Community Finance Bulletin

August 2023

Something new just for you

Hello and welcome to our new regular update, specifically curated for those working in credit unions, Community Finance Development Institutions (CDFIs) and other community finance providers.

There's lots happening at Fair4All Finance so we wanted to pull out some of the key bits of information and opportunities to work together that you should find relevant to your organisation and the people you serve. We've also included resources that we've been developing collaboratively with people in the sector that we think will help make a difference to you and your organisation.

Working together

'Working in collaboration with the community finance sector is a really important part of what we do at Fair4All Finance. You'll read a little more about Vince Cox, our new Community Finance Engagement Manager who will be driving deeper ways of working with you as a sector, and some of the initiatives that we're working hard to implement with your input.'

- Holly Piper, Investment Director, Fair4All Finance

Our new Community Finance Engagement Manager

We're delighted to formally introduce Vince Cox, our new Community Finance Engagement Manager, who will be working directly with credit unions, CDFIs and other community finance providers. In this short profile he talks about the scope of this new role, his priorities and how he sees the role growing this year. You can read more about Vince in this article

Co-designing our Community Finance Resilience Fund

We were recently allocated further funding from the Dormant Assets Scheme which included funds for preserving and increasing the availability of affordable credit. We know that you, and the people that borrow from you, continue to face huge challenges from the cost of living crisis. This is why we're establishing our new **Community Finance Resilience Fund** which is aimed specifically to meet those challenges, support sustainability and deploy our funds effectively.

Thank you to everyone who took part in our consultation and shared their thoughts with us - It's important this fund is designed collaboratively with you in mind. Look out for more on this in the next couple of months.

An update from our awareness raising campaign

The community finance sector has been described as one of the UK's most well kept financial secrets. We want to help change that through our sector wide awareness raising campaign.

A big thank you to everyone who's been involved to date. We're really pleased with the amount of coverage we've seen – with an online reach so far of over 4 million views for coverage on both credit unions and CDFIs.

We recently released our report into illegal moneylending in GB and had some great coverage on the back of this, not only on TV and radio but also in newspapers like The Sun. Looking back between May and July we saw positive search traffic impacts across findyourcreditunion.co.uk and findingfinance.org.uk.

It's great to see more people becoming aware of community finance providers and actively looking to find out more by visiting the websites. The PR and media awareness raising compliments the work already being done within the sector to boost marketing and SEO activities.

It was great to see some of you use the launch of the report to get your own local coverage too. If this is something you're interested in doing, our Credit union PR and Social Media toolkit offers some practical tips on how you can best engage with local press in your area. Take a look at over the page for more info.

Research projects we think you'll be interested in

As one door closes – Illegal Moneylending research

Our latest report explores the hidden world of illegal moneylending in Great Britain, and how the increasing credit vacuum is one of the reasons why people are turning to loan sharks.

We had a great opportunity to promote the launch of this report across the national press, which gave us the chance to highlight the vital role that credit unions and CDFIs play in providing ethical, legal and safe alternatives to loan sharks. You can read the report into illegal moneylending here

Deductions research

Does it all add up for low income earners? That's the question we asked in our research into payroll and benefit deduction lending. We worked with seven credit unions, debt advisors, employers and consumer experts and heard from 7,500 borrowers. You can read the report and watch the webinar here

Improving the financial inclusion of people from minority ethnic groups

We've been working with partners to better understand how ethnicity influences access to, and the use of, financial products and services in the UK. We'll be publishing our report on this soon so keep an eye out for it on our website.

We're keen to work with partners from credit unions and CDFIs who can help apply the recommendations from our research effectively to community finance providers. If you'd like to be involved, please let Vince Cox know on vince@fair4allfinance.org.uk

Tools and resources

Credit union media, PR and social media toolkit

Our new PR and Social Media toolkit has the building blocks you'll need to share your story with your audience and generate local interest. This guide includes templates for potential press activity, including hitting milestones in membership, new local partnerships and highlighting 'VIP' support. There's plenty of space for you to personalise the news story – an important hook for local media!

Click here to access the toolkit

Creating tools to support you

We've been working with the sector on a series of new resources that we hope will support community finance providers to sustain and grow. This work, in collaboration with providers, is part of our ambition to help increase the availability of affordable credit through the sector. These resources will be available in the coming months.

The first is our **Sustainability guide** which has been designed in part to respond to the challenging financial environment. It has insights from across the credit union sector and some helpful tools like a forecasting and reporting tool and a strategic business plan template.

The next is our **Good Practice Lending Guide** which aims to share some of the good practice on all aspects of consumer lending that's been identified through our work with community finance providers. We're lucky enough to have gained lots of insight through the organisations we've worked with in the sector, from investment due diligence to merger and acquisition support and the work supported by our external credit risk resource.

We know we're not a consumer lender though, so we'll be sharing the guide with community finance providers over the coming months as we develop it, to make sure we create a resource that's helpful across all levels of the business.

And finally, based on your feedback we're developing a programme of **digital learning and development** to complement the existing training offers available elsewhere. We've heard from credit unions, CDFIs and trade associations on what topics are important and we're looking at how we can best build this programme. We'll have more to share in our next update.

Thank you for helping us make a difference

Thank you to everyone who's played a part in our journey so far. Together we're transforming the lives of people in financially vulnerable circumstances. We've pulled together a showcase of the difference our collaborative work has already made, and you can **read more about this in our Impact Report**

Work with us

Call out for case studies

We all know that there's nothing more powerful than a real life story. That's why we're asking for you to share your case studies with us. Whether it's an example of where you've made a difference, or how our investments or tools and resources have made a difference – we'd like to hear from you. Email **hello@fair4allfinance.org.uk** if you have something to share.

The benefits of benefit calculators

There have been some fantastic examples from across the sector about Credit Unions, CDFIs and social purpose driven fintech's introducing benefit and grant calculators to help their members and customers. **You can read some of them on our website**. We want to work with any organisation looking to implement benefit and grant checkers into their customer journeys. If you want to know more get in touch with Ayesha Begum on **ayesha@fair4allfinance.org.uk**

Research into how credit unions can provide more insurance options for their members

We're supporting the Aviva Foundation on a piece of research to better understand the insurance needs of credit union members and the barriers facing insurers and credit unions in working together to service these needs. We're looking for credit unions to help shape the requirement, support the supplier selection process, and provide data and expertise to strengthen the research and ensure the recommendations that we arrive at are realistic and actionable for other sectors. If you're interested in getting involved, contact Jake Attfield on **jake@fair4allfinance.org.uk**

Take part in our sector reporting

We provide free quarterly analysis and benchmarking to credit unions, CDFIs and other community providers. Each organisation that takes part receives a detailed report of the quarterly analysis along with individual benchmarking against the sector – this includes key performance metrics which can be a useful tool in strategic planning. Email Brian Doe on **brian@fair4allfinance.org.uk** for more information. **You can click here to see our latest quarterly overview**

Feedback

It's important to us that you get the most you can out of this update and we'd love to hear your thoughts on the content. Did you like the length? Have we got the right level of detail? What else would you like to know about? What else can we include to make this update useful to you? Let us know any thoughts you have at **vince@fair4allfinance.org.uk**