



Responding to the Resilience Risk

Research findings

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Acknowledgements

Renaissi is a social enterprise that supports people and places to thrive. We work with charities, funders, and government to help them deliver greater impact. This report was authored by Alice Thornton and Amanda Norrlander, based on research undertaken by Sally Brammall and Mahdy Alraie.

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Renaissi, August 2020

1. Introduction



Resilience is rarely at the top of the list of key competencies for people who work in the charity sector. Effective charities tend to be praised for qualities like good financial management, transparent governance, or ability to meaningfully engage the people they support. The competencies charities look for in employees might be their ability to clearly communicate, organisational skills, or their empathy and commitment to the cause. Resilience is undoubtedly seen as positive, but it is rarely at the forefront of discussions when we think about what a successful charity or effective charity worker looks like.

Why is this? Perhaps resilience is taken for granted – after all, most people in our sector do need to be resilient, a lot of the time. Perhaps it is not recognised as a capability that can be developed and hired for. It is possible that our sector’s focus on financial resilience has detracted from understanding other types of resilience that organisations, and individuals, need. Or perhaps resilience has become associated with the stigma of mental health, and not seen as something that employers – including charities – should concern themselves with.

Whatever the reason, this relative silence on the topic is beginning to change. London Funders have recently published a discussion paper about the role of funders in supporting the resilience of people in community-facing organisations, and it has been highlighted in a [Stanford Social Innovation Review series](#) on the connection between wellbeing and social change.¹ The Covid-19 pandemic has been a brutal reminder of the importance of having a resilient mindset in times of adversity, as well as underlining the structural inequalities that make it harder for some groups and individuals to be resilient in response to crisis.

1.1. Responding to the Resilience Risk

The Responding to the Resilience Risk project was inspired by a comment made by someone at a charity funded by City Bridge Trust on a visit by their Funding Manager. *“People in healthcare settings get access to professional supervision by a qualified psychotherapist to help them to deal with the challenges of their role. Why don’t we? Our frontline workers have to cope with trauma and crisis situations on a daily basis, just the same as they do.”*

City Bridge Trust wants to address that discrepancy by providing funding to support the resilience of workers in London’s charity sector. But they found very few examples of how to do this. What type of intervention develops personal resilience in a voluntary sector work context? What can charities in different sectors do to help their staff and volunteers nurture and develop resilience? And how can funders best support the resilience of frontline workers through their grant-making and other work? This research project came out of a desire to answer these questions.

¹ *The resilience of people in community-facing organisations: What’s the role of funders?* (2019) London Funders: London.

1.2. About the research

City Bridge Trust funded six organisations between October 2019 and March 2020 to design and deliver a pilot project to support the resilience of their staff and/or volunteers. Each project was unique, tailored to the specific circumstances of their workforce.

Renaissi was commissioned in August 2019 to evaluate the pilot projects and identify promising approaches to developing charity workers' resilience. We looked at answering the following research questions:

1. Is there value in supporting resilience or can it be sufficiently supported through other existing forms of support?
2. What are the features of successful interventions to build resilience and are some features more important than others?
3. Can resilience support be generic or is it more effective if it is sector specific? Are certain features more important to certain organisations, depending, possibly, on size, geography, management or governance structures, or sector?
4. Are there contextual factors that can influence the success or effectiveness of an intervention?
5. How can funders best support interventions to build the resilience of charity sector staff, particularly those for whom there is no existing support mechanism in place?

We used a mixed methods approach to evaluate the pilots. This included:

- **Semi-structured telephone interviews** with the lead contact at each organisation, at the start and end of their pilot project
- **Monthly assessments of participants' resilience levels**, using a tool called the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC – see p.18)
- **A visit to each pilot organisation**, to observe resilience activities taking place, speak to participants of the project and understand more about the workplace context
- **A participant feedback survey** at the end of the pilots
- Interim and final **project reports** submitted by the lead contact at each pilot

This research cannot be understood and interpreted outside of the context of Covid-19.

The crisis not only affected the research findings (see p.19), but has also created a context that underscores the importance of resilience as a research topic and will affect how this research is interpreted and taken forward. It has brought questions of equity, values, structural inequalities and collective responsibility to the forefront of debate within the charity sector, as well as in wider society. We discuss some of the implications of this context for the research – and vice versa – in the conclusions to this report.

1.3. Defining resilience

The definition of resilience used by the Trust is:

“The ability to remain flexible in our thoughts, feelings and behaviours when faced by a life disruption or extended periods of pressure, so that we emerge from difficulty stronger, wiser and more able.”²

In other words, resilience is understood as the ability to ‘bounce back’ following shocks or stress and learning to change our instinctive response patterns. This implies that resilience is a *competency* that can be developed and changed, with practice – in contrast to wellbeing or mental health, for example, which are usually defined as a state of being.³ The project also assumes that developing resilience can happen in a workplace setting over a relatively short (six month) period. The research has raised questions about the relationship between resilience as an individual competency, and team or organisational resilience, which are also discussed in the conclusions to this report.

1.4. Overview of this report

This report summarises our research findings. Because the pilots were experimental and we were not able to control for other influences on participants’ lives, it is not a conclusive assessment of the efficacy of the resilience activities that took place. There is still a lot we don’t know about what approaches are most effective in different contexts. However, we are able to provide some insights into approaches that might work, and we hope that the report can give you some ideas about what your organisation could do to help nurture the resilience of workers in the charity sector.

The report covers:

- An overview of the participating organisations and their pilot projects
- Feedback from participants about the types of approach that they found useful or less useful
- Some emerging insights about more or less effective approaches, and their impact on participants’ resilience
- Recommendations for next steps to further develop this important area of practice and research

Questions and comments about the research can be sent to Alice Thornton, Head of Learning at Renaisi: a.thornton@renaisi.com

² This definition was developed by Dr Carole Pemberton, <https://carolepemberton.co.uk/>

³ See What Works Centre for Wellbeing for a fuller discussion: <https://whatworkswellbeing.org/about-wellbeing/what-is-wellbeing/>

2. About the pilot projects



This section provides an overview of the six organisations that took part in the initiative, what types of resilience activities they delivered, and who these activities were for.

Fine Cell Work

About Fine Cell Work

Fine Cell Work (FCW) is a charity and social enterprise whose mission is to enable prisoners and ex-prisoners to build independent crime-free lives through

opportunity, paid, purposeful activity and meaningful work. They do this by training prisoners in needlework that they undertake in their cells, as well as offering work experience for ex-offenders after release. These ‘apprentices’ are given a professional, productive work environment with tasks requiring different levels of skill to help them to build confidence and develop their employability.



FINE CELL WORK

HANDMADE IN PRISON

About Fine Cell Work’s resilience pilot



The resilience intervention was open to back office staff based in the Victoria office who have limited engagement with beneficiaries, the programme delivery and employment training hub staff based in the Battersea office, and the senior leadership team. FCW delivered the following activities to the different groups of employees:⁵

For the whole team:

- 1 workshop on safeguarding policies (internal facilitator)
- 1 workshop on resilience (external facilitator)

For back-office staff:

- Monthly peer-mentoring sessions (internal facilitator)

For employment hub staff:

- Peer-mentoring sessions every three weeks (internal facilitator)

⁴ More people may have participated in some activities, but we have only included those who were consistently involved throughout the whole project period. Some participants dropped out due to leaving their role, extensive periods of leave, or deciding that they no longer wanted to participate. This applies to all pilot projects.

⁵ There were some changes to the frequency of some activities. For example, the final peer-mentoring session for employment hub staff was cancelled due to Covid-19.

- Reflective practice sessions every three weeks (external facilitator)
- 1 workshop building on the all-team resilience workshop (external facilitator)

For two members of the senior leadership team:

- Monthly 1-2-1 counselling with a qualified therapist

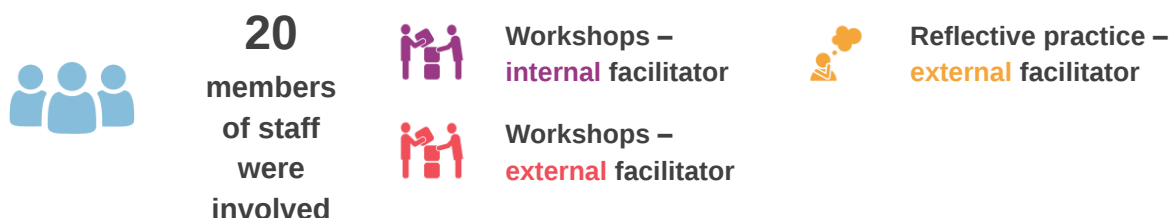
Just For Kids Law

About Just for Kids Law

Just for Kids Law (JFKL) is a charity that provides legal representation and advice, direct advocacy and support, and campaigning to ensure children and young people in the UK have their legal rights and entitlements respected and promoted, and their voices heard and valued.



About Just for Kids Law's resilience project



JFKL's resilience intervention involved:

- **Two learning day workshops** (facilitated by external consultants) on areas of thematic interest for the whole team, including understanding trauma and its impact on young people.
- **Group reflective practice** held every three weeks, also facilitated by an external consultant. Participants were separated into different groups depending on their team: Youth Advocacy, Legal, and Youth Projects.⁶
- **A series of peer-led workshops** were also designed as part of the intervention; one of these took place, but the remainder had to be cancelled due to the lead facilitator taking a period of leave and then leaving the organisation.

Mind in the City, Hackney and Waltham Forest

About Mind in the City, Hackney and Waltham Forest

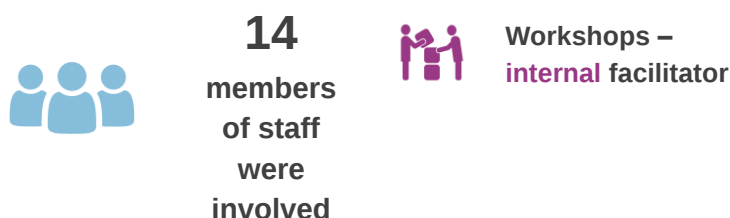
Mind in the City, Hackney and Waltham Forest (Mind CHWF) delivers a range of expert, innovative services to support people's wellbeing, resilience, and recovery. They work both with individuals at risk of or experiencing common mental health conditions, and those with severe and enduring mental health difficulties. The charity offers Wellbeing & Early Intervention



⁶ Due to the implications of Covid-19, the final reflective practice sessions moved online.

Activities, Recovery and Social Inclusion Activities, Psychological Therapies, Welfare Rights and Advice, and Education and Employability Support.

About Mind in the City, Hackney and Waltham Forest's resilience project



Mind CHWF's resilience intervention involved:

- **Two initial workshops** (facilitated by an internal expert) to introduce the intervention to participants.
- **Eight two-hour fortnightly sessions** designed according to a radical self-care model, delivered with the in-house expertise of two members of staff.⁷

Mind CHWF hosted two initial workshops to introduce their intervention to prospective participants. Following this, the selected Mind CHWF staff members took part in a resilience intervention comprising eight two-hour fortnightly sessions. These sessions were designed according to a radical self-care model and were delivered with the in-house expertise of two members of staff.

The ClementJames Centre

About the ClementJames Centre

ClementJames Centre (CJC) is a community charity based in North Kensington which offers employment support, adult learning, children and young people's education, and wellbeing support. Their vision is for everyone in their community to realise their potential and live fulfilled lives.



About the ClementJames Centre's resilience project



The ClementJames Centre resilience intervention involved:

- **An initial workshop** about what resilience means (external facilitator)

⁷ Due to the implications of Covid-19, the final, eighth session was delivered online.

- **Fortnightly confidential one-to-one sessions** with an external support worker who is a qualified UKCP psychotherapist⁸, for Community Hub (frontline) staff members.
- **A second workshop co-produced by staff**, about how to develop resilience as a team.
- **A further four group sessions / workshops**, about specific elements of resilience and how to implement these in the workplace. One of those sessions was externally facilitated by the local NHS Health and Wellbeing team.
- **Two-hour group reflection sessions** every half term, led by the Community Hub Manager.
- **One-hour weekly peer support sessions**, led by team leads.⁹

The Listening Place

About The Listening Place

The Listening Place (TLP) offers face-to-face support for those who feel life is no longer worth living. They provide on-going support by trained volunteers, filling a critical gap in support for suicidal people. The volunteers are in turn supported and supervised by mental health professionals.

the
listening
place

About The Listening Place's resilience project



8
volunteers
took part



Workshops –
internal facilitator

The Listening Place resilience pilot featured **six 90-minute sessions**, delivered for a self-selected group of volunteers, by a volunteer who is also a trainee counselling psychologist. The sessions incorporated the presentation of theoretical ideas, drawing from the Padesky and Mooney model of resilience and various CBT approaches. It stressed how resilience is always a work in progress and offered psychoeducation on different aspects of mental health, whilst providing practical exercises and techniques to work on to hopefully improve resilience. Every session included imagery exercises from compassion-focused therapy (Neff and Gilbert) that were given to the participants to help with self-compassion. Group discussions were an integral part of the intervention and each session focused on a particular theme, such as 'Worry and Anxiety', or 'Hope'. The sessions were held approximately every two weeks.

⁸ The psychotherapist left the post in November 2019 and there was a delay until the New Year before a replacement came into post.

⁹ The reflection, peer support and support worker sessions all moved online after closure of the office due to Covid-19.

Toynbee Hall



About Toynbee Hall

Toynbee Hall works to tackle the causes and impact of poverty in East London, and further afield. They offer advice services, youth and older people's projects and financial inclusion work which are all geared towards supporting members of the East London community.

What Toynbee Hall had planned to deliver

Toynbee Hall had planned to deliver **eight 2-hour long modules** delivered over six months by an **external psychologist**, split into three broad topic areas:

- Resourcing
- Sharing experiences
- Exploring how to take this knowledge back into the workplace

This resilience project could not be delivered for a number of reasons. The expert psychologist who had designed the pilot and was intending to deliver the sessions was no longer able to deliver it. After a delay a replacement external expert was found and a new format agreed, however they also had to withdraw. After another delay, Toynbee Hall redesigned the approach so that they could deliver similar material in-house, but by this time they had significantly less time to deliver than the other projects. The COVID-19 crisis then hit, and Toynbee Hall moved to emailing staff with self-care content and providing online channels for staff to talk and discuss problems instead of the planned intervention.

3. Feedback on the resilience activities

This chapter describes participants' experiences of taking part in the resilience pilots.

At the end of the project, participants were asked how they would now define resilience. Some of their answers are found in the figure below. Generally, these align well with the definition that City Bridge Trust uses (p.5).



Some participants suggested that it would be helpful to discuss the meaning of resilience at the start of an intervention to help the group come to an individual and shared understanding of the term, and what the project will involve.

The majority of feedback about the pilot projects was positive.

"I found the group and the trainers delightful, so I looked forward to the experience." (Participant, TLP)

The majority of participants who responded to the end-of-project feedback survey were either satisfied (45%) or very satisfied (32%) with the activities provided. Only three participants (6%) were dissatisfied.

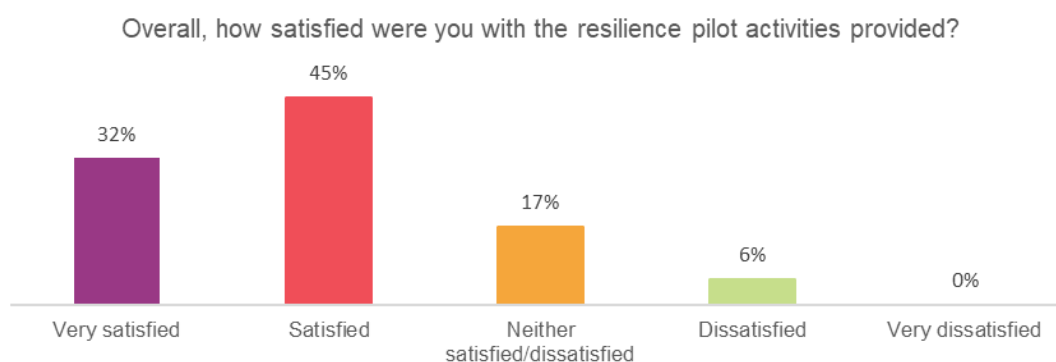


Figure 1: Feedback survey question, 'Overall, how satisfied were you with the resilience pilot activities provided?' N = 53 respondents.

Most participants found the activities useful. Only four people (8%) found them not so useful, and two people (4%) not at all useful.

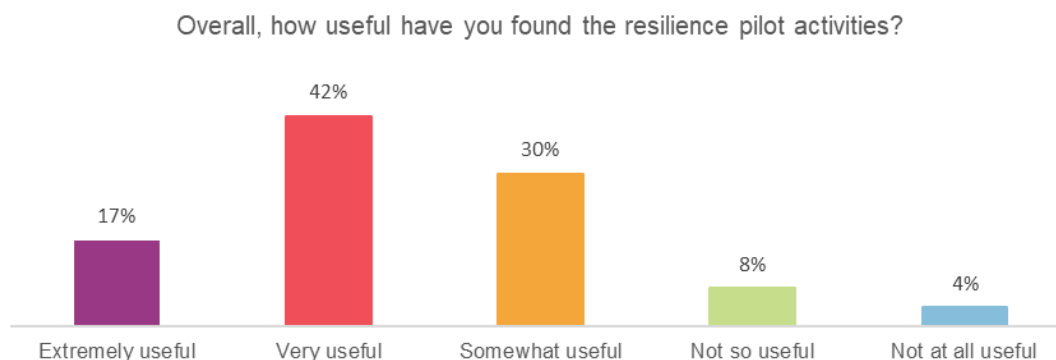


Figure 2: Feedback survey question, 'Overall, how useful have you found the resilience pilot activities?' N = 53 respondents.

Many participants expressed gratitude towards their employer, volunteering organisation and/or City Bridge Trust for the opportunity to take part in resilience activities in the workplace.

"This has been the most helpful single thing we have ever done as a team. As a result we have a happier and more resilient [team]. It has been a fantastic opportunity and I think our service users have received a better quality of support as a result." (Participant, FCW)

3.1. What participants valued about being part of the pilot



Participants particularly valued and appreciated the following aspects of the resilience projects. Feedback about individual pilots separately can be found in Appendix 1.



Having dedicated time and space during work hours to focus on personal and team resilience. This was the most common theme. Many participants described how useful the experience has been for them personally and for their teams. For many, having this dedicated time to focus on resilience was an appreciated contrast to their busy day-to-day work.

“Overall, I have hugely appreciated this project. It is the first time within the charity that dedicated thought has been given to staff resilience and emotional health, which is incredibly important given the people and issues we constantly deal with.” (Participant, FCW)

Focussing on prevention instead of being reactive. Several participants mentioned this as a valuable part of the project. They highlighted that many frontline organisations tend to focus on immediate priorities and lack the time or space to take a step back and reflect.



“We are usually manically bouncing from one project to another with never enough time for learning as the charity has objectives that need to be achieved at any cost. Taking the time out to reflect on resilience and the importance of time to recover and assess felt very relevant and important.” (Participant, FCW)



Feeling more motivated to stay in the workplace. Some participants felt that their workplace has become more attractive as their employer has sent a clear signal that personal and team resilience is important.

“It has increased my motivation to stay on working for the organisation as it shows that [the organisation] value staff wellbeing and resilience.” (Participant, CJC)

Sharing a reflective space helped to increase understanding within the team. Many participants highly appreciated reflecting and discussing challenges with their team and felt that this had increased their understanding of each other and the work they are delivering.



“I did think the sessions were valuable in a sense that we touched on some quite heavy experiences of apprentices that I would not have learnt about and this in turn has given me a more holistic view and increased empathy.” (Participant, FCW)



Having an external expert facilitator or counsellor to share best practice and help the team create a supportive reflective space. Many participants highlighted the value of external input in the resilience activities. Having an external lead helped some feel more comfortable sharing challenges or issues they were facing.

“It was nice having space to chat to fellow colleagues about what was on their mind, and to have a facilitator to reflect on our reflections.” (Participant, JFKL)

Learning about resilience tools and receiving information to use both in the workplace and beyond. Some participants highlighted the value of receiving information packs about resilience and tools they can use in their



personal as well as work lives. Having the opportunity to repeat the content of key sessions was also valued.

“I really liked that we were given information packs from each session. This has helped to be able to go back over the content in my own time and refer to the different exercises.” (Participant, Mind CHWF)



Trying out different types of resilience activities to guide future interventions.

Some participants liked having the opportunity to try out different types of tools and approaches to building resilience. They felt this helped their organisation to shape future resilience interventions.

“It was good to have a few different types of sessions to try in the pilot and to go through with all of them to the end ... This gave us an understanding of what we need, and which format works best for us.” (Participant, FCW)

Peer-led activities. Feedback about peer activities, like peer-mentoring or peer-led group sessions, was generally positive. For some participants, it allowed them to share experiences with each other in an informal way that helped to build stronger bonds between colleagues.



“I think it has built a much stronger team dynamic and level of trust. I liked the informal nature and [it] made me feel a lot more comfortable and open to share my thoughts.” (Participant, FCW)

3.2. What participants found challenging about the resilience pilots



Despite generally positive feedback, there were a number of common challenges and some participants found the project uncomfortable at times. Feedback about individual pilots separately can be found in Appendix 1. Themes that were common to more than one project included:

- **One size does not fit all.** Many participants highlighted that the types of resilience activities they participated in did not work for everyone. This was also obvious in our visits to observe the activities taking place. There is a difficult

balance for organisations to get right: everyone has different learning styles, starting points, preferences and personal contexts. Some participants suggested that the resilience activities could be more ad-hoc, shaped around individual's needs, or more clearly voluntary to overcome this challenge.

"I am aware that others really liked and benefited from it individually and as a team, so that is why I agreed to attend. But I really did not enjoy it. We all learn, communicate and grow differently so interventions will not suit all." (Participant, JFKL)

- **Feeling uncomfortable speaking about personal resilience in the workplace.** Some participants felt uncomfortable, anxious and vulnerable taking part in the resilience activities alongside their colleagues. Some felt that the resilience activities put too much focus on the individual and their capacity for building resilience, as opposed to the role of the organisation in this regard.

"I do not often like to discuss personal feelings in front of others, particularly if I do not know or trust them." (Participant, FCW)

- **Not the right group composition.** Group dynamics were challenging to manage, and this seems to have been a common theme across most of the projects. Some participants felt that the group was too big and this hindered their experience. Many felt uncomfortable being in a group alongside their line managers and/or reports. Some projects mixed different teams together; some participants liked this, but others felt that it would be better to separate them. All of these factors prevented some participants from expressing their true feelings and fully engaging in the activities.

"My comfort levels depended on the group dynamics, i.e. I felt a lot more comfortable when doing the sessions with my team colleagues as we had a good understanding of each other's roles and could reflect effectively." (Participant, JFKL)

- **Time consuming.** Despite being given dedicated time to work on resilience within the working day, a significant minority of participants found it difficult to fit the activities into their workload. 19% found it either difficult or very difficult, and a further 21% said it was neither easy nor difficult to make time to attend.

"It was okay at first, but I started to resent the time it was taking up." (Participant, Mind CHWF)

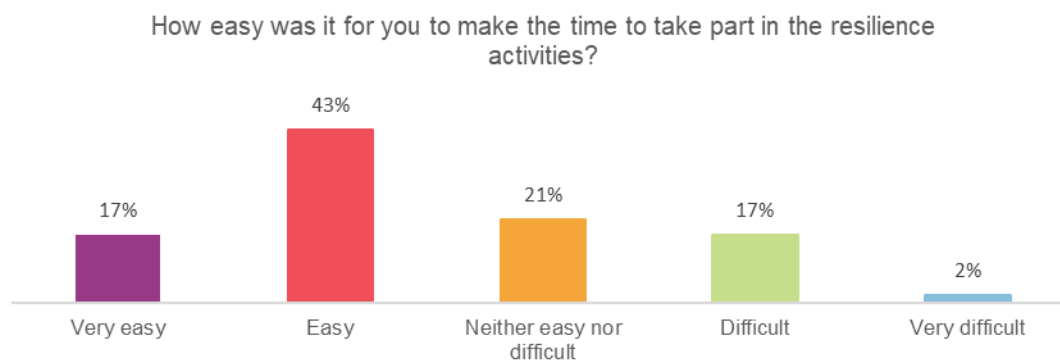


Figure 3: Feedback survey question, 'How easy was it for you to make the time to take part in the resilience activities?' Total N = 53 respondents.

- **Change of staff and/or facilitators.** This was a significant challenge for some pilots. Toynbee Hall were not able to continue with their pilot because they could not replace an external facilitator who was no longer able to deliver the project. Other projects heavily relied on specific individuals (either internal or external) to deliver the activities. This caused problems if those people were no longer available, and could lead to a disruption of the 'safe environment' created in the group.

*"Three of our big supportive roles all left at the end of the year."
(Participant, CJC)*

- **Managing a negative atmosphere during the resilience activities.** Some participants felt 'dragged down' from listening to colleagues' negative experiences or thoughts. Skilfull facilitation of the group activities was important to minimise this risk.

"It caused some anxiousness/discomfort as it felt so unnatural and also thinking of hearing all negative stories and the drain they can have on your energy levels." (Participant, JFKL)

4. Impact of the resilience activities



This chapter discusses what we know about how the resilience pilots impacted participants' resilience levels.

4.1. How did participants' resilience levels change?

City Bridge Trust asked us to use the [Connor Davidson Resilience Scale](#) (CD-RISC) to assess participants' resilience levels over the course of their involvement in the pilot projects. CD-RISC is a well-established tool developed by Kathryn M. Connor and Jonathan R. T. Davidson to 'measure' an individual's resilience. It asks respondents to rate themselves from 0-4 in answer to 25 questions, giving them a total 'resilience score' of between 0 (no resilience) to 100 (very high resilience). You can read more about the tool [here](#).

We decided to ask participants to complete the tool at the start (baseline) and every four weeks for the duration of the pilots. We could not control for other factors affecting participants' resilience levels (like events happening in their personal lives), but the scores do give us a general picture of how the total cohort's resilience levels have changed over time. **Note that these findings should be interpreted with caution, because the sample size is very small** and many factors are likely to affect participants' resilience scores other than the different resilience projects themselves.¹⁰

Figure 4 shows how the total cohort's resilience levels changed between their baseline score and their fifth score five to six months later.¹¹

¹⁰ The pilot projects had different start dates and some were delayed, so each round of responses was collected at a slightly different point in time. This data does not include responses collected from Toynbee Hall participants, as their project did not go ahead as planned.

¹¹ Note that all of the following charts exclude responses from five individuals who completed some rounds of the survey, but then left their organisation or opted out of further involvement in the project.

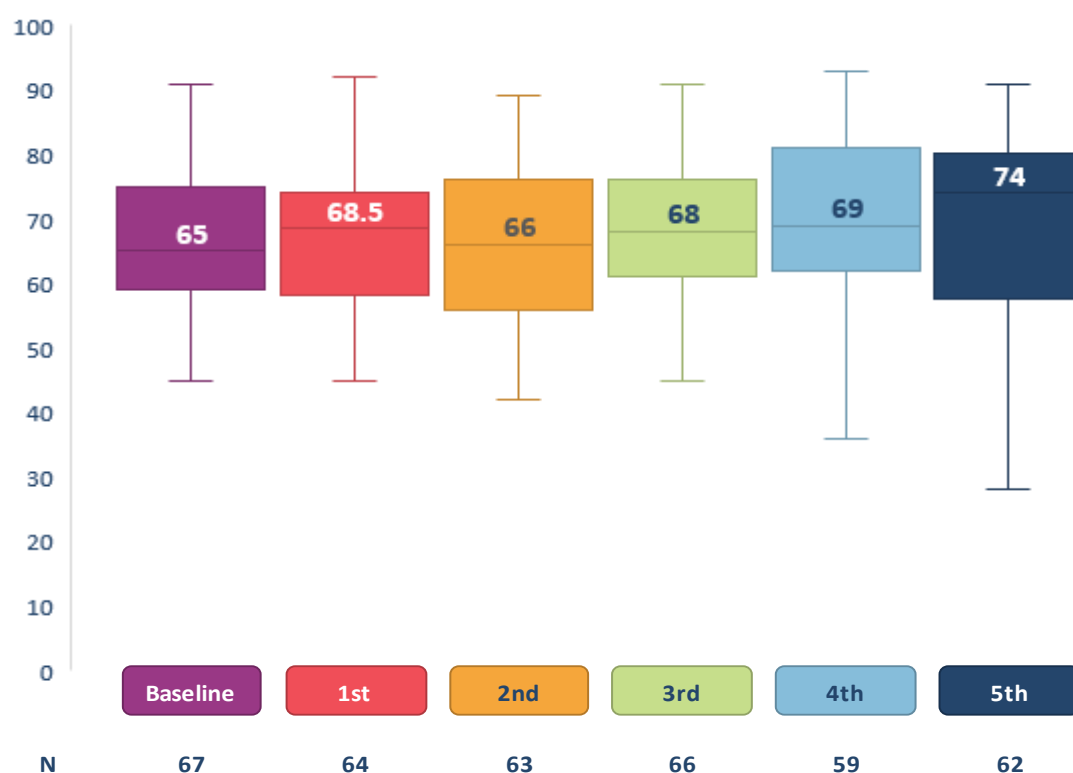


Figure 4: Boxplot showing total cohort's resilience scores by round of data collection. Numbers show median scores.

Across the cohort, some key features stand out:

- **There was little change in the median and distribution of scores between the baseline and the first three rounds of data.** It is tempting to see the increase in median score in the first round as a reflection of the first resilience activities starting to take place, but the change is small and we cannot be certain that this is the reason.
- **The results start to change in the fourth round of data.** The median score was on an upward trajectory since the second round, and is now 69 (four points higher than the baseline), showing that the majority of scores across the cohort have improved. However, the lowest score in the cohort has dropped from 45 in round three to 36 in round four. **This means that the cohort's resilience levels are diverging:** most participants' scores have improved, but some have noticeably dropped.
- **The same pattern is evident in the fifth round of data, but the trends are more extreme.** The median increases again to its highest point (74), nine points higher than the baseline median. However, we also recorded the lowest ever score in this round (28).¹² **The cohort's scores are more divergent in this fifth round than at any other data collection point.**

¹² Some extremely low scores have been excluded as anomalies.

The fourth round of data was collected between February and March 2020, and the fifth round between March and April 2020. **This timing coincided with the developing COVID-19 crisis and lockdown; we cannot separate these results from that context.** Given the wide-ranging impact of the crisis, it is highly likely that it had a bigger overall influence on the scores than other factors may have had on individual participants' lives over the duration of the pilot projects.

It seems that most participants experienced a spike in their resilience at this time, possibly because they had reached the end of the project and were able to reflect on how far they had developed, and possibly also because they recognised their capacity to be resilient in the face of sudden adversity. For others, the results suggest that their resilience took a sudden knock, which may have been in response to a combination of both personal and work-related stress.

These overall patterns were not consistent between the different pilot projects. Figure 5 shows how the average (median) score for participants of each project changed over time.

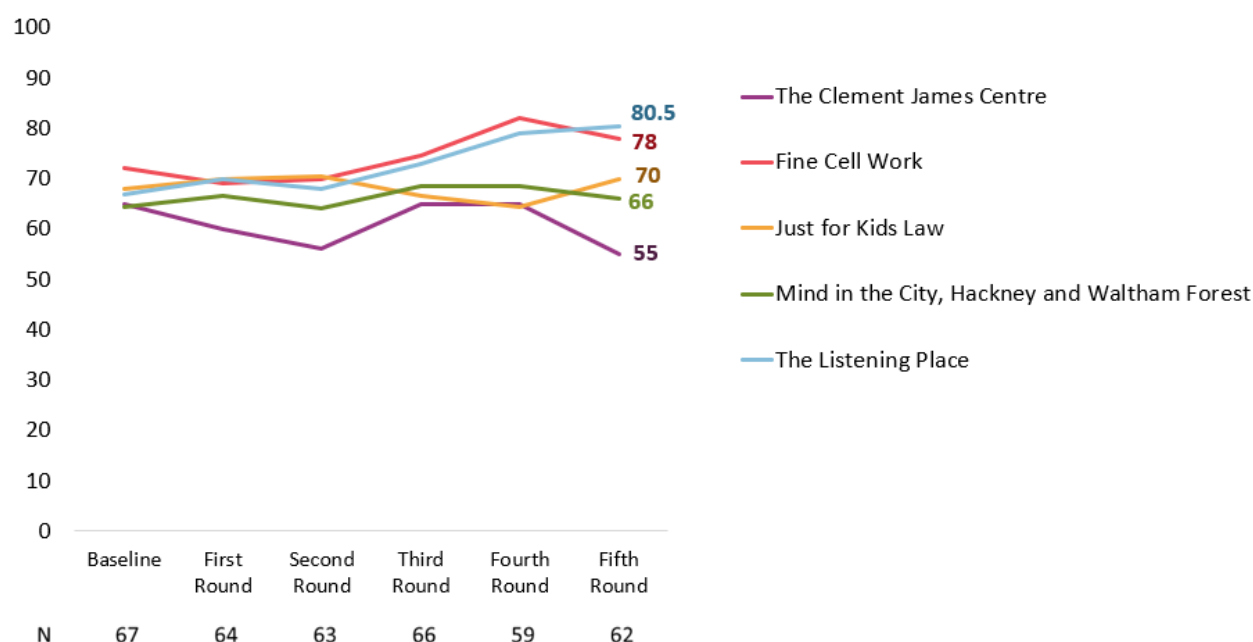


Figure 5: Line graph showing the median resilience score of participants at each pilot project. Numbers show the median resilience score of each project in the fifth round of data collected.

This chart shows that the average participant at each pilot began the project with similar resilience scores (in the range of 65 to 72). However, the median scores diverged over time, particularly in the second, fourth and fifth round. This could reflect the influence of the resilience activities, other contextual factors at their organisation, and/or personal factors affecting the resilience scores.

Figure 6 shows how participants' scores changed within each pilot project over time. **Note that these results should be interpreted with extreme caution given the very small sample sizes.**



Figure 6: Box plots showing the distribution of resilience scores at each pilot project over time. Numbers show the median resilience score in each round. a. The Clement James Centre b. Mind in the City, Hackney and Waltham Forest c. The Listening Place d. Fine Cell Work e. Just for Kids Law

The small sample sizes make these results difficult to interpret, but some trends stand out:

- **Only The Listening Place shows a clear and consistent trend in resilience scores** (upwards, from a baseline median of 67 to 80.5 in the fifth round). Results at the other four organisations fluctuate.
- The distribution of scores at Mind in the City, Hackney and Waltham Forest and Just for Kids Law fluctuate somewhat over time, but there is little overall change between the baseline scores and the fifth round of data collection. This suggests

that, overall, the resilience levels of the group do not appear to have been measureably impacted by the activities.

- **Fine Cell Work has a consistently high median, but there is a relatively large range in scores.** This suggests that some members of the team feel substantially more resilient than others. There is little change between the baseline and first three rounds, but the median noticeably increases in the fourth and fifth rounds of data collection.
- **There is a similar but opposite trend at the ClementJames Centre:** the median score fluctuates but tends to be quite low. It falls in the fifth round to 55, the lowest median score of any point in the data collection.

The Listening Place's results stand out as being particularly positive and showing potential. However, some key features of this pilot project vary substantially from the others:

1. It was delivered exclusively for volunteers, who were therefore doing the activities in a voluntary rather than workplace setting and did not have relationships as work colleagues;
2. The activities were delivered by a practitioner who had the unusual status of being both an expert in this field, and a fellow volunteer who understood the organisation's work;
3. The intervention was simple, focused and followed a clear structure, and had the most consistent attendance of all of the projects.

It is not possible to say how far this pilot's results show that their approach was particularly effective, and/or whether it reflects the fact that the pilot took place in a different environment to the others. It does suggest, however, that the content of the intervention and at least some of these features are associated with an improvement in resilience scores.

4.2. Did the pilots benefit individual resilience, team resilience or both?

These results seem to suggest a potential contradiction. Generally, the feedback provided by participants was positive, and most felt that the resilience activities were useful (see section three above). However, the CD-RISC scores are mixed and do not show much evidence of participants' resilience levels improving, with the exception of The Listening Place. There could be several reasons for this:

- **It is possible that participants' understanding of their own resilience improved during the pilots,** which meant they over-scored their resilience at the start and began to complete the CD-RISC tool more conservatively over time. This is a common challenge with self-assessment measurement tools.
- **It is likely that other factors in participants' work and personal lives were more influential** than the resilience project itself, particularly if they experienced significant challenges during this time. The results in the fifth round of data collection at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic seem to support this.

Another possible explanation is that the resilience activities were more effective in supporting team resilience and improving workplace culture more generally, which the CD-RISC tool cannot capture because it only measures personal resilience.

We asked participants how far they felt the activities impacted personal and/or team resilience at the end of the project. Their responses were almost evenly split. Most (51%) felt that the activities had an equal impact on personal and team resilience. 27% found that the activities had more impact on team resilience, whereas 23% found that they had more impact on personal resilience. **This does suggest that the pilots had a more wide-ranging impact on the organisation and participants' experiences of the workplace** than the CD-RISC scores alone would suggest.

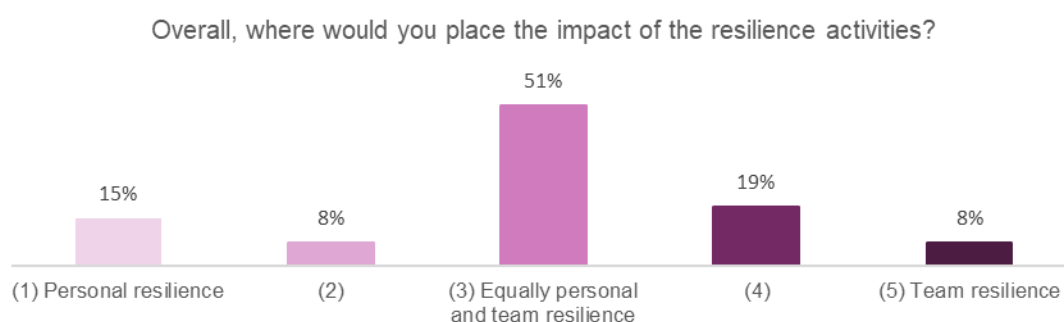


Figure 7: Feedback survey question, 'Overall where would you place the impact of the resilience activities?'
Total = 53 respondents.

"We were an organisation working in very challenging circumstances that were becoming more challenging. This had been dealt with informally with private one-on-one sessions with your line manager as required. A structured group approach has been transformational in building both individual resilience and team resilience." (Participant, FCW)

4.3. What have participants learnt about resilience?

At the end of the project, participants were asked whether their understanding of resilience had changed as a result of taking part in the resilience activities. About 16 of the 53 survey respondents said their understanding had not really changed, but several others mentioned that their understanding had deepened.

"I have a more complex sense of the word." (Participant, TLP)

Some felt that the activities did change their understanding of what resilience is.

"Yes, I think I used to think of resilience as a being strong all the time feeling." (Participant, Mind CHWF)

Almost all of the participants said that they had learnt something about resilience through taking part in the pilot. Three people felt they learnt nothing (6%). One of these people felt they were already resilient and did not learn anything new, one did not find the format of activities helpful, and one had their participation disrupted.

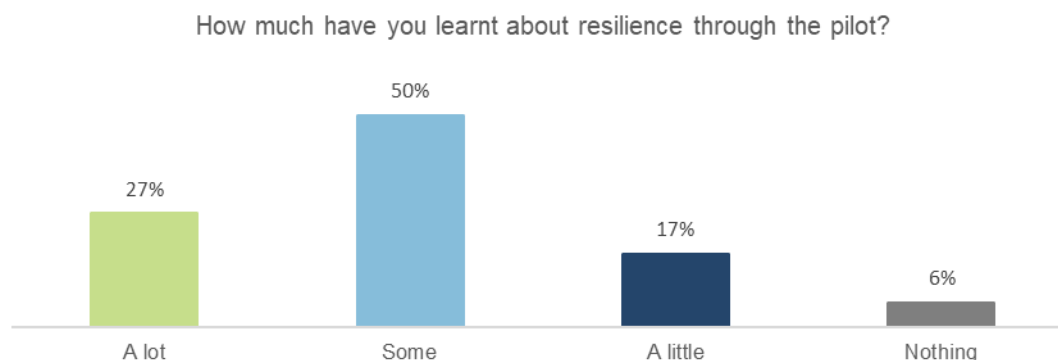


Figure 8: Feedback survey question, 'How much have you learnt about resilience through the pilot?'
Total N = 52 respondents.

The following themes were commonly mentioned by participants as things they had learnt about resilience, and how to build resilience, by taking part in the pilots:

- **Resilience is something you can build and develop.** Some participants noted that prior to the pilot they thought resilience was something that you either had or did not have. Realising that everyone can build resilience helped those individuals to develop strategies to improve their own resilience.

"I honestly thought it was something people either naturally had or did not have. Now, I can very confidently think to myself – 'OK, that did not go well, but next time it will not affect me so much.'" (Participant, FCW)

- **Broader understanding of what resilience is.** Some noted that they had a relatively narrow view of what resilience means and felt that the pilot helped them to widen their understanding. For some participants this was specifically linked to their understanding of team resilience.

"I feel like I had quite a good understanding already, but it has been helpful to think of resilience in the context of the 'whole team' and how we can support each other to build resilience and how I... can best support people individually and as a collective." (Participant, CJC)

- **You are not alone.** Some felt the pilot had helped them to feel less alone with their struggles by realising that others in their team had similar challenges, which was comforting.

"The big thing I took from all of this is that I am not, by any means, the only person who struggles with their resilience in the team" (Participant, FCW)

- **Better at setting boundaries.** This was a common theme. Many participants described having learnt to set clearer boundaries for themselves. Doing this supported them in feeling more resilient.

"We all learnt things about our colleagues and their limits and experiences that we had not realised before. It also has given me

confidence to set boundaries at work, which I never would have done before.” (Participant, FCW)

- **Being less hard on oneself.** Some noted that they now had a greater awareness and understanding of their inner critic.

“It made me aware of how hard I can be on myself. Now, I try and reflect on things more before judging myself.” (Participant, Mind CHWF)

- **The importance of self-reflection.** Participants highlighted the importance of having the time and space to be reflective and take stock. This was also apparent in our visits to observe resilience activities taking place.

“I have really felt the importance of self-reflection. In the group session we did that was led by an external professional we did the 'Tree of Life' and I found this really helpful within a professional context. I will continue to do this.” (Participant, JFKL)

- **The importance of physical, meditative and/or creative activities to support resilience.** Many participants highlighted that they have found a new appreciation for the importance of staying physically active, taking time to be creative and taking time to just be to support their resilience.

“[I have learnt that] activities such as going for a walk, swimming, painting and so on are vital strategies that promote positive thinking and get us out of stress mode.” (Participant, FCW)

Overall, what was learnt, and how much was learnt, was affected by the external environment. Participants learnt more and were more engaged if the format of activities was right for them, and if the group dynamic was a positive one.

5. Concluding reflections



The findings from this study are only partial, and present a mixed picture. On the one hand, feedback from participants was generally positive and suggest that the resilience interventions did add value, despite some challenges. On the other hand, we did not observe a measurable improvement in participants' resilience levels as a cohort, with the exception of one project which took place in a very different context to the others.

This does not, however, suggest that there is no value in nurturing charity workers' resilience as an essential competency in their work. It means that there are still questions about *how* to achieve this, and also how it can be 'measured' or objectively observed. This research has taken us a step forward in understanding some promising features of resilience interventions and some features to avoid, but there is further work to do to understand:

- How to overcome challenges of delivering resilience interventions in a workplace context, and ensuring that everyone feels comfortable to participate
- The relationship between individual resilience and team or organisational resilience, and identifying how interventions support both or either
- Whether certain features can be 'packaged' to make it easier for organisations to develop resilience interventions that work in their context, particularly where they do not have access to expertise on this topic

Although the bulk of the research took place before the Covid-19 pandemic, the effects of this crisis have only served to underline the importance of building resilience in the charity sector, as organisations, teams and as individuals. In this section we summarise the main findings and our reflections in response to the research questions outlined in the introduction.

1. Is there value in supporting resilience or can it be sufficiently supported through other existing forms of support?

Our research findings and the wider discussion they have prompted suggest that there is value in supporting resilience in a charity sector workplace context. The reasons for this fall, broadly, into three types:

Participants valued the support

- Our findings show that the resilience activities were generally well received. The majority of participants found them useful (89%) and felt that they had learnt something about resilience (94%).
- Doing something to support resilience was seen as positive and valued in itself – even when participants did not find that the approach suited them personally. This is

because it sent a message that the organisation cares about its employees and made them feel valued, which had wider beneficial effects.

- Some organisations in the study did provide existing support with resilience, but this varied considerably. Project leads highlighted the value of this project in offering something more coherent, structured and consistent than previous forms of support and felt that it helped the organisation as well as the individuals involved.

Functional value to the organisation

- This research has highlighted the potential value of certain resilience interventions in improving workplace culture and team dynamics more generally, thereby making teams more effective.
- Covid-19 has inevitably impacted resilience, especially amongst those who work in frontline roles with people badly impacted by the fallout of the crisis. The lowest CD-RISC score in this study was recorded as the pandemic took hold. Arguably, it is in organisations' interests to nurture employees' resilience as part of their mission to support people and communities in response to the crisis.

A values-based approach

- Covid-19 has also pointed a spotlight on structural inequalities in our society. By framing resilience as a competency, our research raises questions of equity – whether everyone has equal opportunity to develop resilience and experience the benefits of having a more resilient mindset in the workplace. Arguably, there is a values-based imperative for organisations to support their employees and volunteers with developing resilience to 'level the playing field' in this area.
- Our research has shown that individual resilience and team working environments seem to be closely interlinked: participants were more engaged and gained more from the activities when the environment they took place in was positive, and some feedback suggests that team culture improved through the process of focusing on resilience activities. This suggests that organisations that attach value to the process of change as well as the outcome of their work could use resilience interventions as a means to implement a values-based approach in practice.

2. What are the features of successful interventions to build resilience and are some features more important than others?

The interventions in this study were 'successful' in different ways. With only five projects in the study, it is difficult to be conclusive about which of their features were most important. But our findings suggest the following factors, which attracted positive feedback from participants, may be associated with better results:

- The Listening Place's intervention achieved the clearest positive results, and was also the simplest, well-structured and most consistently attended of the pilots.

- Having dedicated time set aside within the working day was an important feature in common across the projects – although there is a balance, and not taking up too much time from busy schedules was also important.
- Sensitivity to team dynamics is essential. High-quality, sensitive facilitation was an important feature of all of the projects; poor facilitation seems to have been a significant barrier to participants gaining something positive from the experience.
- Where it was offered, participants seem to have valued some external, expert input to help them learn more about resilience and bring an objective, neutral perspective.
- Having a supportive and listening peer culture within the organisation, which made people feel safe to participate, was also important.
- There is no 'one size fits all'; it is challenging for organisations to provide a balance of activities that will be well received by a group of people with different preferences, starting points and contexts.

3. Can resilience support be generic or is it more effective if it is sector specific? Are certain features more important to certain organisations, depending, possibly, on size, geography, management or governance structures, or sector?

These pilot projects were all given the opportunity to develop their own approach, which varied significantly despite having some common features. With only five projects in the study, it is difficult to generalise whether certain features are more important for different sectors or types of organisations. However, it does seem that a flexible approach that allowed organisations to design an approach that responds to their context was positive.

Feedback from participants also suggests that the number of people participating (related to organisational size), team composition (i.e. whether the groups mixed people in different roles from different teams), type of role (relating to sector) and how the work day is organised (relating to time available to take part in the activities) were all important factors in their experience of the resilience intervention. It is possible that these factors might make certain features more important to certain organisations or sectors, but it is difficult to be conclusive about this at this stage in the research.

4. Are there contextual factors that can influence the success or effectiveness of an intervention?

Broadly, there were three types of contextual factors that influenced the interventions in different ways.

- **Organisational factors** included: the consistency of support provided, which could be impacted by the turnover of staff and availability of external facilitators; existing team dynamics; any significant changes or developments taking place in the wider

organisation; whether the intervention was well-suited to the needs of people in different roles and teams.

- **Societal factors** included the impact of Covid-19, which had a clear effect on the CD-RISC scores recorded in March and April. This seems to have affected participants in different ways – for some, it seems to have prompted a boost in their resilience scores, whereas others felt their resilience knocked.
- **Individual factors** included factors in participants' lives at home as well as in the workplace which impacted their experience of the activities and/or ability to participate. The ability to consistently attend and fit the activities into a busy work schedule was also an important factor, alongside personal preferences about the mode of delivery.

There are a huge number of factors that could influence the possible success of resilience interventions. Societal and individual factors are largely impossible to control, however the organisational factors can to some extent be managed to support the effectiveness of the interventions. Some tips to consider when designing and delivering a resilience intervention can be found in the Appendix.

5. How can funders best support interventions to build the resilience of charity sector staff, particularly those for whom there is no existing support mechanism in place?

Most funders want to support organisations that care about and support their staff and volunteers. However, it can be challenging to translate that desire into practical steps to more explicitly support the type of activities described in this report. Our research suggests that, broadly, there are three ways that funders could do more:

1. **Funding:** Ensure that it is clear in communications and funding criteria that funds can be used by organisations to support resilience interventions, where there is a clear need for this given the organisation's work.
2. **Time:** Support and enable organisations to have the internal capacity for staff to be able to engage in resilience activities within working hours – both the participants, and someone who can facilitate and organise the activities.
3. **Advice:** Provide advice and guidance to organisations on how to support resilience effectively in their context, including peer advice where appropriate.

6. Recommendations



For City Bridge Trust

1. **We recommend that City Bridge Trust funds a second round of resilience pilots** that are designed based on the learning from the first round summarised in this report. The aim of this round should be to focus on outstanding questions that we have highlighted in the conclusions, as well as taking the context of Covid-19 into account. These pilots should also be supported to incorporate some common features, based on learning from this report, that seem to have been associated with more positive feedback – whilst allowing them to tailor these features to their specific context. This will make it easier to build on the research to date and assess which features are more or less successful in developing resilience in different contexts.
2. **We recommend that City Bridge Trust considers how to embed the learning from this research into its Covid-19 response and other funding programmes.** This could involve reviewing whether and how funded organisations could use funds to support resilience interventions, and whether they are aware that they can do this. It could also involve targeting support at organisations whose frontline staff have to respond to the most acute need and those which have been particularly affected by the Covid-19 crisis. Organisations would benefit from being provided with advice and support by the Trust on how to develop an approach that will work in their context.
3. **We recommend that City Bridge Trust uses its planned Covid-19 learning and research activities to assess the level of need amongst funded organisations for resilience support.** This could help to provide some indication of priority sectors and communities to target with any future funding or support to develop resilience interventions.
4. **We recommend that City Bridge Trust continues to work collaboratively with other funders to support the resilience of London's charity sector workforce.** The London Community Response could provide an opportunity and framework for more joint working in this area (see below).
5. **We recommend that City Bridge Trust disseminates the checklist of advice contained in the Appendix to organisations interested in developing a resilience intervention.** We further recommend that a more detailed how-to guide is developed following the second round of pilots.

For the wider funder community

1. **We recommend that funders consider whether to provide more dedicated support and funding to organisations to enable them to support the resilience of their workforce.** This could involve providing targeted funding, or ensuring that resilience support is included as a permitted use of funds within existing funding

programmes. It could also involve reviewing communications with funded organisations to ensure that they are aware that they can use funds in this way.

2. **We recommend that funders consider how to embed support for charity workers' resilience in their Covid-19 response.** This could involve reviewing funding criteria, communications and allocation of funds to ensure that funded organisations are aware and able to invest in resilience interventions if there is a need.
3. **We recommend that funders consider how to work collaboratively with each other to support the resilience of the charity sector workforce,** in London or elsewhere. The London Community Response could provide an opportunity or template for more joint working in this area. It may also provide an opportunity to research the extent of need for resilience support amongst London's charity sector workforce, and prioritise sectors or communities in particular need of support.
4. **We recommend that funders consider how they can provide non-financial support to organisations to enable them to develop and deliver resilience interventions for their workforce.** The projects in this research study needed dedicated time to plan, develop and deliver the interventions as well as enough capacity within the team for people to participate. Funders could support organisations by providing them with information and support to get them started, and/or offering the opportunity to develop their approach alongside other peers. Flexible funding requirements will also help organisations and individuals to have the time to develop and engage in resilience activities.
5. **Finally, we recommend that funders provide organisations with guidance and advice on how to develop resilience interventions that work in their context.** This research found that many organisations benefitted from either an in-house expert or external expertise to help design and deliver the project. Appendix 2 in this report provides a checklist for organisations who want to design and deliver resilience activities, which could serve as a starting point.

Appendix 1: Summary of feedback about each pilot project

	Approach	Positive feedback	Negative feedback
Fine Cell Work	 Workshops – internal facilitator	Focusing on prevention instead of being reactive	Discomfort sharing personal feelings in the workplace
	 Workshops – external facilitator	Sharing reflections about apprentices' experiences helped to increase understanding across the team	Discomfort with mix of participants in group activities: some felt uncomfortable being in the same group as more junior/senior staff, some disliked that frontline and back-office teams were mixed in some activities, but others felt that not mixing the two exacerbated an existing divide between the teams
	 Reflective practice – external facilitator	Some felt that the peer-led activities increased the level of trust and improved team dynamics	
	 1-2-1 counselling		
	 Peer-mentoring	Participants were positive about FCW having carved out time for staff to take part	- Many participants were uncomfortable with the reflective practice activity, finding it awkward and dominated by a small number of participants - Some felt the facilitated sessions became overly negative, creating a less positive environment - Timings of sessions did not suit some participants
Just For Kids Law	 Workshops – internal facilitator	Reflecting with fellow colleagues and sharing information about resilience	Some participants did not enjoy the style of the activities
	 Workshops – external facilitator	Having an external facilitator playing back those reflections was felt to be useful	Discomfort with mix of participants in group activities, notably having managers/reports participating in the same group
	 Reflective practice – external facilitator	Having the time to think about one's own resilience and wellbeing	Some felt the sessions became overly negative, dominated by a small number of participants

			- Some sessions were cancelled which disrupted the consistency of the project - Some did not want to take part in the project and felt obliged to join in
Mind in the City, Hackney and Waltham Forest	 Workshops – internal facilitator	- Generally participants felt there was a positive group atmosphere which was well facilitated - The timing of the sessions was appreciated (end of the workday) - Receiving information packs which allowed people to continue their learning beyond the workplace	- Discomfort sharing personal feelings in a group setting in the workplace - Some felt it became too time consuming to take part
The ClementJames Centre	 Workshops – internal facilitator	The mixed format of activities was appealing and meant that more people liked at least one element of support	Some turnover of staff in the organisation led to some delays to the pilot
	 Workshops – external facilitator	Sharing ideas, challenges and discussing solutions with colleagues	Discomfort sharing personal feelings in a group setting in the workplace
	 1-2-1 counselling	Having the time for self-reflection and focussing on personal wellbeing was helpful	Some felt that the pilot was too focused on personal resilience rather than team resilience
	 Reflective practice – internal facilitator	The 1-2-1 counselling support received consistently positive feedback	Some participants thought that sessions became repetitive
	 Peer-mentoring		Some felt that the project became too time consuming
The Listening Place	 Workshops – internal facilitator	Generally, all participants were very positive about the pilot – group size (8) and a positive group atmosphere were key to this	Trying to do guided meditations too early on made some participants feel uncomfortable as they felt they needed to get to know the group better first

- Several participants commented that mutual respect was developed within the group
- Having the space to share feelings and challenges with others was appreciate
- The group was well-facilitated by someone with expertise in the subject, which was very much appreciated
- The time frame of some sessions moved, which clashed with some participants' other commitments

Appendix 2: A checklist of things to consider

Delivering resilience activities: A checklist of things to consider



What works – format of resilience activities:

- ✓ Mixing different types of activities to meet the varied needs of participants
- ✓ Offering consistent support throughout the whole delivery period
- ✓ Flexibility in engagement, e.g. participants can take part on a voluntary basis without pressure to take part
- ✓ Some peer-led activities to develop stronger relationships in the group
- ✓ Use of external facilitators or expert support to provide objective input and expertise
- ✓ Avoid relying on a small number of individuals to deliver the activities in case they are no longer able to do so
- ✓ Try to embed resilience activities in the organisational culture and ensure they take place within working hours

In the design phase:

- ✓ Carefully consider the group size and composition – provide at least some separate activities for line managers and different teams
- ✓ Time and timings – actively ensure participants' workloads allow them to take part, and that the timings of activities fit in participants' schedules and preferences as far as possible
- ✓ Understand the needs and learning styles of participants before designing the resilience activities

In the delivery phase:

- ✓ Discuss participants' individual understandings of resilience at the beginning of an intervention to come to a shared group understanding, and be clear about what the project will involve
- ✓ Set ground rules for group sessions – allow people to share honestly but plan how to avoid developing a negative atmosphere
- ✓ Allow participants to provide feedback throughout the delivery period to ensure their needs are being met
- ✓ Provide tools and information that can be used in the workplace and beyond, and explored in participants' own time if they want to
- ✓ Combine information sharing with practical exercises for higher engagement
- ✓ Make use of a range of engaging activities including physical, meditative and creative exercises to help participants step back and reflect