

Annual Report 2020



Foreword	
Message from the Chair: Mike Fischer CBE	3
Highlight Achievements in 2020	
Establishing the Volunteer Covid Testing Network	4
Building an early literacy tutoring system for UK schools	6
Supporting Core Schools with system improvement: The Apex Core Project	8
Vitamin D Studies	10
Fischer Family Foundation Organisation	
Governance and staff team	11
Core partners	12
Financial Overview	
Summary of expenditure and income	14

"Overall, the year was the busiest that the Foundation has ever had. We are pleased that we had the skills and resources to move quickly and be part of the many efforts that have been made to help out during this crisis."

Mike Fischer CBE
Chair, Fischer Family Foundation

Foreword

Message from the Chair: Mike Fischer CBE

The year of 2020 was extraordinary. During February, as the pandemic developed across the world, we could see there was an urgent need for increasing Covid PCR testing capacity in the UK.



The Foundation and its core medical research partner, Systems Biology Laboratory (SBL) in Oxfordshire, rapidly redirected resources to provide a high quality RT-PCR Covid-19 testing service. In March 2020, we started the first ever asymptomatic screening for staff in GP surgeries and care homes in the local area. We showed that twice weekly testing could keep front line health and care facilities safe and open. The Foundation also located, purchased, and donated Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to health facilities and care homes. To extend our testing model beyond Systems Biology Lab (SBL), we initiated and sponsored the formation of a national network of Covid testing laboratories, The Covid Testing Network, that went on to make a significant contribution to the national testing programme.

A major consequence of the pandemic is likely to be its impact on the life chances of children, particularly due to a potential shortfall in timely literacy development of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Even in pre-pandemic times, underperformance in this respect has been immensely costly, and improvement in this area has been a major focus of our work since the creation of the Foundation as the Fischer Family Trust in 1999. Indeed, the Foundation has been pivotal in changing

the way school performance is measured and analysed, and its activities have had a significant impact on the teaching of literacy in England. As part of this we have continued to support Success for All (SFA) UK, a partner working on school improvement in primary schools in some of the most deprived areas of England.

This year we continued our work on the Apex Project, a programme involving a number of SFA schools aimed at identifying and delivering a set of systematic interventions to enable a breakthrough reduction in the number of children experiencing early literacy failure. We had started the UK adaption and ongoing refinement of ‘Tutoring with the Lightning Squad’ (TWL), which is an online, blended, reading tutoring programme developed by academics at Johns Hopkins University as part of the SFA programme in North America. In the summer of 2020, with two new team members, we accelerated this work to make it ready for the Covid educational recovery programme in England, the National Tutoring Programme. This has led to our partner, FFT Education, becoming the largest supplier of early literacy tutoring in England.

As part of our response to the pandemic, the Foundation also provided significant funding to Queen Mary University London to carry out a randomised trial to investigate the impact of vitamin D supplementation on the incidence of symptomatic Covid-19. Finally, we continued our annual funding to University College Oxford to support access for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Overall, the year was the busiest that the Foundation has ever had. We are pleased that we had the skills and resources to move quickly and be part of the many efforts that have been made to help out during this crisis.

Mike Fischer CBE
Chair, Fischer Family Foundation

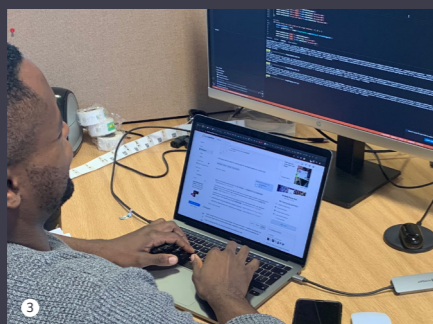
Highlight Achievements in 2020



1



2



3



4



5

1. Systems Biology Labs. 2. Eye-sight testing. 3. Systems Biology Labs. 4. Applegarth Academy. 5. Mike Fischer visiting Applegarth Academy.

Asymptomatic Covid Testing for GPs and Care Homes

Summary

In February and March 2020, the Fischer Family Foundation recognised that the UK would need to urgently increase its capacity for Covid PCR testing. It supported a community-led response by purchasing and providing a supply chain of chemical reagents needed for PCR testing at Systems Biology Lab (SBL). Throughout March and April, SBL tested staff at local GPs' surgeries and care homes in Abingdon, Oxford, twice weekly on a fast turnaround basis, finding that asymptomatic screening was effective in keeping services

'Covid free'. This approach became a blueprint for later UK Government staff asymptomatic screening in the NHS and care homes.

"We established the first ever asymptomatic screening for staff in GP surgeries and care homes in the local area in March 2020, proving that twice weekly tests could keep facilities safe and open; and this later became the UK model for asymptomatic testing."

Mike Fischer CBE
Chair, Fischer Family Foundation

spurred the later creation of the Covid Testing Network (CTN), that has since provided millions of PCR Covid tests; connecting labs to their local care homes, providing regular screening for high risk workplaces and contributing to the national UK testing programme.

Nature of project

- Establishing a supply chain of critical supplies and reagents for a group of existing laboratories to be able to undertake Covid PCR testing.
- Working with care homes and GP surgeries to offer twice weekly asymptomatic testing.
- Working with UK Department of Health SC to agree to supply asymptomatic screening for vulnerable groups and schools.
- Ran first pilot of testing in schools during June and July 2020 for UK government.

Results in 2020

Model of twice weekly asymptomatic testing adopted by the UK government for all health care and care home works

Contribution of knowledge to DHSC on asymptomatic testing of teachers in schools

Partners

Systems Biology Lab (SBL),
Covid Volunteer Testing Network

Education System improvement: The Apex Core Project

Summary

The Apex Project is a long-running project to apply the science of system improvement to the challenge of education. Repeated analysis shows that literacy attainment at the age of seven closely correlates with success at age sixteen and beyond. Eliminating early literacy failure was identified, more than twenty years ago, as the single most significant change to create the largest impact on educational outcomes.

Current interventions to help children achieve foundational literacy which allows them to access the curriculum are provided by Success for All, an integrated programme of language, social and emotional skills and reading, that has been developed by experts at Johns Hopkins University, and iterated and adapted in the UK since 1997.

Alongside ten Core Apex Schools that are already implementing Success for All, we develop pilot projects and judge their success, so that we can improve, develop and scale up. In the current cycle, 2019-2021, the project is developing tutoring for Years 1 and 2, and testing school-based eye-sight screening to improve literacy outcomes at KS1 and KS2.

Nature of project

- Creation of a systematic feedback loop – online / offline data collection.
- Pilot of Tutoring using Tutoring with Alphonse (an earlier version of Tutoring with the Lightning Squad) – a cost effective, online, blended reading tutoring programme in nine schools in Y1 and Y2.
- Pilot of school-led eye-sight screening programme in three schools.
- Building data platform to integrate SFA literacy data.

Results in 2020

Jan to March: Proof of concept pilot in nine schools

Sept – December: 155 children in nine schools tutored with 1:4 blended, reading tutoring programme in Years 1 and 2

School based eye-sight screening in two schools, indicates that between 20% and 30% of children may need follow up eye-tests. Schools begin follow up with children to get opticians' appointments.

Experimentation of remote use of online tutoring during lockdown.

Scoping for an online data tool to capture eight-weekly data points and improve instrumentation of the programme.

Partners

Success For All UK, Success for All Foundation (USA); FFT Education, Unity Schools Partnership (Clements Academy); Woodhall Academy; Burton End Academy and Houldsworth Valley Academy; STEP Academy Schools (Applegarth Academy); Tudor Academy; Turnham Academy and Gonville Academy; Badsley Primary School; Middleton Primary School.



"In 2020 we accelerated work to support the UK education Covid recovery programme, the National Tutoring Programme, readying FFT Education to become one of its largest implementing partners."

Mike Fischer CBE
Chair, Fischer Family Foundation

Building an early literacy tutoring system for UK schools



Summary

'Tutoring with the Lightning Squad' is a Success For All Foundation tutoring programme used in the USA for more than five years and based on reading tutoring interventions developed and analysed for more than thirty years.

It consists of a tried-and-tested scalable technology platform that is a unique combination of cooperative learning in pairs, structured pedagogy and real-time data to inform implementation. It is cost effective due to one adult supervising two cooperative pairs.

Building on our work in the Apex Project, we responded to the challenge of the UK Government National Tutoring Programme. To do this we initiated a collaboration of the partners: Success for All UK, FFT Education and Operam Manpower. Over the summer, we rebuilt the programme to be suitable for English children and scalable and adaptive to UK needs. We then applied and were successful to become an official partner in the UK Covid catch up effort.

Nature of project

- Reviewing all US content for adaptation and Anglicisation of content, phonics and spelling, including around 20,000 discreet texts such as passages, sentences, questions, and words totalling around 115,000 words within 66 'stories' on the tutoring application
- Re-recording all sound associated with the programme.
- Creating clone of US application and content database.
- Writing UK training modules for tutoring.
- Creating new reporting and tools and reports for schools and tutors to access through an online portal.
- Development of partnership and pricing structure to support NTP and marketing to schools.

"Working with Success for All UK, we met and planned with a small group of schools, and this helped us understand better the needs of schools and children in the pandemic."

Mike Fischer CBE
Chair, Fischer Family Foundation

Results in 2020

FFT Tutoring with the Lightning Squad programme is ready and scalable for implementation in UK schools

First set of schools for NTP recruited (October to December)

Partners

Success for All UK, Success for All Foundation USA, FFT Education



Vitamin D Studies: CORONAVIT

Summary

The Foundation provided ancillary funding for CORONAVIT, a study run by Queen Mary University with lead researcher Adrian Martineau. The study, launched in October 2020, ran for

six months and involved more than 5,000 people to find out whether a 'test-and-treat' approach to correct people's vitamin D deficiency during winter will reduce the risk and/or severity of COVID-19 and other acute respiratory infections.

Strategies to boost the UK population's immunity to respiratory infections are urgently needed pending development of an

effective vaccine for coronavirus. There have been recent debates as to whether vitamin D – the 'sunshine vitamin' – could play a key role in protecting people from COVID-19; however, definite evidence on this is lacking.

We are hoping that this study will provide important 'gold standard' RCT evidence for efficacy or non-efficacy of vitamin D in preventing or reducing severity of infection with Covid 19, that has previously been lacking in observational and smaller-scale research. This research will therefore contribute to the effort of the scientific community to understand the disease better and find appropriate therapies for people worldwide.

Nature of project

Recruitment of volunteers who are randomised to receive either the standard government recommendation of 400 units of vitamin D per day, or vitamin D testing, with an offer of one of two higher dose regimens if levels are found to be low: 800 units per day, or 3200 units per day.

Results in 2020

Enrolment of volunteers
6,200 participants

Doses sent out

Partners

Systems Biology Lab (SBL),
Queen Mary University



"The Foundation provided ancillary funding for CORONAVIT, a study run by Queen Mary University with lead researcher Adrian Martineau."

Fischer Family Foundation Organisation

Governance and staff

The Fischer Family Foundation is primarily a funding organisation for core partners in Health and Education as well as a number of smaller charitable causes.

Its Founder and Chair, Mike Fischer, is active in day-to-day direction and implementation of its activities.

The Foundation is governed by four trustees who are longstanding colleagues and collaborators, with different specialisms to support the work. James West is an entrepreneur and co-founder with Mike Fischer of both Alamy Ltd and Videoloft Ltd. Kenneth Brookes is an experienced director and provides professional legal services to the Foundation as required. Trustees meet annually for the Board Meeting and budget approval.

The Foundation has two education staff, Eliza Hilton and Louise Parkinson, who are responsible for driving forward the Apex Project and collaborating closely with FFT Education. A number of other freelance staff contribute to initiatives that are supported by the Foundation.

Emma Steward, of accountancy firm Business1st, is responsible for compliance, accounting, payroll and audit and circulates all key decisions to trustees for approval.

Staff of the charity

Eliza Hilton:
Policy and Advocacy Lead

Louise Parkinson:
Monitoring, Evaluation
and Learning Officer

Emma Steward, Business1st:
Accountancy and Compliance

Trustees of the charity

Michael Fischer
James West
Ken Brooks
James McMillan

Core partnerships

Systems Biology Laboratory UK

Since its inception in 2011, the Foundation has remained the core funder for the Systems Biology Laboratory UK (SBL) in Abingdon, which also hosts the Foundation infrastructure and staff team.

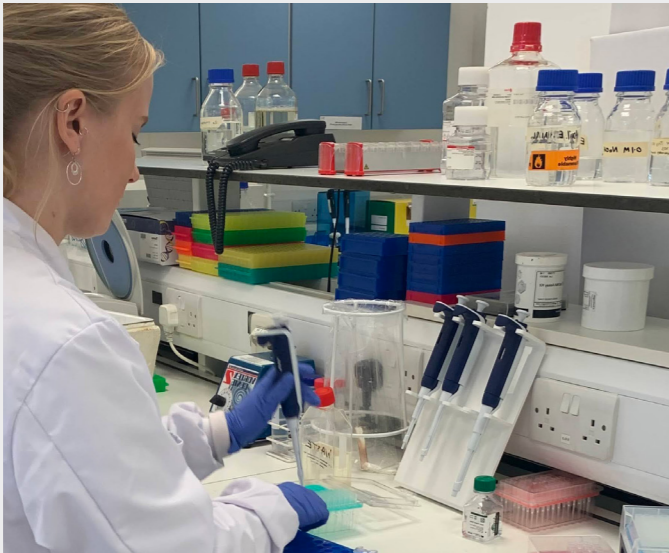
SBL is a community interest company dedicated to improving patient treatment options through high quality, collaborative and clinically focused research. SBL has a strong scientific team with a variety of academic and industrial backgrounds.

SBL was established because of a view that so often in medical science problems remain unsolved, not because solutions are impossible but due to being ‘hard to fund’ or unlikely to yield immediate results.

In other cases, like Covid or Ebola, a new challenge requires a fast response. SBL attempts to close that gap in medical research, by implementing small, agile studies, instigating innovative work with partners, and developing new diagnostic and therapeutic techniques.

We have particular strengths in all aspects of immunology and molecular biology. Our work is focused on the following areas:

- DNA instability in neurons
- DNA recombination in lymphocytes
- Cancer immunotherapy
- Medical guidelines on vitamin D
- Using DNA analysis to identify possible causes of persistent UTIs.



"SBL has a strong scientific team with a variety of academic and industrial backgrounds."

"Programmes are fully aligned to the National Curriculum and help schools to teach English from Reception to the end of Key Stage 3. The literacy programmes have been proven effective in a wide range of schools, including those schools with a high proportion of disadvantaged children."

Success for All UK

The Fischer Family Foundation identified Success for All in the States, led by Nancy Madden and husband Robert Slavin of Johns Hopkins University, and, inspired by their work, helped establish Success for All UK in 1999. It has provided regular support to the charity, as and when required, since that time.

Elements of the SFA programme include: structured teaching of reading (an early leader in development of phonics teaching), social and emotional development, cooperative learning and oracy, teaching at right level – e.g. grouping children for literacy - and providing catch up tutoring support for children who are behind. Programmes are fully aligned to the National Curriculum and help schools to teach English from Reception to the end of Key Stage 3. The literacy programmes have been proven effective in a wide range of schools, including those schools with a high proportion of disadvantaged children.



FFT Education and FFT Datalab

FFT Education was started in 2001 by Mike Fischer and Mike Treadaway, as a project to work with local authorities, to analyse school performance and was later established as an expert source to provide national education data to the DfE, processing the National Pupil Database in England from 2004. Since that time, it has informed new methodologies for analysing school performance and expanded a team, with a national voice; and is now firmly established as the best providers of independent information on school performance.

In 2015 Education Datalab was launched, producing independent, cutting-edge research that can be used by policy makers to inform education policy, and by schools to improve practice. FFT Education Datalab works collaboratively with research partners and makes sure its published research is accessible to policy makers and schools.

FFT Education has an office in Cardiff and c. 80 staff in 2020. It is a not-for-profit company and donates surplus funds to the Foundation, in order to further our charitable objectives. At the same time, it can be a grantee for education projects that require development, and it implements core projects alongside the Foundation.



Financial Overview

Summary of expenditure

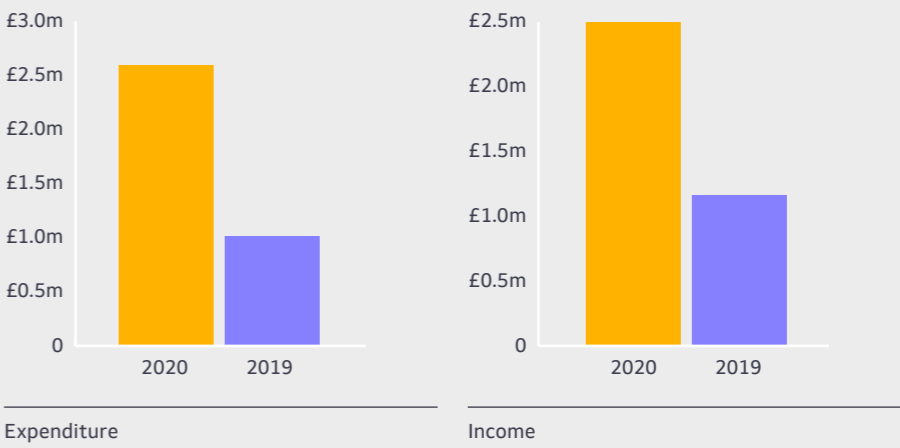
Total expenditure in 2020 was £2,590,001. This is more than double the expenditure in 2019.

Increased expenditure is mostly accounted for by Covid testing in the early days of the pandemic by SBL and other laboratories supported by the Covid Volunteer Testing Network.

Funding to the core partner Success for All UK was greater than in previous years due to several factors:

- Lower income for core costs caused by reduced grant funding, as well as delays to implementation and sales caused by the pandemic
- Implementation and expansion of the Apex Project
- Implementation Support for the Anglicisation of Tutoring with the Lightning Squad, in collaboration with FFT Education.
- Regular giving continued to Oxford University and other charitable causes.

Staff costs increased due to the hiring of two new staff members in August and November. Trustee expenses were reduced.



Summary of Expenditure

PROGRAMMES	2020	2019
Health Programme: Systems Biology Lab, Covid Volunteer Testing	£1,538,411	£668,735
Education Programme: Success for All, Tutoring, Direct School grants	£685,965	£190,000
Health: Queen Mary's University, London: Vitamin D Study	£227,500	£0
Education: Oxford University	£20,000	£20,000
Other charitable expenditure	£75,300	£108,675
Staff costs	£19,626	£2,350
Professional fees	£15,953	£9,061
Governance costs	£3,554	£8,696
Other costs	£692	£181
Total	£2,590,001	£1,007,698

Summary of Income

Income in 2020 was largely donation from the Founder. Surplus from FFT Education as a not-for-profit company was donated to the Foundation.

	2020	2019
Michael Fischer Charitable Donation	£1,900,000	£92,600
FFT Education	£95,000	£405,000
Alamy Ltd	£0	£496,682
Gift Aid receipts	£476,000	£23,150
Interest received	£16,057	£27,516
Other income sources	£4,587	£116,260
Total	£2,491,644	£1,161,208

Foundation for improvement

The Fischer Family Foundation, driven by the work and passion of its founder, Mike Fischer, supports longstanding partners to implement innovative projects that aim to drive down social and health inequality in the UK and worldwide.

fischerfamilyfoundation.org.uk

