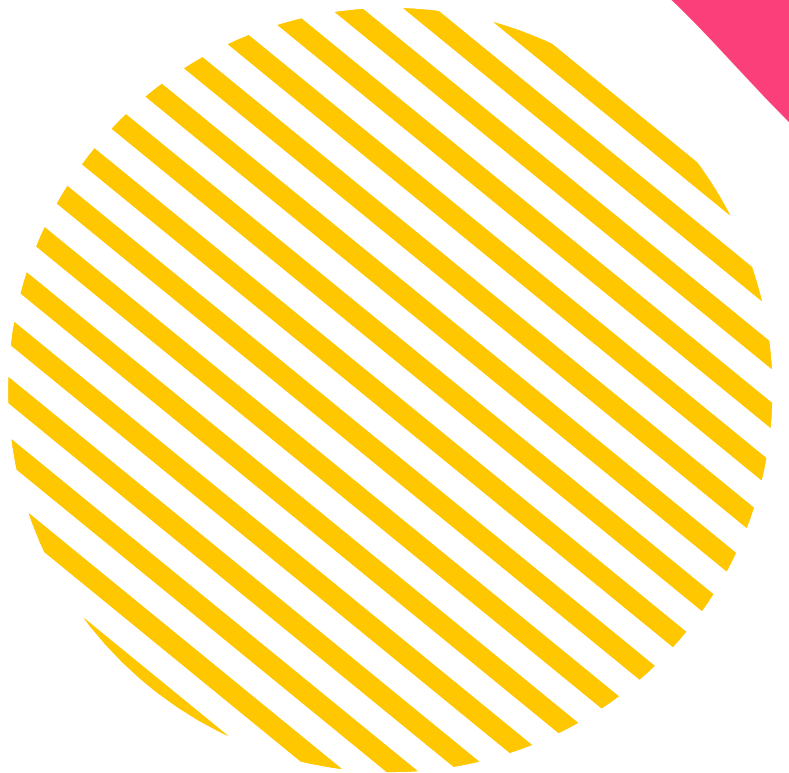


Rosa's Covid-19 Response Report

**Impact review of
coronavirus on specialist
women's organisations
funded by Rosa in 2020**



01

Introduction

This is second of two short reports detailing how the global pandemic has impacted women's and girls' organisations across the UK, funded by Rosa. In it, we distil the main talking points that came up in more than 50 in-depth conversations we held with funded organisations, with a focus on those led by and for Black and minoritised women.

Our intention was to hear and understand the many perspectives of specialist women's and girls' organisations in the UK. This, in turn, helps us to develop a relationship-centred approach to funding. To us, having in-depth conversations with the women leading the organisations is the best way to fully understand the complexity of their needs and build funding models that are suitably grounded in evidence.

We hope that sharing our approach and findings in this way will encourage other funders to consider the value of this in-depth, relationship centred approach to funding.

It's equally crucial that Rosa responds to evolving language. We understand the important and ongoing conversations around terminology. For the purpose of this report, when we refer to 'Black and minoritised women,' we're using the term 'Black' in a policy sense, i.e. women and girls who are defined in policy terms as Black and Minority Ethnic (BME)

WITH THANKS TO OUR DONORS AND SUPPORTERS

With the support of donors including Comic Relief, Cummins, Esmée Fairbairn, List Family Foundation, Oak Foundation, Emmanuel Kaye Foundation, and many more, we were able to respond quickly as the pandemic unfolded.

We raised more than £1.2 million and distributed it to 110 organisations through two funds: Rosa's Covid-19 Response Fund and the Covid-19 Emergency Response for BME Women's Organisations which we development in partnership with Imkaan and which focused on organisations working to end violence against women and girls.



£1.2m

We raised more than £1.2 million and distributed it to 110 organisations through two funds.

Rosa's Covid-19 Response (Small Grants)

£1,046,741 MONEY DISBURSED
(COVID-19 RESPONSE)

72

Organisations funded
(Covid-19 Response)

41

Organisations led
by and for Black and
minoritised women

54

Organisations
with an income of
less than £100k

Emergency Response Fund for BME Women's Organisations

£633,108 MONEY DISBURSED
(BME FUND)

38

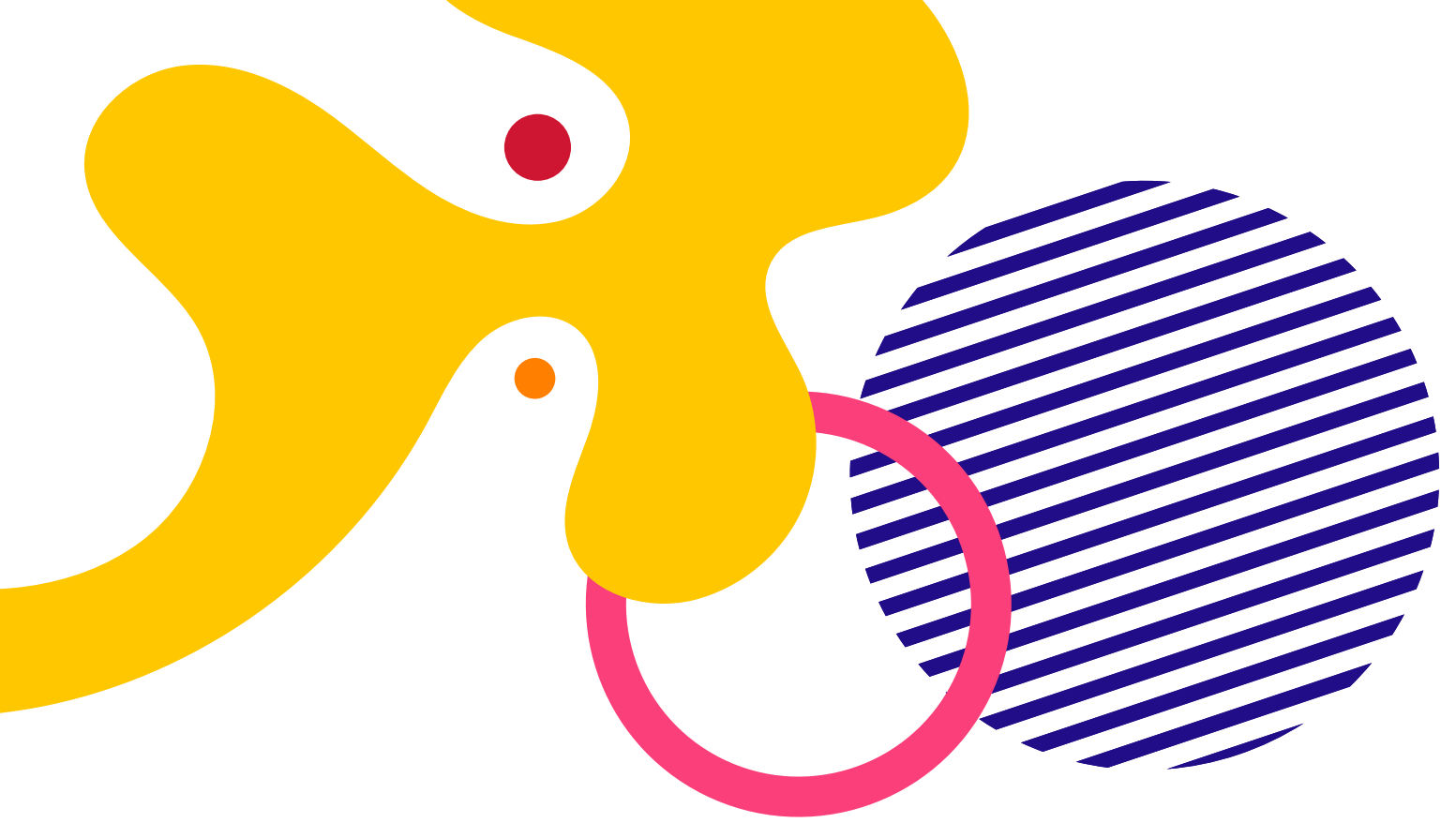
Grants given
(BME Fund)

11

Refuge providers

16

Ending-VAWG
services



02

**The impact of
the pandemic
on women's
and girls'
organisations**

The global pandemic had a profound impact on women and girls around the world and in the UK. It deepened existing social, political and economic inequalities and set many women's and girls' lives back decades. It profoundly exposed and amplified disparities experienced by women and girls from Black and minoritised communities.

At the same time, across the UK the core issues impacting women and girls, as well as the women and girls sector, gained increased public visibility. News programmes, social and current affairs programmes and drama programmes across TV and radio channels all highlighted the inequalities many women and girls were experiencing. This was amplified across social media, and influenced Government agendas, and general public debates.

**1**

Rosa worked closely with the organisations it funded during this time to understand how the pandemic affected their roles, priorities and presence through the lens of service users, policy makers and mainstream providers. These conversations highlighted the direct impact on the running of services, as well as on the governance and infrastructure of women's and girls' organisations.

**2**

Time and time again, organisations demonstrated their capacity to innovate and adapt quickly and effectively in times of crisis to meet the immediate and critical needs of women and girls. This was particularly apparent in those organisations which exist on very limited funds and are led by Black and minoritised women.

**3**

The significant surge in demand coupled with increasingly complex needs among the women and girls they support took a profound toll on the mental and physical health and wellbeing of staff within these organisations. This will have a long-term impact on organisational sustainability.

**4**

The current funding landscape works against organisations led by and for women and girls, especially those led by and for Black and minoritised women and girls. They often find they lose out on funding opportunities to race and gender 'neutral' organisations and are faced with delivering complex service provision on very limited funds. This is especially true where statutory commissioning is involved.

A CLOSER LOOK AT SOME OF THESE CHALLENGES:

1) Meeting demands – old and new

The impact of the pandemic meant demands on women's organisations increased by volume and complexity. A common thread in the conversations we had was that organisations felt the need to respond, adapt, change, and "get on with it." Staff quickly realised that local mainstream services were "grounding to a halt" and safe public spaces such as schools, libraries and GPs were no longer accessible. This increased demand on the existing services provided by women's and girls' organisations.

In particular, organisations offering domestic abuse support had to adapt their services to accommodate women who found it even harder to make contact during normal office hours. Being permanently at home with other family members – often the perpetrators of abuse – made it much harder for women to reach out or call discreetly and many organisations responded by accommodating 'out of hours' calls, including taking calls in the middle of the night.

" WE'VE HAD ABOUT 160 REFERRALS FOR WOMEN, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FLEEING DOMESTIC ABUSE SINCE THE LOCKDOWN." – funded organisation.

Several organisations saw a considerable increase in demand from women with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) and with children seeking financial support and accommodation. Many temporary housing arrangements previously offered to women by friends or community members were withdrawn from once the first lockdown measures were imposed in March 2020. Women were left with no option but to present themselves and their children as homeless to their local authority. The organisations Rosa funded reported that the majority of women in this position they supported were from minoritised communities.

" THE BME WOMEN'S SECTOR IS ONCE AGAIN SUFFERING. IT'S VERY CHALLENGING FOR US, ESPECIALLY BECAUSE OF THE NO RECOURSE FOR PUBLIC FUNDING AND SUPPORTING MIGRANT WOMEN. IT SEEMS AS THOUGH WE HAVE TO WORK TWICE AS HARD TO GET THEM THE SUPPORT THEY NEED." – funded organisation.

Many of the funded organisations responded to the crisis by providing services outside their normal remit, for example:

- **Providing** quick and accessible information about Covid-19 to enable women to make informed decisions
- **Disseminating** public health messaging in community languages, often at cost to the organisation
- **Distributing** food and basic provisions
- **Sourcing and distributing** PPE and sanitising equipment
- **Providing** immediate advice, in cultural and language appropriate way, about the furlough scheme, universal credit applications and business support options
- **Sourcing** laptops and data for home-schooling
- **Upskilling** women to use new technology or equipment
- **Women staffing organisations** also offered increased emotional support to help address increased anxieties relating to job losses, home schooling, poverty and abuse through additional counselling, online support groups, and advice lines
- **Managing** the anxieties of frontline workers at higher risk of Covid-19 through signposting to cultural and language specific guidance, additional counselling and informal platforms to share fears and stories. Care workers particularly felt vulnerable and isolated through both their journey to each 'client' as well as exposure to households outside their 'bubble'
- **Supporting** families, through helplines, online platforms and befriending. Covid-19 disproportionately impacted Black and minoritised communities and this was reflected in the death rates. The absence of the normal grieving process and restrictions on performing religious and cultural rites added to the strain on individuals and communities.

2) Working with statutory agencies

Whilst mainstream and statutory services (including health providers, police and social services) often rely quite heavily on the work delivered by specialist organisations led by and for women and girls, lockdown measures significantly and rapidly increased this. In particular, it was understood that reaching BME communities with information was most effectively delivered via specialist organisations that understood cultural, language and issue-based contexts.

“ WE HAVE HISTORICALLY CAMPAIGNED AROUND THE NECESSITY OF SPECIALIST SERVICES, BUT WE WERE ALWAYS ENCOURAGED TO BE GENERIC. THE PAST YEAR HAS HIGHLIGHTED THAT SPECIALISTS ARE NEEDED AND THERE IS SO MUCH VALUE IN THEM. IT HAS TAKEN A GLOBAL PANDEMIC FOR PEOPLE TO REALISE THAT BAME SERVICES ARE IMPORTANT. THERE NEEDS TO BE A FOCUS ON THESE PROJECTS, IT’S LONG OVERDUE.” – funded organisation.

Whilst specialist organisations welcomed this realisation of the need for culturally appropriate services and approaches, unfortunately the increased demand from mainstream providers added pressure without the appropriate remuneration or resources to manage it.

BME women’s organisations particularly highlighted demands in:

- **Housing women in safe places** – Many organisations were called upon to help social services find safe spaces for women who had been released from hospital but whose home lives were unsafe. Women were at risk of being sent back to their families if culturally relevant organisations were not available to them.
- **Translation and interpreting services** – Several organisations referenced this and included requests from police, social services and local councils for help with specific cases. They also reported being asked to help relay information regarding Covid-19 rules, as well as medicine and food pack distribution.
- **Covid-19 testing** – Many organisations support women from BME backgrounds cannot read English and are also illiterate in their mother tongue. There was an obvious gap in information and knowledge about testing centres for these women – a gap which was filled local specialist organisations. This was especially true when schools re-opened after the summer
- **Food parcels** – In some cases, food parcels contained inappropriate food in terms of faith and culture, leaving many women at the risk of insufficient rations.

“ SHE’D BEEN GIVEN TINS OF PORK AND HAM, AND SOME PASTA. SHE’D NEVER COOKED PASTA AND WOULDN’T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH IT. IT WAS THE MONTH OF FASTING, SHE’D BEEN LIVING ON BISCUITS AND SHE DIDN’T WANT TO GO OUT BECAUSE SHE DIDN’T FEEL SAFE.” – funded organisation.

3) Sustainable Funding

It was clear in all of our conversations with women’s and girls’ organisations that sustainable funding remains a real and profound challenge for many of them. This is particularly true for those led by and for Black and minoritised women. In particular, organisations reported that while Rosa funding and other Covid-19 response funds had been forthcoming to cover the ‘emergency’, it was effectively short-term funding and would not be enough to sustain them in the longer term. One funded organisation said:

“ POST-PANDEMIC, IF THAT LEVEL OF FUNDING ISN’T SUSTAINED, WE’RE GOING TO SEE MORE AND MORE BME WOMEN’S GRASSROOTS ORGANISATIONS FALL TO THE WAYSIDE. THEY WON’T BE ABLE TO SUSTAIN THEIR STAFF THAT THEY HAVE NOW JUST ABOUT RECRUITED DURING THE PANDEMIC.” – funded organisation.

A lot of the Covid19 emergency funding was short term and often provided relatively small amounts of money. This meant organisations had to apply for multiple sources of funding, which impacted on the organisations’ capacity to meet expectations, both from women needing the services and funders requiring reporting. It was clear that many women’s and girls’ organisations have limited internal capacity to fundraise, write bids and submit monitoring and evaluation forms.

We also heard clear messages about the need to resource both the increased immediate and emerging demands. At the height of the pandemic, the volume and pace of demand was difficult to predict and several organisations spoke about the “push and pull” from mainstream services.

This included being called upon at short notice, as well needing to proactively intervene when Black and minoritised women’s needs were neglected due to the lack of culturally appropriate provisions. In addition, many organisations we spoke to were acutely conscious that the long term impact of the pandemic will have a profound impact on women and girls which they exist to support – but the lack of long term, sustainable funding affects these organisations’ ability to plan for or respond to these emerging demands.

Several organisations found that funding opportunities were available but not necessarily accessible. This was particularly true for smaller, specialist organisations led by and for Black and minoritised women and girls. These organisations felt they were perceived as higher-risk than other organisations and that they lacked bid writing experience, an understanding of funders' expectations and access to IT or data outside of core work hours in order to complete applications. It is important to note that many of the women running these organisations are low paid, providing many hours voluntarily, often working from home and sharing equipment, physical space and data with family members.

4) Responding to emerging need

As well as having to adapt rapidly to respond to the pandemic, all of the interviewees reported needing to revisit their purpose as well as initiate new services such as food drops and telephone befriending. Whilst many organisations could access emergency funding to deliver frontline service provision, it was far harder to access resources which would allow them to sustain the organisation around this work.

“ FUNDING WAS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FOR US. THE RISK ASSESSMENTS, ADAPTING OUR POLICIES AND THE TRAINING THAT WE’VE HAD TO DO REQUIRED US TO MENTALLY STRENGTHEN OUR SELVES FIRST. WE NEEDED TO DO THIS BEFORE WE COULD DELIVER AND GET BACK INTO THE COMMUNITY AGAIN.”
– funded organisation.

When probed about non-financial support needs, 98% of the organisations we spoke to identified a range of support needs. These included an overwhelming need for space, time and professional support to develop strategic plans that reflect the impact of Covid-19 on domestic abuse, housing and evictions, unemployment, mental health, education and racism.

“ LOOKING FORWARDS, WHAT WE NEED NOW IS TRAINING ON MENTAL HEALTH FOR OUR STAFF.” – funded organisation.

The pandemic highlighted pre-existing stark inequalities and disparities facing women to government, funders, policy makers and wider society. But what this also highlighted was the need for the women and girls sector to revisit its purpose and presence.

5) Remote working

For most organisations, transitioning to online platforms, skilling up and familiarising people with new software and systems was a sudden and steep journey. Most, however, recognised it as a 'gamechanger', presenting an opportunity for organisations to upgrade systems, processes and staff confidence. Securing funding for equipment, software and training helped organisations respond quickly to their own needs and those of the women and girls they support.

Staff were recognised for their ability to stop and restart on a completely new canvas. For a sector that has been primarily paper-driven, service delivery, communications and organisation infrastructure were transformed in a relatively short period.

However, digital transformation impacts organisations differently. Those led by and for Black and minoritised women are often supporting women who cannot read English and have limited access to tech. At the height of the pandemic, these women needed extra time, engagement and capacity to get up to speed and access information, classes and activities. This hidden training need has additional costs which are borne by organisations working with Black and minoritised women that are often overlooked.

" MORE PEOPLE NEED TO BE MADE AWARE OF THE STRUGGLES THE BAME COMMUNITY ARE FACING." – funded organisation.

6) Boundaries

As with many women, the impact of the pandemic has had a profound effect on staff in the women and girls sector. Working from home has left women juggling a range of challenges, including caring responsibilities, reduced hours and income, lack of space, lack of social interaction with colleagues and managers, and managing home schooling often whilst delivering services to women and girls with profound needs. Boundaries have blurred and the working day has spread over longer hours.

" I'M SUPPOSED TO HELP 50 WOMEN OVER A YEAR, AND I'VE HELPED 75 IN 5 MONTHS." – funded organisation.

However, for some women, these difficulties come in addition to troubling domestic situations. Women who work in women's organisations are often facing home lives that mirror those of the women they support. This could mean living with extended families, cultural and religious pressures, parenting alone, health and mental health concerns, and caring for children with additional needs.

In summary, the conversations highlight concerns for staff in relation to:

- **Work life balance** – this was drastically impacted by changed routines and expectations from women
- **Home working** – for those with caring responsibilities in particular, the pandemic has resulted in longer days and little or no respite between home and work responsibilities
- **Burn out** – organisations had limited ability to provide opportunities for staff interaction and additional support, which exacerbated burn out
- **Isolation** – women were unable to meet with colleagues for the invaluable support found in face-to-face meetings at office spaces
- **Sickness** – staff at organisations led by and for Black and minoritised women were more likely to take sick leave, which correlates to a higher proportion of black and minoritised people affected by coronavirus.



03

Challenges and Opportunities for Funders

Rosa exists to invest in, and resource organisations led by and for women and girls across the UK. Like many other funders, we responded quickly to the changing social and economic environment facing the sector in March 2020. Women's and girls' organisations recognised and appreciated Rosa for providing a lifeline in the context of the complex and multiple challenges they face in delivering their work. They particularly appreciated Rosa's funding for core work and crisis support as well as our flexibility with funding terms and conditions, grant extensions.

Rosa aims to engage with the organisations we support in a way that benefits them and enhances their work. We strive to be a supportive and accessible funder, responding to the changing and varying needs of the women and girls sector. We will be using the findings from our Covid19 funds to consider how we fund organisations in the future and how we support other funders to invest in and resource the women and girls sector.

Key findings for funders

" COVID HAS SHOWN THAT SPECIALIST SERVICES ARE REALLY IMPORTANT, SO IT WOULD BE GREAT TO HAVE SOMEONE STEP UP AND SAY, 'THEY'RE IMPORTANT, LET'S DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT AND LET'S GIVE THEM THREE YEARS' WORTH OF FUNDING'. THAT WOULD BE FANTASTIC." - funded organisation.

The research we have conducted with organisations we have funded in response to Covid19 has provided some specific insights for funders to consider as they seek to support organisations rebuild for the future.

How funding is awarded

- **Award long-term and multi-year funding** as well as high quality non-financial support
- **Offer flexible funding** that supports core costs as well as project work
- Simplify the funding application process and include opportunities for conversations with applicants as part of the assessment process
- **Shorten the turnaround times** on funding decisions and ensure advertised decision-making dates are maintained
- **Support all staff** to be culturally aware and empathetic
- **Look at reserves and assets with a broader lens.** Funders have understandably regarded organisations with reserves as safe and 'less risky' but the impact of the pandemic has meant many organisations have used their reserves to enable survival and will struggle to rebuild these in the short term
- **Consider the internal biases of your own organisations.** Organisations led by and for Black and minoritised women have historically struggled to be recognised as specialist organisations within a specialist field, this is particularly true for small organisations
- **Reflect on which organisations your application process serves or benefits.** Enable specialist organisations to demonstrate their experiences, needs and impact in more creative, less rigid ways, in particular allowing space for articulating intersectionality
- **Consider the proportionality of your reporting requirements** and in particular the additional burden and bureaucracy that results from demands for multiple reports for relatively small grants. Increased core funding can allow organisations to increase staff hours, which enables them to oversee this level of reporting. Funders should consider covering these costs in addition to any future project funding.

INVESTING IN THE WIDER WORK OF ORGANISATIONS

As noted above, organisations reported that, whilst they had been able to secure emergency funding to respond to the immediate challenges presented by the pandemic, they were now seeking to address the pressing needs of their organisations. This included support for organisational infrastructure, staff development, strategy, fundraising and networking.

Organisational Infrastructure

- **Governance** – support with re-positioning and re-evaluating the purpose and strategy for small women's and girls' organisations
- **CRM systems** – supporting the development of appropriate, affordable and safe CRM systems that allow for continued remote working. Organisations identified a need for investment in new systems, skills development through ringfenced additional funds or pro-bono resource through corporate links
- **Goods in-kind** – supporting an organisation's core resources and functionality including IT, laptops, PCs, software, and licences, as well as resources for beneficiaries including starter packs, food and hygiene products, learning resources, and IT equipment
- **Pro-bono legal, HR and bid writing support** – as well as website and digital development.

Staff development

- **Coaches** – Leaders within the women and girls sector have spoken about feeling lonely in their roles. They told us there's little resource available for personal growth, channelling ideas or sharing experiences. Skilled and experienced coaches would add value to the talents, energy and resilience of these women leaders
- **Mental wellbeing support** – The impact of Covid-19 on women working in the women and girls sector supporting women on multiple and complex issues was referenced throughout the report. The volume and pace of work – as well as accommodating new ways of working, and balancing home and work responsibilities – has taken a toll on many women. Burnout is inevitable if financial support for counselling, wellbeing activities or donations of wellness activities and treats are not sourced for individuals, teams or whole organisations

- **Training and development** – 98% of organisations identified that they would like to see access to more free training with specified topics such as:

Voice and visibility • Policies and governance • Safeguarding • EDI • Project management • Fundraising strategies • Bid writing/winning contracts • Digital confidence • Influencing policy • Financial management and budgeting • Self-care.

Strategy

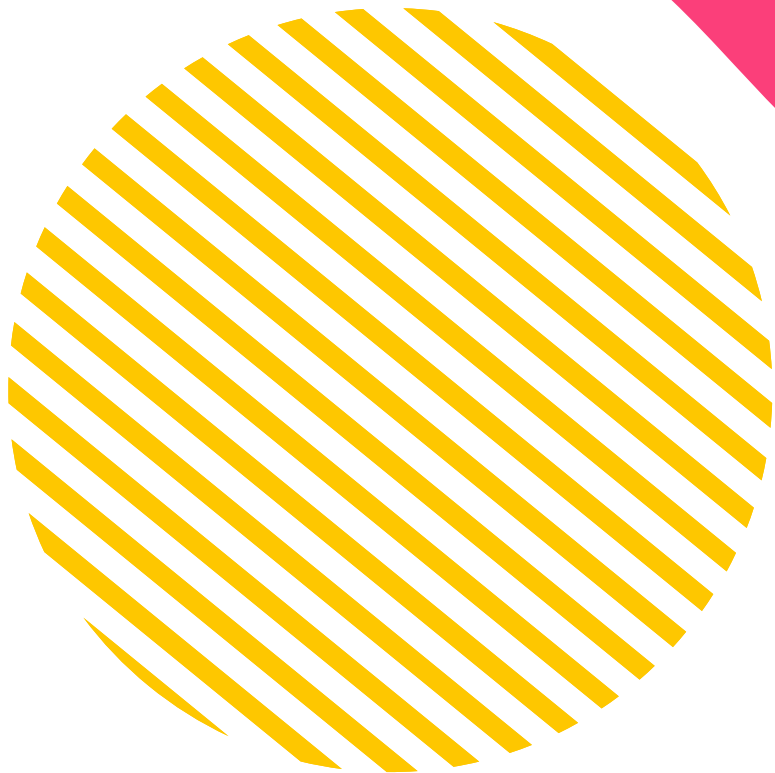
- **Sustainability** – Several organisations highlighted their diminishing reserves and their profound concerns around the risk of closure. This was particularly true of small organisations led by and for Black and minoritised women. Many reported needing support to develop business plans and organisational strategies that would help them reflect on their purpose and build their fundraising approach.

Fundraising

- **Cause sponsors, champions and patrons** – Several organisations spoke about the lack of capacity and knowledge to promote their organisation's work to wider public platforms for both awareness and fundraising purposes. Having people to champion 'the cause' on social media platforms including via influencers, events, articles, radio etc would increase presence and visibility of their achievements and maintain discourse in public spaces
- **Measuring social impact** – Whilst issues affecting women and girls are visible and evident, organisations felt that support is needed to showcase their work better, show funders the value of the work beyond the formal 'value for money' concept, and inform future funder strategies and programmes.

Networking

- **Sharing of good practice and resources** – Up and down the country, women spoke about how they dealt with the challenges their organisations faced in providing front-line services for women and children. New resources and new ways of working were developed, and they need to be shared. Funders need to create spaces and platforms for women to share the learning and ongoing challenges. Organising and facilitating such spaces requires resources and capacity
- **Facilitating collaborations and networking** – Through online virtual meeting platforms, women found that the engagement with other similar organisations across the country was powerful for both shared learning but also initiating potential collaborations based on specialist issues and/or specific communities. Scoping and facilitating potential collaborations requires resources and capacity and should be considered as part of increasing hours of leadership and core staff.



04

Conclusion

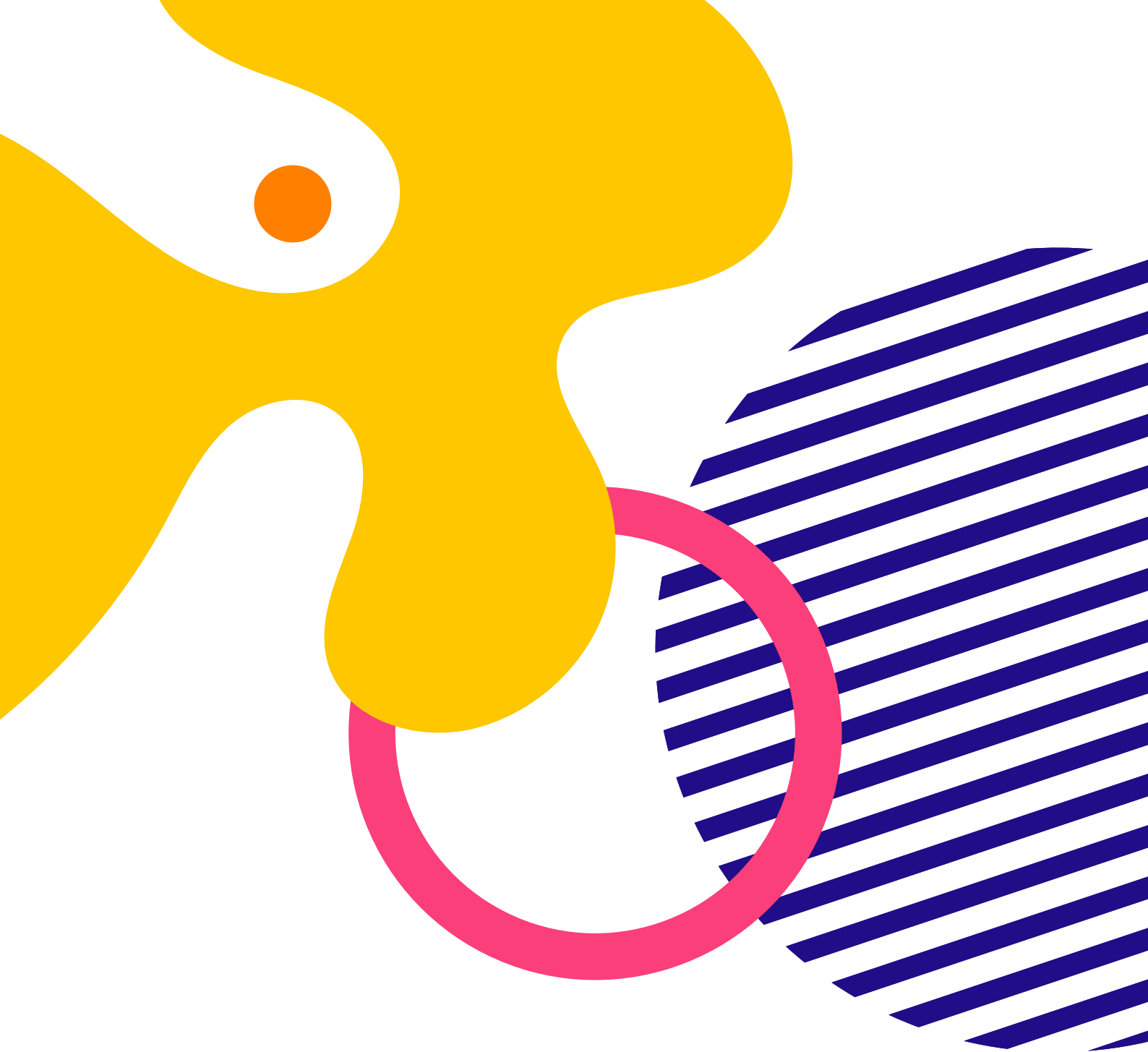
It will be many decades before we fully appreciate the consequences and impact of the global pandemic on individuals, families, communities and nations, as well as on the organisations and institutions that exist to support us all.

The consequences will not be evenly felt, however, and it is clear that women and girls in the UK and around the world, will bear the brunt, particularly those who face multiple and intersecting inequalities including Black and minoritised women and girls.

Rosa exists to invest and resource the UK women and girls sector. We are proud of our record of supporting these organisations. We know, however, that we always have more to learn about how to be better at what we do, and how to share that learning with other funders in order to increase the funding into this often overlooked but profoundly important sector.

As funders, we have an opportunity now to listen to what organisations are telling us and to respond to their needs now and in the future.

They have spoken, we must listen and we must act.



05

Moving Forward

The wider reflection and messages for funders is encapsulated in the following three points:

1

Understand and appreciate the importance of funding core. This is true of central and local Government, as well as the funding community more broadly.

2

Organisations need flexible funding rooted in trust that they know what they need and are experts in their own experience. This might include...This might include rent, salaries, as well as funding which enables the 'thinking' and 'development' time needed to build organisations and work which amplifies women's voices to support influencing and awareness raising.

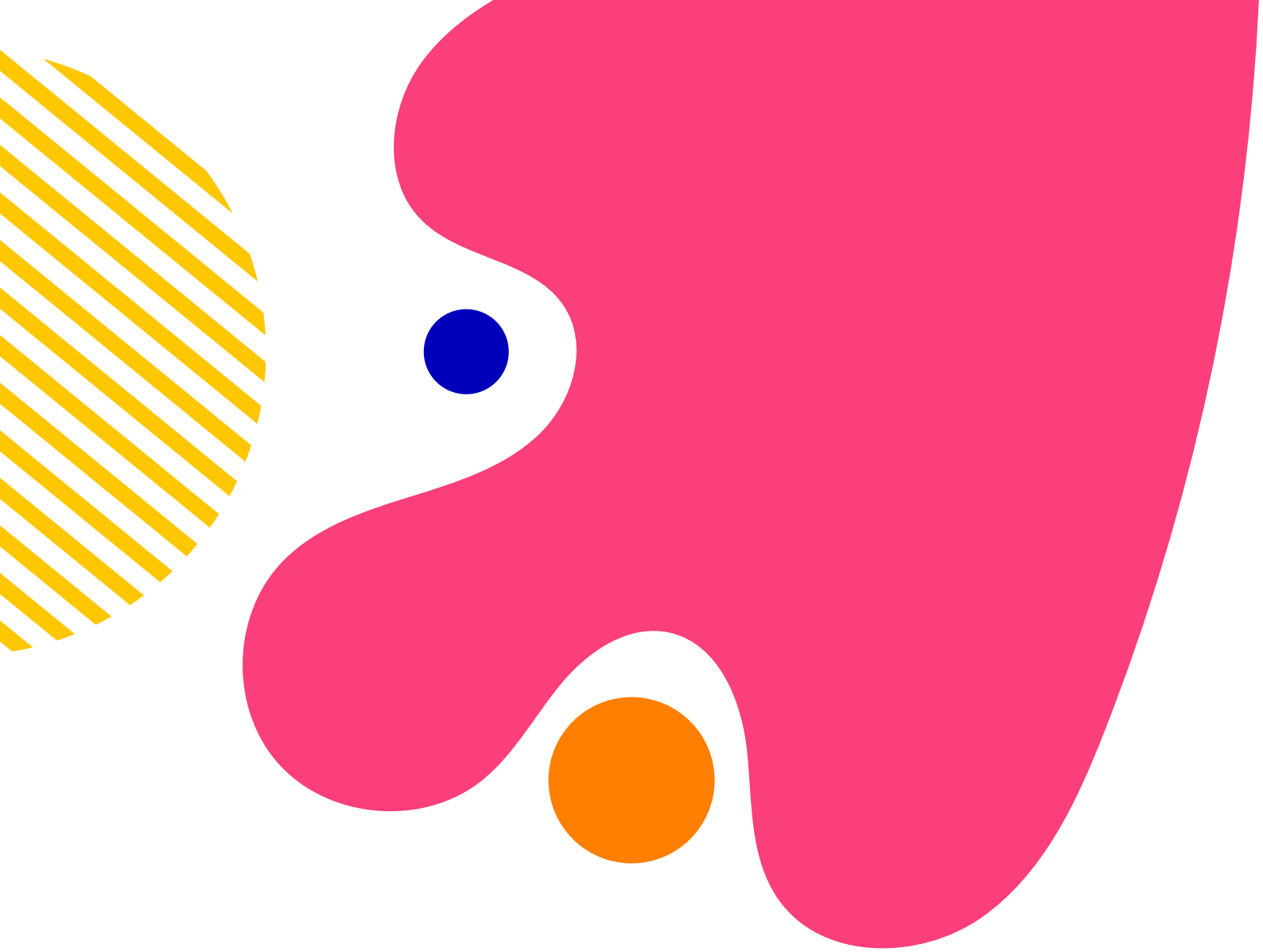
3

Covid19 emergency funding has created a 'cliff edge' with funding having to be spent by 31st March this year. Many smaller organisations do not know how they will survive into the new financial year.

The journey beyond COVID-19 specific funding will be a genuine struggle for the majority of current grant recipients. That said, many expressed optimism at the collective, collaborative approach happening in the women and girls sector, as well as support from Rosa and Rosa staff.

" I'M VERY, VERY OPTIMISTIC BECAUSE I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A STRONG BELIEVER IN PEOPLE'S VOICES. MUCH OF HAS STEMMED FROM THE ZOOM MEETINGS, IT'S VERY POWERFUL TO HEAR PEOPLE'S STORIES." – funded organisation.

** Comic Relief, Cummins, Erica Wax, Andrew Balls, Esmée Fairbairn, JA Clark, Kering Foundation, List Family Foundation, The Talent Fund, The Waterloo Foundation, Oak Foundation and Individual donations.*



06

Case Studies

“Funding meant we could take on 12 girls who need support with their wellbeing and integrate them into one of our two mentorship programmes.

Since the crisis started, we've had more young women and girls come to us for support than we've been able to take on. Having a part-time member of staff who is there to consistently recruit new mentors means we're able to meet these increasing needs.

Now, we've allocated either a peer or therapeutic mentor to every girl who has come to us.

Most of the girls we support are from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, so a big thing even before the pandemic was the stigma attached to being women and girls of colour in certain geographic areas. This is a challenge that's always there.

Access to work has been an equally big issue. We have girls that had part-time jobs working in fast food joints, for example, so they've lost their jobs and it's been tough. During the pandemic we registered with the National Youth Agency, so we can offer accredited programmes in leadership and peer mentoring skills. This means the girls can get qualified to become fully paid peer mentors. We were able to buy laptops so that when we can eventually have in-person workshops, the girls will have the equipment they need to do their accredited programme.

Lots of the girls who come to us don't have access to IT equipment at home, so this is a big development. What's incredible about all of this is that it's about getting these girls financially independent at above minimum wage, empowering them as well as strengthening their skills.”

– funded organisation.

12 girls

Funding meant we could take on 12 girls and integrate them into one of our two mentorship programmes.

“Our greatest challenge has been moving all of our activities online, including our fitness and cooking classes, youth and social club, referrals and advice for women and their families.

We work with women who face unemployment, financial deprivation and lack skills and confidence. Everything we've built to support them over the last 10 years is now online. This took a lot of work because we had to adapt our policies, get extra support and training for the team, and work out how our sessions would change. We also had to really focus on mentally preparing ourselves.

Around 80% of the women we support can't read or write, so we developed an interactive learning approach. We gave the women we support IT equipment and taught them how to use it. Things like using WhatsApp broadcasts and Zoom, downloading apps, creating a CV... all of this was new to them.

It's been really challenging to encourage women to move online, but we're getting there.

One of the most successful parts of our new online offering is the fitness classes, especially for improving women's mental health. We'd been running them in-person for the last five years, so we knew we had to continue.

The women knew the basics of Zoom from our interactive learning classes, so they felt confident accessing the fitness sessions online and feel comfortable with the instructor as she speaks in their languages. Helping women to maintain their physical health online in this way has been a massive achievement for us.”

– funded organisation.

80%

Around 80% of the women we support can't read or write, so we developed an interactive learning approach.

“Mental health and wellbeing were massive issues from the start of the pandemic. But on the grand scheme of things, wellbeing wasn't what people were focusing on.

A lot of the response funds centred around ‘urgent needs’ like emergency food, which are of course vital, but people’s mental health is equally urgent. Most of the young women we support are aged between 15 and 25 and are experiencing all sorts of challenges. During lockdown, many of them were going back home to over-crowded houses. Black Lives Matter was happening at the same time, too, which was a really emotional time and there were lots of hurting hearts.

This year has highlighted the magnitude of relative poverty that exists in the UK and the pandemic is only compounding it. Women After Greatness mostly supports young women of colour, but we opened out the group to create an inclusionary space. Most of the young women we support are from working class backgrounds, many are living in poverty and were the first to go to university. Lots of them were students panicking about the trajectory of their academic careers.

Rosa funding meant we could immediately start responding to their needs. The grant helped us to run nine weeks of creative writing workshops and a book club for 20 young women. The workshops were facilitated by a professional writer and two clinical psychologists, and became a place for young women to feel comfortable sharing, learning and challenging themselves.

Lots of them were worried about being able to buy the book that we'd be reading. When we told them we were covering everything, they were in awe because in relation to everything going on, a book doesn't seem ‘essential’. We're trying to challenge the idea that mental health and wellbeing are secondary issues in a global pandemic.”

– funded organisation.

9 weeks

The grant helped us to run nine weeks of creative writing workshops and a book club for 20 young women.

**Get in touch to
discuss partnering
with Rosa at
info@rosauk.org**