We received a total of 68 applications from organisations across 25 local authority areas. Funding was granted to 38 organisations in 23 local authority areas shown in the table below:

CATS-funded organisations by local authority area

● Aberdeenshire	● East Renfrewshire	● Scottish Borders
● Angus	●●●● Edinburgh	● Shetland
●●●● Argyle & Bute	●● Fife	●●●● South Lanarkshire
●● Dumfries & Galloway	●●● Glasgow	● Stirling
● Dundee	● Highland	● West Dunbartonshire
● East Ayrshire	● Inverclyde	● West Lothian
● East Dunbartonshire	●● North Lanarkshire	● Western Isles
●● East Lothian	● Perth & Kinross	



5 Success stories





Lanarkshire Carers Centre



We used the CATS funding for reporting improvements to our in-house Carer Information and Reporting System, CIS (Carer Information System). This funding was used to add a number of additional functionalities which allowed us a greater level of granularity in our reporting, which lessened the manual working of data when producing our reports and lessening the chance of human error when processing information. The benefits we have seen from this:

- Ability to pinpoint areas of excellence/for improvement thanks to monthly reporting
- Feedback utilised to address any issues in a timely manner
- Reduction in the time taken to create reports has allowed for creation of templates
- Greater flexibility in servicing ad-hoc report requests from staff, stakeholders and orgs
- Greater accuracy in data entry thanks to streamlined input and output points
- Targeted promotion and marketing as a result of enhanced reporting capabilities

Carers of West Lothian



CATS Round 1 funding has allowed us to have a bespoke CRM system developed. Gathering information required for the Carers Census was difficult and time consuming and we were unable to report on outcomes successfully. The new CRM system allows us to do both things much more easily. Gathering the information required for the carer census was less time consuming and more efficient and as we gain confidence in the new system it should become a much smoother process.

Funders and local authorities are looking for the difference a service makes to the carer and we now incorporate this in all aspects of our contacts with all our service users. Moving forward this will help us to shape our services to the needs of our service users.



Edinburgh Young Carers



The CATS funding has given us the opportunity not only to make digital advances within the organisation to improve our efficiency and communication but also to engage young carers in informing our digital approach, ensuring that our output is driven by the needs of the young people we support. Our new website design and content has been built based on the engagement sought from young carers during regular Forum meetings between staff and young carers.

Young Carers who engaged in our digital development process were involved in producing a podcast for Carers Week, to raise awareness of the role of a young carer, the challenges they face and how being involved in Edinburgh Young Carers benefits them. It was a fantastic delivery and the young people were proud to have taken part in this project. The feedback on the podcast and the issues it raises has been wholly positive and we are still receiving hits on SoundCloud months later.

Mid Argyll Youth Development Services (MAYDS)



Having been able to install a server, upgrade software and update lots of equipment that was well past its sell by date, this fund has given MAYDS the ability to offer a secure and efficient service. The delivery of the service has been greatly enhanced as MAYDS young carers worker has a new laptop and software which allows her to complete young carers statements out about across Mid Argyll, Kintyre and Islay (MAKI). In addition, the upgrade of computers and security in the I.T suite has allowed young carers using our service better and safer availability to technology. The biggest impact the CATS fund has had is that the young carers worker is able to travel across Mid Argyll, Kintyre and Islay (MAKI), reaching out to individual young carers in the remotest of areas. The young carers do not have to take time out to travel to a young carers centre, so now we will go to them.



Volunteer Centre Glasgow

(on behalf of voluntary sector partners of the Glasgow City Carers Partnership)



This CATS award has enabled third sector carers support service providers to work together to develop agreed business requirements, then commission software requirements specifications to best deliver those requirements and identify the most suitable options that meet those specs. In addition, with effective project management processes, the partners have been able to retain a small under-spend to put towards the costs of the chosen software provider solution.

As a result of effective grants admin/management and external advice sought/received we were able to facilitate and manage a successful software requirements development and procurement process. By ensuring all the partners were able to participate and contribute, each of the third sector partners - and indeed public sector partner officers - have developed a greater understanding of how to manage such processes for the future.

North Lanarkshire Young Carers Project



We received the referral via our new Young Carers website that has been funded by the CATS fund. The parent had found our new site and realised that his son (Mark) was potentially a Young Carer who had the right to completion of a Young carers Statement. The parent requested further information on Rights and some financial, emotional and social support. We completed the referral procedure and the Young Carers Statement was completed, which indicated that Mark was indeed a Young carer who was affected physically and emotionally by his Caring role at Home. Mark's education was also suffering due to stress around caring. Mark was brought into our service and has now been with us for 5 months. In this time the child has received two short breaks (One overnight) and groupwork support, as well as two outings to Laze zone and the trampoline facility in Glasgow. This support at our service was made possible via a parent going online and becoming aware of what we do, then using our Young carers Statement facilities to complete the referral. This case study shows how important north Lanarkshire young carers is Mark and his family and how useful the CATs funding has been. (And will be in the future as our investment is one with lasting value!)



Western Isles Community Care Forum



Prior to this grant, our equipment was slow, and tasks took a long time. Documents were being emailed out when staff required them and time was spent making repeated calls to staff in the community, until we finally made contact. If there was a power failure, work stopped. It was difficult to do any additional work at home in the event of trying to meet deadlines etc. as all the information was stored on the desktop computer. Submitting statistics for the Scottish Government's Carers Census was extremely complicated and time consuming.

Now staff are able to access what they want, when they want, improving efficiencies with direct service to carers. The online calendars enable us to know when a staff member will be free/where they are. Had it not been for this fund we would have been unaware of the IT trainers available locally and dialogue with them resulted in us improving safety for the lone workers. This information has been shared with member orgs who also intend improving safety for their staff.

Power failures will no longer prevent work from being undertaken and the Co-ordinator now has flexibility to work from home when required as she will have access to all records. It will no longer be necessary to print off papers for meetings, thereby enabling financial savings, which is most beneficial in this economic climate. Our IT Trainer was able to set up our systems to correspond with the Carers Census, so going forward we will be able to 'copy and paste' statistics. This training increased staff skills in Excel spreadsheets. In a nutshell, it feels as if we have been brought out of the dark ages, technology wise!





6 Lessons learned

- Feedback from organisations indicated that any further CATS funding should include activity criteria relating to organisational development and possibly short- term test/ pilot activity. These two categories have been added to the existing category of IT/ Infrastructure for CATS 3.
- The support from SCVO throughout the application process has been valued and appreciated by organisations.
- Those organisations who took part in the bespoke Digital Accelerator programme commented positively on the benefits of this. We will endeavor to incorporate a similar programme in future rounds.
- The fixed timescales for completion of funded activities was viewed as challenging by those organisations that were commissioning CRMS and MIS, however the timescales were fixed by the funder. Flexibility was exercised when this situation arose to enable maximum impact to be achieved.



7 SCVO recommendations

- Consideration should be given to extending the delivery period for any future CATS funding to allow for pre application activity to support organisations to examine their needs and research potential solutions in order to maximise the opportunity this fund presents.
- The addition of two categories to the type of activities the fund would support – organisational training and development and develop/test new approaches, both in relation to contributing to specific outcomes from the Carers Act Implementation plan.
- Continued accessible support and guidance from SCVO throughout the application process.
- Incorporate Digital Accelerator activity into the Learning & Sharing activity of future rounds.



8 Conclusion

The Carers Act Transformation Support Fund (CATS) has shown that a supportive and proportionate approach to grant management is an effective way of enabling organisations to access this Scottish Government funding to support their role in the implementation of the Carers (Scotland) Act.

The benefits to organisations who received CATS funding have gone beyond their expectations and positive impacts have been made in relation to staff skills/knowledge, staff efficiencies, wider organisational development and collaborative working. The bespoke Digital Accelerator programme was extremely well received by those who attended and gave them the opportunity to reflect on their wider organisational needs.



Appendix 1

Carers Act Theory of Change Outcomes

- Increased numbers of population providing care are identified
- Increased numbers of hidden young carers are identified, assessed and supported
- Fewer young carers undertaking inappropriate caring responsibilities
- Increased proportion of carers feel more able to manage their caring role
- Increased proportion of carers who feel better informed and more empowered about issues relevant to their caring role
- Carers have improved health and well being
- Carers feel valued within their community





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