



Third sector resilience in West Yorkshire and Harrogate Before and during Covid-19



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Keith is a volunteer driver at the Dementia Forward hub in Burton Leonard, Harrogate

Executive Summary

‘Our charities are playing a crucial role in the national fight against coronavirus, supporting those who are most in need’ Rishi Sunak, UK Chancellor of the Exchequer

More than 300 Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations delivering services in West Yorkshire and Harrogate (WY&H) completed this survey in April and May 2020. These organisations represent the diversity and breadth of the Third Sector and the intrinsic contribution they make to the health and well-being of the population and reducing health inequalities. With the grass roots connections and trust to reach the most vulnerable in our society, this survey reflects how communities have turned to the VCS during this time and the part the sector has played in our response in WY&H.

The findings from the survey captured in this report reflect the impact of COVID-19 on the sector. **Despite significant financial pressures and loss of income, organisations have responded quickly and flexibly, with 83% of survey respondents adapting how they deliver services to meet existing and emerging needs** – especially for the most vulnerable and isolated in our society including BAME and those experiencing poor mental health.

Organisations taking part in this survey **employ 7000 members of staff**, equating to 4,600 FTE. Nationally the VCS employ some 2.7% of the UK workforce. **Just over a third (34%) of organisations that employed staff in this survey told us they had furloughed staff** by April/May 2020 and many of these are likely to be made redundant as organisations close before the end of the year.

Of the organisations taking part in this survey, **95% were actively engaged in working with more than 16,000 volunteers in January 2020. By April/May 2020 this had reduced to 65%** primarily due to volunteers shielding or face to face services being put on hold. **21% of organisations told us they had no paid staff and were entirely volunteer run.**

Our report shows many charities are fighting for survival with **55% of organisations saying they did not expect to be financially sustainable beyond the end of 2020**. Traditional methods of generating income have dried up overnight. Social distancing is making delivering services harder and more costly. Reserves are running out. Smaller charities, in particular, are at risk of imminent closure if adequate support is not provided. This will leave significant gaps in provision for the most isolated and disadvantaged in our communities.

Quickly adapting and adopting new and innovative ways of working, the sector has embraced the use of digital and telephone services despite limited access to up to date technology and digital support. However, our report highlights that **digital exclusion has been a barrier to reaching some of the most vulnerable** including the elderly, those for whom English is a second language, disabled people, those experiencing domestic violence and those living in poverty. This is a challenge we need to work with communities to address as a priority moving forwards.

In many instances, the urgency of COVID-19 has led to the **fast tracking of partnership arrangements with local authorities and the NHS, flexibility of funding from local and national funders**, and a recognition of the value of volunteering within health and care (one fifth of the organisations who responded are run solely by volunteers). These are all positive developments to learn from and build on. The VCS itself recognises the need for sustained and joined up investment in the sector not least to ensure continuity and consistency for those using services.

This report clearly demonstrates the case for supporting a new, sustainable model of investment in the VCS as we reset the way we commission and deliver services across WY&H. The financial vulnerability of the sector is clear but so is the vital contribution they make to health and care in our communities and the generous and genuine heart that these organisations have to do the best for people. The fundamental issue is not about saving charities or charity jobs but supporting the beneficiaries that rely on the safety net that charities provide. A system wide response is essential to build a strong, resilient sector that in turn helps to build a more resilient population through preventative and community based services, supporting self-care and enabling greater independence, resulting in a reduction in demand for acute and long term health and care services.

“Charities at the front line and all those working to support our society need help to perform their vital function bringing people together at this time of enormous challenge. They will need this type of support now and into the future as we come out of this crisis.”
Sir John Low, Chief Executive of the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF)

What next? Our recommendations

1. NHS, Local Authorities and other funders and commissioners commit to putting in place a strategy for longer term, joined up investment in the VCS.
2. All Partners formally recognise the social and economic value of volunteering and actively plan to better connect the volunteering infrastructure across NHS, VCS and LAs. This includes: working together to consider developing and adopting a volunteer passport; investing in volunteer training and development across sectors; and working together to develop a WY&H wide integrated volunteering strategy.
3. Commissioners and funders work together to simplify contracting and commissioning arrangements including monitoring requirements and to develop a shared application format.
4. The Partnership works with the VCS to put in place a workforce offer which enables the further development of: workforce capacity including health and well-being; finance and business adaptation; governance and planning.
5. All partners ensure the VCS and community voice is listened to and reflected in service design and delivery from the outset.

Introduction to report

Aims and background to this report

Some 55% of the data for this report is from a survey carried out by Third Sector Leeds (TSL), and led by a partnership of Forum Central, Leeds Community Foundation, Social Enterprise Yorkshire and Humberside, Third Sector Leeds and Voluntary Action Leeds. The survey was then adapted by other areas to help complete the West Yorkshire and Harrogate picture. Additional data came from a similar survey undertaken in Bradford and Calderdale.

An on-line questionnaire was completed by third sector organisations between 8 April and 8 May 2020.

The survey sought to capture the impact of COVID-19 on the third sector looking at:

- Sector viability in the light of changing income and expenditure
- Pressures on communities and changes in volunteering
- The third sector's ability to adapt to changing circumstances and positive experiences.

This report has been part funded through Harnessing Power of Communities and it looks at the data covering West Yorkshire and Harrogate Health and Care Partnership, with 303 organisations contributing information.

The report team and how the data was analysed

The majority of the data for this report was gathered through an on-line survey using Smart Survey and organisations answered a series of questions that produced both qualitative and quantitative data.

The quantitative data from the survey was analysed and coded into themes which allowed the research team to identify commonality and themes from the survey. This coding was initially done for each district of West Yorkshire & Harrogate and then amalgamated and summarised for the whole of West Yorkshire and Harrogate.

Voluntary Action Leeds (VAL) managed the data analysis and had responsibility for producing the report, supported by a team of 3 furloughed staff from the private sector and one person from The University of Leeds.

Sample size

The survey analysis was completed on 303 responses received from third sector organisations in West Yorkshire and Harrogate between 8 April and 8 May 2020.

Data and results from the survey have not been adjusted to reflect the numerical regional breakdown of West Yorkshire and Harrogate, for example nearly 55% of responses to this survey come from organisations with bases in Leeds. This 55% rate of responses from Leeds is larger than the actual percent of West Yorkshire and Harrogate that includes Leeds. The percentage of the population of West Yorkshire and Harrogate living in Leeds is approximately 32%.

Explanation of difference in mean average and mode average

The Third Sector is diverse on many levels, which the data from this survey reinforces. For example, the number of paid staff that organisations employed in this survey varied from zero up to 748. The number of volunteers that organisations were working with (January 2020) varied from zero to 4000. Because of this large variation, any *Mean Averages* that are calculated will be affected by large values that are high in comparison to the rest of the data. Because of this, this report sometimes refers to both *Mean Averages* and *Mode Averages*. The median average is better suited for skewed distributions to derive at central tendency since it is much more robust and sensible. The Median is the number found at the exact middle of the set of values. A median can be computed by listing all numbers in ascending order and then locating the number in the centre of that distribution.



Paul cooked over 2,000 individual meals which the team at Supporting Older People in Harrogate distributed to anyone who struggled to get fresh food during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The report

The organisations taking part in this survey

303 Third Sector organisations took part in this survey that all had bases in at least one area of West Yorkshire and Harrogate.

Organisations taking part in this survey were asked a series of questions about their organisations in terms of turnover, number of staff, number of Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) and number of volunteers. While this report cannot claim that the more than 300 organisations taking part are an accurate representation of the third sector across West Yorkshire and Harrogate, a sample size this large still gives an opportunity for a better understanding of the diversity of the third sector across this area.

The type of organisations taking part

- 87% of organisations declared they are a Registered Charity and/or a Company Limited by Guarantee
- 13% a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)
- 8% a Community Interest Company (CIC)
- 7% a Group or Unincorporated Association.

NB some organisations are registered in more than one way

Organisations' annual turnover

Turnover of Organisation	Number	%
Less than £10k	55	18%
Less than £100k	103	34%
Less than £500k	87	29%
Between £500k to £1 million	23	8%
Over £1 million	24	8%
Over £5 million	10	3%

NB. One organisation did not respond to this question

Organisational reliance on earned income

Organisations were asked if more than 50% of their income is earned by trading, room hire etc. **31% of organisations said the majority of their income came from 'income earned'**. Covid-19 has had a dramatic impact on reducing organisations opportunities to generate earned income. This has meant organisations have had to reduce delivery of services that are dependent upon this income.

"We have had to close our shop and café which are both income generations for other services. We do have some reserve but as we are now providing services that were not in our budget (e.g. providing free meals in takeaway containers) we will struggle if this goes on for months."

It is important to remember that while 31% of organisations said that more than 50% of their income was earned through trading, there will be many more organisations who will also be earning a significant percentage of their income through trading.

The Local Authority Areas where the organisations are based

Organisations were asked which Local Authority they were based in. Additional areas from outside West Yorkshire and Harrogate have been included as some organisations had more than one base. The figures below represent those organisations taking part in the Third Sector Leeds (TSL) survey, but in addition to this data, information from an additional 49 organisations based in Bradford and 25 from Calderdale has been used in this report.

What Local Authority are you based in?		
Answer Choice	Response percent	Response total
Bradford	8.3%	25
Calderdale	3.3%	10
Craven	8.9%	27
Harrogate	16.2%	49
Kirklees	12.2%	37
Leeds	54.79%	166
Wakefield	4.3%	13
Other Areas* Some organisations that were based in West Yorkshire and Harrogate also reported bases in other Local Authority areas	12.87%	39

NB. Some organisations cover more than one area.

How many staff do organisations employ?

In the survey organisations were actually asked *“How many staff do you have?”*

The number of staff each organisation had varied from zero up to 748.

The mean average number of staff each organisation had was 23 staff members, which often included full time, part time and sessional workers.

A note of caution: given that one organisation employed 610 staff, a mean average is not necessarily the best figure to use to represent average number of staff employed per organisation.

How many full time equivalents (FTEs) are employed by organisations?

Organisations were asked “How many FTE staff do you have?” and the number of hours implied by an FTE was not actually specified

The mean average number of FTE each organisation employed was 15 FTE.

However as the sample size included some large employers a better average is a median average and this was significantly lower average at **2 FTE staff per organisation**.

The total number of FTE staff employed by organisations taking part in this survey was 4,593

Approximately one in five (21%) of organisations told us they had no paid staff and were entirely volunteer run.

38% of organisations told us they employed no staff or less than 1 FTE.

How many FTE Equivalents do you have?

How many FTE staff do you have?	Number of organisations	Percentage
Less than 1	111	38%
1 - 5	92	32%
6 - 10	30	10%
11 - 20	23	8%
21 - 30	8	3%
31 - 50	9	3%
51 - 100	9	3%
101 - 610	8	3%

How many staff did organisations employ at the time of the survey?

Organisations were asked how many staff they currently had, a question that was asked to try and establish the effect of Covid-19 on staff numbers. This number is explored later when each Local Authority area is analysed. It was apparent that some organisations may have reported in terms of FTE's and not in their overall numbers. Also it is possible that if organisations were asked to report this figure for June it would be very different from April/May.

Just over a third (34%) of organisations that employed staff in this survey told us they had furloughed staff by April/May 2020.

Volunteering numbers: Before and during Covid-19

Organisations were asked “How many volunteers did you have in January 2020?”

In January 2020, 95% of organisations said they had active volunteers involved in their organisations. **The total reported number of active volunteers in West Yorkshire & Harrogate (January 2020) was 16,681.**

It is important to remember that this is only the number reported by organisations taking part in this survey, the real number would have been, and still is, many more times this number. However, the data produced by this survey (294 organisations responded to this question) does give important indications of volunteering in West Yorkshire & Harrogate. It is important to remember that **nearly one in five organisations participating in this survey said they were entirely run by volunteers.**

There was a wide variation in the number of reported active volunteers per organisation, numbers varied from no volunteers (5%) up to 4,000 volunteers. This equated to a (mean) average of 57 volunteers per organisation. However as just two organisations reported they had a total 6,500 a better guide to the average number of volunteers per organisation is a median average, this equates to **15 volunteers per organisation.**



BTM in Bradford holds a range of workgroups that develop and deliver accessible information. These workgroups are made up of people with learning disabilities, people with mental ill health and people who are Deaf.

How many volunteers did organisations have April/May 2020?

Organisations were asked “How many volunteers did you have now?” (April/May 2020). It was thought useful to capture this number so it could act as a comparison of the figure before Covid-19.

In April/May 2020, 35% of organisations told us they now had no active volunteers, this compares to only 5% of organisations saying this in January 2020.

The total number of “Active Volunteers” engaged with organisations April/May 2020 was 6324, this compares to a figure of 16,681 (January 2020) which is equivalent to a reduction of 62% in the number of Active Volunteers. These figures are reviewed in more detail by each Local Authority area but there is a consistency in the pattern reported.

It may seem surprising that the volunteer numbers appear to have dropped when a substantial number of volunteers have come forward for Covid-19 related activities. We believe the explanation is that new volunteers may not be formally recorded and established volunteers may not be able to help because of the change or cessation of services or due to shielding.

The mean average number of volunteers per organisation in April/May 2020 was 22, this compares to a mean average of 57 per organisation in January 2020 which is a reduction of 61%.

The median average number of volunteers per organisation in April/May 2020 was 4 this compares to a median average of 15 per organisation in January 2020, which is a reduction of 73%.

Comparisons of number of volunteers organisations reported January 2020 and April/May 2020	Number of organisations January 2020	% of organisations January 2020	Number of organisations April/May 2020	% of organisations April – May 2020
No Volunteers	16	5%	102	35%
1-10 Volunteers	98	33%	121	41%
11-30 Volunteers	91	31%	47	16%
31-50 Volunteers	36	12%	8	3%
51-100 Volunteers	29	10%	6	2%
101-150 Volunteers	16	5%	3	1%
151 – 4000 Volunteers	8	3%	6	2%

What organisations told us

The following sections of the report look at both the data from the survey in terms of numbers, but also “*What Organisation Said*” through their “*free text*” input into the on-line survey.

What organisations told us about organisational delivery

Current demand for services

Organisations were asked: “*Has demand for your services changed?*”

- 59% of organisations said demand had increased (37%) or had stayed the same (22%)
- 41% of organisations said demand for their services had decreased.

Modifying delivery of services

Organisations were asked- *Have you maintained your service with modified delivery?*

- 83% of Organisations said “Yes”

Organisations were asked -*Have you had to close/put on hold all or part of your service?*

- 89% of organisations said “Yes”

How has service delivery changed?

Responses from organisations responding to this research showed:

- Services are adapting to ensure they can be sustained.
- This has led to excellent innovation and the expansion of some services.
- This largely involves digital and phone services.
- Furthermore, there has also been an increase in demand for many services.

Services are adapting to ensure they can be maintained. While some organisations have had to close completely, others have put elements of delivery on hold, or found new ways to deliver their services. This has been due to a number of factors including: a loss of income streams, physical spaces needed for service delivery being closed, changes to staffing (including furlough), an increase in demand for some services (such as mental health support), and changes necessary to maintain social distancing guidelines.

For some organisations, this has meant focusing resources on providing only essential services. For example, one organisation reported:

“We have had to close our Day Centre, and withdraw our Homecare Service. We are only providing shopping for isolating older people, and a 5-days a week Hot Meals Service delivered by a local Cafe who have closed their doors to the public.” (Leeds)

Some services cannot be carried out due to restrictions, so have been put on hold:

“We are a community hall - not being used for Covid-19 response - so our doors closed on 23 March and we have no idea when they might reopen.” (Kirklees)

Many are stretching their resources to ensure vulnerable people are getting the support they need. Some services, such as food and meal deliveries, have been modified to account for social distancing.

“Community Response Service launched - linked in with VAL. Providing telephone / social media support, shopping, supermarket food vouchers, pharmacy drop off etc.” (Leeds)

This has led to excellent innovation and the expansion of some services. For one organisation, innovation in online activities has had a chance to thrive:

“We are a digital Social Enterprise. The transition to work remotely had its challenges. Our engagement in the last four weeks has increased significantly.” (Kirklees)

What areas of delivery are most at risk?

Organisations identify delivery risks in terms of: specific delivery, those most at risk from receiving support and risks to their organisation as a whole.

While organisations gave a diverse range of services that were “*at risk*” lots of organisations specifically highlighted mental health support and the consequences of people not receiving appropriate support. Running alongside this was an increased demand for many services but also increasing uncertainty about financial stability.

Pressure on services is increasing, putting them at risk

There is an increase in demand in key support areas such as domestic abuse and mental health support, putting these support areas at risk.

“The support areas most at risk are related to domestic and sexual violence which we have already seen an increase in. Mental health needs are increasing as people are struggling with family dynamics and a reduction in frontline support services.” (Bradford)

Delivering mental health services is a core priority for many organisations, with increasing demand in difficult circumstances *“Mental health and wellbeing of young people and vulnerable adults” (Kirklees)*

“Concerned about impact on those with mental health issues and the fact that m/h has been pushed aside (there is no choice right now...) No longer term planning seems to be in place to deal with the m/h of the front line staff once things settle either.”

The following is only a selection of the comments made in the survey, however it clearly demonstrates the diverse range of services delivered by the third sector but also serves as warning of the range of services and beneficiaries that face uncertainty.

Examples of types of services identified as being at risk

- Community engagement and support
- Training and employment project
- Lunch clubs – closed
- Wellbeing Cafes
- Volunteer programme
- Asylum seeker support
- Dementia focused exercise classes
- Mental health. No bereavement counselling and no support for bereaved parents and families
- Community transport
- Health and wellbeing programmes
- Maintaining current bank of volunteers
- Bereavement skills training
- Youth sessions
- Parent and toddler groups
- Ongoing funding for work in schools and community settings such as care homes
- Support - practical, legal and moral
- Laundry service
- Prison provision of Sports Leaders

Examples of those most at risk from not receiving support:

- The most vulnerable children
- Vulnerable Adults
- Services to families who have children with additional needs
- Loneliness amongst over 70s
- Unemployment support especially those with limited IT skills
- Residents getting ill
- People with Mental Health issues, in particular those who do not have a mobile phone or access to a computer
- We are concerned about our services to children as these are funded through fundraising which is being impaired

- Volunteers
- Vulnerable young people not accessing education / service support

Examples of organisational risks:

- Paying our landlords
- Lack of money
- The whole charity might have to close
- Concerns are capacity, staff safety/illness, buildings for return of activities
- The Hot Meals Service is costing our charity £168 per day! We cannot maintain this without some grant support.
- Resumption of group activities



Digital technology

Embracing and using digital technologies

There has been a large shift towards digital and phone communication in order to comply with social distancing. One organisation reported a shift to:

“Working from home, no face to face meetings but online zoom meetings” (Kirklees).

Furthermore, there is a transition to digital and phone services, replacing face to face contact and group sessions, *“Face to face contact replaced by telephone support” (Kirklees).*

“With all our sites (Leeds \ Bradford \ Shipley and hubs in Calderdale and Keighley) closed, we have had to rapidly adapt our service, with contact initially through phone, that has now expanded to text \ e-mail \ group chat workshops \ etc.”

Challenges of using digital

While many organisations had managed to change their way of delivery with technology, other organisations felt this would be difficult for them:

“Whilst we have maintained some semblance of service we are not really able to provide a lot of the support we usually would as our service relies on face to face contact with our service users.” (Bradford).

Another organisation saw the importance of providing some sort of support to its clients but there were lots of logistics to organise and things to consider:

“Funders have largely been very understanding, kind and flexible. They have encouraged us to offer support however we can, approving our changes to delivery as they have said they trust us as experts in what we do. The challenges come from working with disadvantaged and vulnerable groups after impact of austerity on these communities, during Covid-19 pandemic. To deliver support to women seeking asylum, for instance, we need to work out how to safely communicate with some women and potentially buy them phones. We also need to ensure that they, like other women we work with, have reasonable access to food and are safe from harm in their current accommodation. With some women we have to work out code so we can communicate safely with them. With some we can only communicate when they go out to the shop. The impact on mental health for many women has been huge. We are managing more stress, more suicidal ideation and staffs are being affected by level of need in contrast to ability to have positive impact.”

Many organisations participating in this research wanted and saw the importance of engaging with their users/clients/members through the use of digital technology but identified that often this needed an initial investment and there is a cost associated with remote working:

“We are currently planning how to offer an online service to our beneficiaries, and how to fund this.” (Craven)

“We have had to lend I-pads to Looked after Children - when the Government are stating that they are providing them” (Calderdale)

Organisations identified challenges around engaging with many different clients/people, examples are:

“Particularly poorer people and people in transphobic or less accepting living arrangements” (Harrogate)

“We run youth groups - we are trying to engage with our YP online but many of them struggle to get online” (Leeds)

Digital exclusion

“Not all asylum seekers have phones; asylum seekers are not permitted to have bank accounts therefore they have difficulties getting phone contracts with data.” (Wakefield)

Organisations were asked “Are you finding digital exclusion an issue for people you work with (e.g. older people, deprived areas, young people etc.)?”

Are you finding digital exclusion an issue for people you work with (e.g. Older people, Deprived areas, Young people etc.)?		
	Number	Percentage
YES	207	74%
NO	71	26%

This survey identified that:

- Transfer to digital and phone services while can provide new opportunities, it also creates significant barriers, making some unable to access services.
- Older people, people in poverty, disabled people and vulnerable people living in abusive settings are all at risk of missing out on key services.

There are major barriers for some vulnerable people in accessing these services. Digital exclusion was reported to be multi-faceted. Some individuals lacked access to digital technology needed for online services. This was reported to be a barrier to people living in deprived areas and in poverty, as well as older people. Organisations reported that a key element in digital exclusion for many of the people they support was unhealthy or abusive home environments, where people’s access to technology is controlled by a partner, or it is unsafe to make phone calls.

A recurring theme was a lack of skill and know-how in using technology; this was often the case with older people and those with learning disabilities. Organisations reported working hard to develop the skills and confidence to operate online.

For example, one organisation reported that continuing work with the most vulnerable children was at risk as they are *“[made] vulnerable by doing virtual support in unhealthy home environments e.g. where domestic violence or abuse is present.”*

There has also been an increase in demand for many services. Domestic and sexual violence is increasing, putting huge pressure on limited resources:

“The support areas most at risk are related to domestic and sexual violence which we have already seen an increase in. Mental health needs are increasing as people are struggling with family dynamics and a reduction in frontline support services.” (Calderdale)

Older people and digital technology

While some organisations reported how they were supporting older people with digital technology, many organisations also expressed concerns around older people are at risk of missing out on services due to technology barriers:

“Digital exclusion is generally an issue for older people we are aiming to combat this problem under the current circumstances.” (Leeds)

“Older people in our Harrogate site ... do not have these facilities at home so we are ringing on their landline. Many of them also live with elderly parents who do not have access to the digital world.”



“We cannot send email updates and information to most of the older people we support and the majority do not have access to online banking” (Harrogate)

“There are many more options we could offer if our service users had internet and iPad, but some don’t even have a mobile phone.” (Harrogate)

Poverty, deprivation and access to digital technology

Many organisations identified that poverty is a key factor in access to online services, and lack of access can cause exclusion:

“Yes that is a problem, many people in poverty or those who are homeless do not have internet access or enough data or sometimes electricity to keep up to date and the easiest way to find out what is going at the cafe is on our social media but some people cannot access that.” (Leeds)

“One of the groups using our centre teaches ESOL to children struggling at school and one is for asylum seekers and refugees. Some of those families are in melt down. The children do not have equipment to access and take part in virtual groups and the cost of printing and dropping off activity sheets is creating issues with the limited funds available to that group” (Bradford)

Access to technology is a barrier for many people in deprived areas:

“Access to appropriate digital equipment is an issue for some of our adult participants and learners living in most deprived areas of Leeds.”

Disabled people

Reliance on technology to deliver services can act as a further barrier to disabled people: *“People who are hard of hearing not understanding a phone call” (Leeds)*

A skills gap has been identified in some people’s technology use, with organisations providing key support in developing these skills and confidence: *“We support people with learning disabilities and have found that many of them have access to a smart phone or tablet but haven't been supported to learn how to use them. Staff are spending a lot of time helping people get online and become safe and confident with the technology.” (Leeds)*

“Some of our learning disabled workers do not have access to a computer to access on-line sessions through Zoom/Facebook.” (Harrogate)

Abuse

Access to technology, and therefore key services, can be severely compromised by abusive home environments: *“Yes some women we work with cannot afford to maintain a smart phone. When in abusive relationships their phone is often broken or put in cash converters by abusive partner.” (Leeds)*

Lack of a safe home environment can hugely reduce safe access to services that now may only be delivered digitally: *“Women experiencing DV - not able to take phone calls.” (Leeds)*

Volunteering

“Volunteer expenses have quadrupled as we are becoming more reliant on them for transport and deliveries.”

Volunteering responses to Covid-19

The data results of this survey clearly demonstrate that there has been a significant reduction in the number of active volunteers across West Yorkshire & Harrogate in terms of overall numbers as well as a significant increase in the number of third sector organisations currently not actively engaged with volunteers. This figure increased from 5% to 35% from January to April/May 2020.

However, the timing of this survey has probably not yet captured the significant number of volunteers across West Yorkshire and Harrogate that have come forward in response to Covid-19. In Leeds for example more than 8,000 volunteers registered through a scheme coordinated by Voluntary Action Leeds (VAL) and Leeds City Council. Volunteers have been actively placed with third sector organisations across Leeds to support people dealing with

the consequences of Covid-19. It is likely that this “influx” of new volunteers has not yet been captured.

“We have more volunteers than we had in January” (Craven)

“We maintained (or rather met the increased demand) with more/different daytime volunteers available due to furlough in their day time employment” (Bradford)

Many of these ‘New Volunteers’ volunteered in direct response to requests from different schemes being organised across West Yorkshire & Harrogate. Some of these schemes were led by third sector organisations, Local Authorities and partnerships of organisations and communities ‘coming together’. Many organisations thought it important that the third sectors response to Covid-19 is recognised. The sector has long had a reputation for being responsive and this was exemplified by its response to Covid-19. But the sector’s response to this wouldn’t have been possible without the energy and commitment of thousands of volunteers across West Yorkshire & Harrogate; many working together as Mutual Aid Groups or Good Neighbours. The NHS Volunteer Responders are a separate and valued group of people not included in this report.

In this research organisations were asked- *are you linking with a volunteer programme (e.g. VCS, Local Council etc?)*

47% of organisations in this survey told us they were linked to a volunteer programme and other organisations told us they were planning to.

Are you linking with a volunteer programme (e.g. VCS, Local Council etc.)?		
	Number	%
Yes	136	47%
No	136	47%
Not Yet	16	6%

Lots of organisations in this survey explained how they had taken leading roles in responding to the needs of communities in response to Covid-19:

“A voluntary taskforce is coordinating delivery of prescriptions and shopping, pet care, liaison with local services and businesses, and providing a calm, friendly, trusted voice on the other end of the phone for isolated and vulnerable people. A dedicated telephone line, email address, social media, and web page are all being monitored six days a week, and Victoria Hall administrative systems have been co-opted and adapted to safely, reliably and efficiently support up to 1500 vulnerable people throughout a very isolated rural area. The auditorium has been converted to a socially-distanced office space, from which our core volunteers can coordinate the response for Settle and surrounding area. Services we provide include shopping and prescription deliveries, signposting to services and businesses, pet care, general advice, and check-in calls for the isolated and vulnerable” (Harrogate)

“We have stopped our voluntary car driving service and our handyman gardening and DIY service and redeployed staff and volunteers to co-ordinating volunteers to do essential shopping and prescription collection and delivery, plus other tasks such as dog walking. Also, making arrangements for emergency food, signposting to other support etc. Now looking to develop befriending support to those self-isolating as well (already offered in one part of our District)” (Harrogate)

“The service has changed dramatically. We have a team of workers and volunteers who do befriending calls each week. All group activity has stopped within the centre and we have changed our delivery model to one of a food distribution centre” (Leeds)

Many organisations talked about the commitment of volunteers: *“Key volunteers are currently working 60-70 hours a week” (Leeds)*

“We couldn’t do what we are doing without them and hope to retain their service when we come through this crisis. Our organisation has not had existing volunteers to rely on as many of our existing staff and volunteer suffer from mental health issues and are therefore not resilient enough to cope with the needs of how we have had to refine our provision. We have therefore relied very much on the senior staff team and VAL volunteers to help us. They have been amazing!!!”

Some organisations thought there were perhaps too many volunteering schemes set up, rather than working with what was already there:

“Top down volunteering schemes from government, businesses etc. have been tricky to respond to without sounding churlish/ungrateful and some of the blame must lie with the VCS for not having a higher profile. However we really must get the message out there that if people want to help and feel good helping look at what is already there and working well before setting up new stuff. This is hard to prioritise when we're already extremely stretched, but volunteering is not just for Christmas or COVID-19!!”

Volunteers that are shielding and the challenge of keeping volunteers volunteering

As already discussed, overall the number of third sector organisation that said they were actively working with volunteers had significantly decreased from 95% in January 2020 to 65% April/May 2020. While it is likely that some of these *“missing volunteers”* have been volunteering on responses to Covid-19, many of these volunteers will not be volunteering

“Our volunteers are all retired and some of the older ones may decide not to return if they perceive risk, however diminished, by interacting with other people” (Kirklees)

“The only area of concern is whether our volunteers and organisation will re-boot when it's all over” (Calderdale)

Sustaining the volunteering response

Several organisations raised concerns about how long these “New volunteers” would be able to stay volunteering with their organisation:

“We are now providing repeat food deliveries whilst still accepting new cases and may not be able to provide the required number of volunteers” (Leeds)

“We maintained (or rather met the increased demand) with more/different daytime volunteers available due to furlough in their day time employment” (Bradford)

Many organisations talked about the costs of delivering services and often there was an assumption that “volunteers come free”. In the case of “formal volunteering”, they need to register, have an induction, and be issued with an identify card; they need support; acknowledgment of the important role they play; and expenses:

“Volunteer expenses have quadrupled as we are becoming more reliant on them for transport and deliveries” (Leeds).

Organisations in this research identified how one of the positive outcomes of Covid-19 was the fact that they had “engaged with many new people in the community.” While this is a positive, an outcome of this is that many third sector organisations have seen a significant increase in the need for their services. Many of these services are reliant on volunteers and some concerns were raised on what might happen to these services when any volunteers who have been furloughed, can no longer volunteer because they are back at work:

“We are now providing repeat food deliveries whilst still accepting new cases and may not be able to provide the required number of volunteers” (Leeds)

“We fear that when things can get back to normal many volunteers will feel they don't want to continue which will mean some groups may not be able to operate” (Craven)

Sustaining volunteering, the ‘New’ and the ‘Old’

Volunteers

Covid-19 has highlighted the reliance of many organisations on volunteers in general and many of these volunteers were involved in delivering services pre Covid-19. Many organisations commented on their reliance on older volunteers. As a high-risk category, these individuals are often shielding, so the sector has seen a particular dip in older volunteers.

“Most of our volunteers are in the high risk group (over 75)” (Leeds)

“Our volunteers are all retired and some of the older ones may decide not to return if they perceive risk, however diminished, by interacting with other people” (Kirklees)

Many organisations were concerned how their services that relied on volunteers were going to re-engage with those volunteers:

“Going forward it will be how to recover and re-establish community office, particularly around physical volunteers able to assist. Most of our volunteers are over 70 so depending on restrictions and social distancing, this may impact on how we reopen and what we can offer. Prior to COVID-19 we were trying to recruit a wider range of volunteers from different backgrounds, with different skill sets and of varying ages as many of our current volunteers will gradually leave us but this is always a challenge. Now it is even more important as some volunteers may not be able to return to work with us and many newly recruited volunteers to assist specifically with COVID-19 are either furloughed or able to assist in the short term, rather than sustainably for the future.” (Harrogate)

“Cadet & volunteer retention - how many cadets/adult volunteers will lose interest once we have been shut down for a long period”. (Bradford)

Another organisation shared its concerns on how to re-engage its volunteers, without whom they would not be able to generate an income:

“Our only income stream is from our charity shop that is run by 80 volunteers. There are only 12 that are under 70 so the shop is closed. The shop generates income to pay the rent on that shop and the rent on our advice centre” (Kirklees)

Volunteers returning to work and new volunteering opportunities

As already discussed, due to Covid-19, there has been an enormous response by people to volunteer across West Yorkshire and Harrogate. It is important that this motivation to volunteer is harnessed and sustained (on other activities) after Covid-19.

Organisations’ financial viability

“All our funding is from the council payments for the first quarter have already been made. I don't know if they will do the same next quarter.”

How long are organisations financially viable?

Organisations were asked- *If the current situation continues how many months do you expect you can continue to be financially sustainable?*

55% of organisations said they did not expect to be financial sustainable beyond the end of 2020 and less than one in five organisations (18%) thought they could be financially stable beyond 12 months.

The fact that the majority of organisations (55%) didn’t expect to be financially stable beyond the end of this year is obviously a concern and discussions need to take place about this. It is anticipated that many third sector organisations may start the next financial year with a projected deficit budget, but with the hope that they can secure additional resources to “*balance the books*” later on in the year.

This year has been unusual. Many funders have stated they have stopped funding any future projects that are not directly contributing to tackling the effects of Covid-19. Local Authorities are predicting very large deficits for this financial year and many third sector organisations rely on Local Authority funding. During this year is that many third sector organisations have a limited opportunity to generate income due to loss of room hire, delivery of training etc.

Nearly a third (31%) of organisations said the majority of their income came from “*income earned*” and with limited opportunities to earn income this financial year is going to be especially financially challenging for third sector organisations.

If the current situation continues how many months do you expect you can continue to be financially sustainable?		
Amount of time	Number	Percentage
1 Month	13	5%
3 Months	47	17%
6 Months	91	33%
12 Months	75	27%
Indefinitely	49	18%

NB Not all organisations answered this question.

Income streams most at risk because of Covid-19

Organisations were asked to *identify income streams affected/most at risk (now)? Have these risk areas changed specifically as a result of Covid-19?*

There was a diverse range of risks identified by organisations that would affect their income streams. Some organisations had been ready to submit or hear back on significant funding bids but have learnt that funding is currently only available for “*Covid-19 type activities.*” Other organisations were concerned about how they would be able to deliver specific contracts and income streams. They were concerned around how much flexibility funders would give them.

Many organisations discussed how responding to Covid-19 has left very little capacity for bid writing and securing funding even when/if this opportunity arose.

The third sector has for some time found ways of developing new and diverse income streams, no longer relying just on grants and contracts for income. Important income streams are through things like room hire, delivering training, activities, selling products and services and donations from corporate partners and the community. Many have important income streams that have completely stopped or have been reduced drastically. One organisation commented:

“We had followed the sector advice to work towards increasing traded income due to of shortage of funds. It's somewhat ironic that this has now put us at risk whereas our funded income is robust.”

Another organisation explained how being unable to deliver had left them with little income:

“Virtually no income as we can't offer any face to face classes. We are waiting to hear about a Harnessing the Power of communities grant which if we are successful will really help as we come out of lock down, a decision on the grants has understandably been delayed.”

Several organisations shared their concerns around having to use reserves to survive as their incomes had drastically reduced:

“All we can do is use reserves - which would be OK for more than 12 months but without any income coming in at all - this has limits.”

The following are examples of many income streams at risk as a specific consequence of Covid-19

Examples of funders and contracts at risk:

- Fundraising for new projects.
- Revenue income from grants related to achieving project delivery outcomes.
- All our funding is from the council payments for the first quarter have already been made. I don't know if they will do the same next quarter.
- Our application to Big Lottery has been put on hold.
- Grant application (currently a lot of focus on grants for charities delivering projects directly related to COVID that we are unlikely to qualify for).
- Our primary funded programmes are to deliver workshops and projects within community groups and school settings. This has completely stopped.

Examples of other income streams at risk

- Trading - we've just stopped and are working on grant incomes.
- Income generated from selling of services - yes 100%.
- Income from care contracts.
- Income from social enterprises.
- Parental contributions.
- Sales from our shops which are closed at the moment.
- Appeals, fundraising events and donations - appeals not held, fundraising events not held- significant impact on community services going forward.
- Our top income streams have basically stopped as they all rely on us having premises and delivering face to face therapies.
- Fees paid by parents - this is 50% of our income so if the nursery is closed then no fees.
- Room hire and programme income - lost 100%.
- Investments - lost 40%.

- £7k paid for courses and practice days have now stopped and we don't anticipate earning more than £200 in donations for the online offerings we have made available.
- Corporate Fundraising.

Challenges to expenditure/cash flow

Organisations were asked: *What are the top 3 challenges for your expenditure/cash flow?*

Organisations shared many examples of how they still had running costs to pay but often without any income streams: *"still have bills that we are contracted to pay and have the standard building checks and safety laws to abide by which are a large expense."*

Organisations raised concerns around *"LA reducing/stopping grants"* and another organisation concern around cash flow was *"we will not have any"*.

Many organisations shared their concerns around "people not renewing their donation habits" and limited opportunities to organise events that "bring in donations and gifts."

Many organisations saw the fact they were having to use reserves as a big challenge to their cash flow: *"£15k drop in monthly income on top of deficits for last 3 years, Low reserve levels"*.

The following are examples are what organisations saw as their main challenges around expenditure/cash flow

- LA reducing/stopping grants.
- When social isolation ends we won't automatically go back to the level of income that we had in March 2020 but we will have the same overheads. It will take time to get the income back to the same level.
- Funders having used all the funds to cope with current situation and no funds left afterwards.
- Medium term this picture may change, but that would depend on the continued funding, or not, of our contracts and grants.
- That we use all of our reserves and cease to exist.
- Low level risk funders backing our work remain stable.
- If we are back to normal operation by September we will take an income hit of two-thirds of our annual turnover i.e. £18,000.
- I think the risk is that we are earning £0 but still have bills that we are contracted to pay and have the standard building checks and safety laws to abide by which are a large expense.
- That we will not have any.
- Room hire and Cafe income has been building for couple of years. We are hoping this doesn't set up right back the start but are fearful it will.
- Funds in the charity reducing as overheads continue even though we are working from home and mostly furloughed.

- Potential ‘wastage’ loss due to people not renewing their donation habits; loss of unplanned donations will stifle this year's programme of material and project support.
- The majority of our income comes from local authorities - if they receive further cuts then our services could be in jeopardy.
- Being a grassroots movement we will struggle to keep a profile in a closed community; this will affect donations and gifts.
- Even when restrictions are lifted we will still have problems as many of our users are elderly and will be very cautious visiting the Hall. It maybe that film night which is our main income stream may prove uneconomical in the future.
- Cash flow - having the money in the bank to pay wages at end of each month. We know we will get the CJRS 80% money back and SSP refunded but having no date is a problem - beginning of May is no use for 30 April payments.
- Redundancies - we have a loyal long service workforce so statutory redundancy costs would force business to close if it came to that.

Flexibility of funders

Organisations were asked: *If you receive grant/contract income how have funders offered flexibility & have there any been particular challenges?*

63% of organisations that receive grant/contract income said funders had been flexible and about one in five (18%) thought it was too early to know.

Have grant/contract funders offered you flexibility?		
Response	Numbers	Percentage
Yes - they have been flexible	135	63%
No - they have not been flexible	32	15%
Unknown – too early to tell	39	18%
Mixture – some funders flexible, others not	9	4%

Many funders have been very supportive:

Organisations said that generally, there has been flexibility and support from funders. some have offered flexibility, such as less strict reporting, others have not relaxed their expectations. Funding for non-covid related initiatives, such as sport and wellbeing have been reported to be drying up.

“Funders are being flexible and accepting of changes put into place, reporting has been reduced” (Kirklees)

“Our grant funders have been fantastic - allowed for flexibility in the way we use our current funding and have offered support (financial and otherwise) to be able to make our virtual support more widely available” (Leeds)

Funding streamlined to Covid-19 response

There were many reports of funding being streamlined into Covid-19 response organisations, leaving other services unable to access grants. Criteria for funding is changing to adapt to Covid-19 programmes, leaving organisations unable to deliver targets and missing out on income to pay staff: *“Grant applications for general overheads and salaries - these are now needed for Covid-19 programmes and the criteria are changing, this means we are not able to meet our intended/planned targets for the coming months and years. If grants are available, we are now focused on other needs and not able to commit time to source and apply for funds for ongoing needs.” (Leeds)*

Funding being streamlined to Covid-19 relief, reducing access for other services: *“Some funding streams we had applications in with have been withdrawn as the funders are now focusing on emergency support.” (Leeds)*

Some funding has been put on hold or closed

While some funding bodies are putting bids on hold, others are closed to new applications all together: *“Funding - from the Lottery - application put on hold. Other funders are closed to new applications” (Leeds)*

Grants for non Covid-19 support have been lost, while small grants are available for Covid-19 related activity: *“Grants for our previous activity for sports, wellbeing and community cohesion are low priority and have dried -up. Current grants (few in number) have been related to the shop and drop service.” (Leeds)*

Mixed response from funders

“Grant income at present is through Leeds community foundation who have been very supportive. Leeds council have been supportive to a point. Harrogate council are not being helpful, still saying that as we are not physically open to trainees we may not be paid even though we are working remotely and even though we have been directed to close. Mixed messages.”

Another organisation said one funder had been helpful but another paused an application that was a few days away from a decision: *“Public Health have been very generous and supportive and are working with us to redeploy staff as usefully to the city as possible. Big Lottery have paused everything (even bids that were two days away from panel) and that has been most unhelpful.” (Leeds)*

“Some have been very flexible...others have been a nightmare and very unsupportive.” (Calderdale)

Some have offered little or no flexibility:

Some funders have offered no flexibility: *“We do receive some small pots of funding and there have been no concessions in the expectations - which is really disappointing as we are supporting disabled people into work!” (Leeds)*

“No flexibility from funders in early release of funds has left us struggling.” (Kirklees)

Accessibility issues

Some organisations highlighted issues with accessibility in the forms being produced by grant giving organisations: *“People within grant giving organisations are creating forms to ask for evaluation, but because they are doing them in a hurry accessibility has not been considered hence we are unable to complete them”*

Continued access to funding is essential for survival

Maintaining funding is essential for the survival of third sector services: *“If we lose lottery funding we will have to close as we won't be able to pay the rent or wages” (Kirklees)*

Some have more precarious income streams that have the potential to be severely affected by an economic shift: *“high risk; don't have a stable income so entirely dependent on grant funding and supporter income which given the current economic climate these funding sources could have an increased risk of drying up.” (Kirklees)*

Example quotes on: flexibility of funders:

- The Arts Council have offered longer reporting times...and ensured that funding is still delivered regardless if reporting has been carried out on time.
- CCG funding for the financial year has been received in full, rather than just for the 1st quarter as it normally would.
- All of our funders have been very supportive and there have been no challenges.
- Our grant funders have been fantastic - allowed for flexibility in the way we use our current funding and have offered support (financial and otherwise) to be able to make our virtual support more widely available.
- Commissioners have been great - they don't have time to look at next year's budgets so have just asked us to invoice them - we are a key part of the pathways and getting people out of NHS services which is key currently.
- We have a loan from the Key Fund to buy our industrial shredder- this ends in November. They have been very understanding and have deferred payments for the next 3 months to help with cash flow.

- We receive contract funding and the Council has confirmed there is no risk to that funding, accepting our business continuity plans on adapting the delivery of the contracted service. We are keeping in close communication with commissioners.
- Funders from our core grant providers have been brilliant. They have understood the need to change and prioritise our services to meet needs and are supporting us to do this by using the funds already granted in different domains and services, they have relaxed monitoring and reporting demands.
- Funders have all offered a great deal of flexibility so far and have been clear that they will continue to fund so long as we can show we're adapting delivery.
- Good Things Foundation who fund around 25% of our delivery have been really good and are keen for us to continue with delivery remotely where possible and are continuing our financial support.
- We have been told not to worry about targets and do what needs to be done, offered small additional grants to cover loss of income or pay for additional things like phone costs, been allowed to reallocate unspent money for other things.

Examples of quotes where organisations feel funders have not been flexible

- No flexibility from funders in early release of funds has left us struggling.
- Waiting on one funder for three weeks to get an answer as to whether we can suspend a project that we can't adapt and then extend. This is getting difficult as we can't give the Project Manager any clarity.
- Big Lottery have paused everything (even bids that were two days away from panel) and that has been most unhelpful. They do have a new fund to apply to but that doesn't replace all the hard work on existing bids.
- Nothing has been said since Covid-19 started. Discussions we were having all seem to have gone on hold.

Example quotes on: Particular challenges around funding and delivery

- There is flexibility in how we can adapt our work. However other funders have paused or stopped their application processes which were part of our future funding plans.
- All funders flexible and supportive. But our European project still has to be delivered on time and on budget.
- Yes the Lottery have been brilliant, as have Live Well Leeds commission, other funders have been flexible but it is hard to weigh up whether to pause or re-deploy workers for other causes (e.g. city wide covid-19 project). We have done a mixture to provide stability longer-term (furloughing some workers).
- As we are OK at present I have not done anything yet, hoping that if things improve in the next six to nine months we might catch up somehow.
- Funders happy to defer work but don't offer core funding without project delivery.

- Some funders have indicated that might be able to be flexible in how services are delivered, but in the interim we lack funding to have staff developing suitable alternatives. Also if we divert current funding to other services we anticipate a funding gap when able to reinstate regular programmes.
- We haven't applied for any grants we are too busy facing the day to challenges.
- The pressure to 'find ways' to engage is very overpowering but not practical.
- Payment by results contracts have been extended by 9 months but will remain very difficult to deliver next year. Whilst some limited compensation has been offered for things that were cancelled in March, this in no way covered the costs we had incurred.

Furloughing of staff

Organisations that employed staff were asked if they had furloughed staff, **34% said they had furloughed staff** and an additional 6% said they hadn't yet but were considering doing so. As this figure is the one that organisations reported April/May 2020 it is likely that this figure will have increased during June:

“9 at present. Will probably furlough more.”

“No - not yet but will consider it in the future if necessary”

“We are in the process of furloughing 70% of employees. If partnership agreements do not work this will be more.”

Did organisations face challenges in the furloughing of staff?

Generally, organisations said they managed the process okay, one organisation commented that the process was *“simple and easy to apply and the repayment arrived quickly”* but another organisation said *“it is a distressing process, and the process of claiming the money is not simple.”*

Several organisations wished they could furlough staff for part of their hours and commented on: *“The lack of clarity at the beginning caused major challenges.”*

Several organisations also commented on the fact you still had to pay staff costs and then get reimbursed in arrears which could cause cash flow problems: *“You have to have the money before you get it reimbursed. Not many not for profits have £12K readily available.”*

Selected quotes on: Furloughing staff and the process:

- Staff morale...Some are working twice as hard for 100% salary and others are at home not working but getting paid 80%. Some of those doing nothing are struggling with mental health.
- Evolving process requiring management time and subsequent communication support for furloughed staff.
- It would be easier if we were able to furlough part of someone's hours as my team work different hours for different projects / funding streams.
- Only disappointment was that staff couldn't volunteer for us - even in a completely different role -but we have directed to other charities instead.
- We believe that we can't furlough because we are in receipt of public funds.

Organisation support needs

“For our charity we need support to survive, receive funding for core costs”

What sources of support and advice are you using?

Organisations were asked where they were going for sources of advice and support, the most popular was Local Authorities (62%), Local networks/partners (53%) & local Council for Voluntary Service Organisations (40%).

Looking at the distribution of percentages it is clear that organisations were going to several sources for support and advice. 22% of organisations said they went to “other” sources of advice that included Government advice through website, HR specialists, solicitors and the Federation of Small Businesses

26. What sources of support and advice are you using?		
Support from whom:	Number	Percentage
National Infrastructure (e.g NCVO)	85	32%
Council for Voluntary Service (e.g. Voluntary Action Leeds)	106	40%
Other Infrastructure (e.g Forum Central/SEYH, Community First Yorkshire)	83	31%
Community Accounting Services	15	6%
National media	76	29%
National third sector networks	75	28%
Local Authorities	163	62%
Local networks/partners	141	53%
Local contacts	122	46%
Other	58	22%

What areas did organisations say they felt they needed more support for?

Organisations felt the top priority was around funding, *“emergency funding”, “help with core costs”, “other Govt. initiatives”, “funding for digital inclusion”* and this required *“Lobbying at the highest level”*.

“Lobbying at the highest level to fully represent the sector to elicit much greater, financial support for the sector, in the medium term (not just these 6 months), particularly small and medium-sized organisations who are dependent on a project-based funding model.”

Examples quotes on: Financial support needed

- Financial support to keep the community going.
- Sources of emergency funding. Furlough and other Govt. initiatives set up to help financially.
- Help with core costs.
- Lobbying local authorities about continuing to pay throughout this period.
- Training and Funding for digital inclusion for staff and carers.
- Accessing grants/funding.
- Support to get more tech out to people and offer digital inclusion.

Other areas of support that organisations asked for

Many organisations in this research raised issues of dealing with *“staff anxiety and Stress”*, for some staff this was thought, in part, to be due to working in a fast changing, stressful and a very unusual working environment. Other organisations talked about the stress staff who were not working experienced because they were isolating or furloughed. This was causing a feeling of isolation for many staff members. Several organisations asked for support around *“Managing staff anxiety”*.

“Brilliant response from staff, making the most of resources and putting in extra time. be mindful of mental health impacts and overworking. Also for those furloughed- mindful of impacts of watching organisation suffer and unable to volunteer.”

Another common support request was around *“Digital development”* in supporting staff, volunteers and clients. Organisations asked for *support in “Promoting the fact we are still here”* and many organisations felt it was important that support is provided to ensure that the role of the third sector in responding to Covid-19 is recognised: *“Recognition of the work we’re continuing to supply.”*

Examples quotes on other areas of support that organisations asked for

- Managing staff anxiety.
- Help with HR issues.
- Digital and social media understanding and how to implement online working.
- More joined up connections with similar services.

- Recognition of the work we're continuing to supply.
- Promoting that we are still here offering a service to disabled people and to people with health issues.
- Digital development i.e. moving training on line.
- Advice on steps required to adequately maintain a temporarily unoccupied community building, reduce its expenditure, cater for any of the implications on any facilities in an unoccupied building, cater for security etc in the current COVID-19 restrictions.

Support around an 'Exit Strategy'

While there is obvious uncertainty around *"timing for ending lock down"* and when things might be *"normal"* again organisations saw they need to plan ahead and to start thinking about *"'normal' needs of community outside of Covid-19 crisis."*

Examples of quotes around support needed for planning ahead

- Information on likely exit strategy and timing for ending lock down.
- We need to be able to operate as a face-to-face community once more.
- Practicalities of bringing enterprise activities and community buildings back into use - cost versus income versus demand versus staffing.
- More support if the lock-down continues for 6 months or more to pay for insurance and service charges on building.
- Ongoing community need assessment that reflects 'normal' needs of community outside of C19 crisis.

Positives emerging from Covid-19

"We've shown we can react quickly to a crisis and may be able to introduce new remote working systems for clients not previously used."

Organisations were asked: *What are the positives for your organisation/your service users to emerge from Covid-19-?*

A few organisations said they couldn't see many positives, but the vast majority of organisations could. The main positives that organisations identified were:

- **Digital technology for staff:** *"something for everyone to consider in the future, reduce the need to travel to attend meetings."*
- **Digital technology for clients:** *"Dedicated online services launched"*
- **New partnership working & collaboration:** *"Organisations who wouldn't normally work together forming strong partnerships."*

- **New ways of working:** *“Throwing orthodoxy out of the window.”*
- **A better understanding of communities** *“A greater community spirit.”*
- **Engaging with new people:** *“We have found vulnerable adults that we did not know.”*
- **Volunteering:** *“My volunteers have been amazing, dedicated, caring and enthusiastic.”*

Digital technology for staff

For many staff, working from home will be very challenging and particularly at present. Many organisations, though, talked about the positives of “home working technology” and people coming to understand that “on-line can be more effective.” Several organisations stated that initially staff working from home found it difficult but many had now found it an effective way of working:

“Some office based staff who were reluctant to work from home before now realise they can do it and quite enjoy it. IT systems have been adapted and most of the time work well. Before COVID-19 we felt we were running out of office space and were looking for larger premises. We now realise we can use the space we have more effectively.”

Lots of organisations talked about now being regular users of Zoom / Skype and this was *“something for everyone to consider in the future, reduce the need to travel to attend meetings.”*

Examples on quotes digital technology for staff

- Working from home is a possibility for future situations.
- Increased ability to use home working technology.
- Learning how to work in different ways and using technology.
- Realising meetings on line can be more effective and quicker than face to face.
- We will continue to use Zoom as an additional service offer once the current crisis is over.
- Remote working and capacity to change quickly to meet the challenge.
- We had recently completed an overhaul of all our IT - and its paid off with all staff have access to 21st Century working systems and able to work remotely.
- Use of digital solutions to keep in contact and hold meetings - Zoom / Skype - something for everyone to consider in the future, reduce the need to travel to attend meetings.

Digital technology for clients

As already discussed the “Digital Divide” is very real for many people, however many third sector organisations have found new ways of engaging with users through Digital technologies. One organisation said: *“Moving online is a huge positive for the organisation. It will benefit some learners who could not access the classes.”*

Examples of quotes digital technology for clients

- Dedicated online services launched.
- Moving to Zoom means there is no geographical restriction on where we deliver.
- Made us develop our capacity to deliver on line...but this is really the opposite of what we try to do in running face to face groups.
- Moving online is a huge positive for the organisation. It will benefit some learners who could not access the classes, and may suit some learners more than face to face lessons.
- Staff learning and implementing more virtual resources which enables a greater proportion of our local and national audience to be able to access therapeutic support.

Partnership working and collaboration

A big positive that organisations identified was echoed by one organisation who said: *“We have seen partnerships develop that seemed impossible before.”* Organisations talked in terms of *“improved working”*, *“Co-ordinated approach”* and *“Renewed commitment to partnership working.”*

Examples quotes on partnership working & collaboration

- Organisations who wouldn't normally work together forming strong partnerships.
- Improved working with cross city colleagues.
- Better relationships with statutory sector - they finally pick up the telephone and talk to us.
- A joined up / co-ordinated approach that has pooled resources where necessary for critical contracts.
- Being better linked in with the council, and having more of a reputation with decision makers.
- We have seen partnerships develop that seemed impossible before, we have seen a real neighbourly and community response which has been missing for many years and I have seen real integration amongst some diverse groups that would ordinarily have remained distant.
- Renewed commitment to partnership working.
- Move towards more partnership opportunities.

New ways of working

Organisations talked about how Covid-19 had made people/organisations “*focused on bigger picture*” and that organisations were able to adapt “*quickly*” and were being “*creative.*”

Examples quotes on new ways of working

- Throwing orthodoxy out of the window.
- People have focused on bigger picture and not on petty nonsense!
- We have adapted and changed what we do at short notice.
- Creativity and ingenuity of services being offered and how they are being offered”.

Engaging with new people

Many organisations talked about making contact with people “*that we didn’t know*” and in terms of “*People are more confident in our service and asking for help.*” A positive outcome of Covid-19 is the fact that so many third sector organisations have “*reached out and engaged with*” so many “*vulnerable adults*”. Many of these adults weren’t previously engaged with other support services, the fact that they are now getting support is positive. The challenge in this will be ways of making this support sustainable.

Example quotes on engaging with new people

- We are incredibly proud to be a LCC/VAL hub throughout the crisis and the opportunity to be at the forefront of helping local people. We will do whatever it takes to make sure we deliver at the highest level and are constantly looking to refine our provision according to need. We are, however, concerned that we are adequately staffed to deal with the aftermath, however, we accept that there are many organisations in this position and it is difficult at this stage to identify what will be needed in the long term.
- We are ready to rise to the challenge but will need support financially to do this.
- We have found vulnerable adults that we did not know were there and who didn't want to contact the council. We have learnt new skills and build new partnerships.
- Community cohesion has improved and people are more aware of who is next door and their needs. People are more confident in our service and asking for help.
- We've been able to connect with parents on a different level and share more joyful and fun activities and information especially sharing old photos we've taken over the years of the children we work with and sharing memories.

A better understanding of communities

Lots of organisations commented that there was now: *“an enhanced sense of community”, “A greater community spirit”* and a better understanding of *“what their local community can do for each other within their own environment.”*



Organisations talked in terms of a *“desire for the community to come together”*, their organisations now had a better understanding *“of the population we serve”* and had come to better understand *“How strong our community resilience is.”*

Example quotes on a better understanding of communities

- Overwhelming community support.
- The support of our community. Financially but also in messages and willingness to 'broadcast' us and what we do.
- Clearer sense of community needs. Improved reputation among service users and partners of our logistical capability.
- Fostering an enhanced sense of community (we are a rural area).
- Shared support and strength.
- Incredible community support for the organisation and what we are doing. It has definitely helped with our image and promoting who we are and what we do for the community because many either didn't know who we were or thought we were part of the council before COVID-19. We've had a lot of support and thanks from the community and from service users that have benefited from getting in touch with us for help.
- How strong our community resilience is.
- Great sense of Community spirit; increase in volunteering by residents of the Community.
- More understanding of the population we serve.
- Building up relationships with the community.
- Community unity and the opportunity to build on that, to enhance hall use, services and events.
- A greater community spirit.
- A general feeling of appreciation for what their local community can do for each other within their own environment.
- A greater appreciation for the importance of human connection and community.

Volunteering

As already discussed many thousands of volunteers have come forward from across the region and nationally to volunteer in response to supporting Covid-19 response activities.

This volunteering response was highlighted by lots of organisations: *“We couldn’t do what we are doing without them and hope to retain their service”, “the process of people offering help and volunteering has been astounding” and “amazing response to request for volunteers”*

Many organisations talked in terms of *“harness some of this goodwill after the Covid-19 situation”, “Our community work cannot take place without volunteers so hopefully this will continue” and “An increase in people volunteering now may help us in the future.”*

Examples quotes on volunteering

- An increase in people volunteering now may help us in the future as people see it as a positive thing to do.
- Sense of future direction for volunteers.
- Quadrupled the number of volunteers.
- People willing to offer help and to volunteer if we need.
- Amazing response to request for volunteers.
- 200% increase in number of volunteers - we are overwhelmed and cannot give them all a job but we are trying to maintain contact and hope to harness some of this goodwill after the Covid-19 situation.
- The dedication and continued maintenance of the 24/7 Samaritan helpline by volunteers.
- My volunteers have been amazing, dedicated, caring and enthusiastic.
- The volunteers that we have worked with from the LCC/VAL scheme have been amazing! We couldn’t do what we are doing without them and hope to retain their service when we come through this crisis. Our organisation has not had existing volunteers to rely on as many of our existing staff and volunteer suffer from mental health issues and are therefore not resilient enough to cope with the needs of how we have had to refine our provision.
- Engagement with new people in our communities through the Leeds Cares Volunteer Scheme referrals who we hope will be able to access our services and activities in the future.
- Unbelievable community spirit - the process of people offering help and volunteering has been astounding.
- Society generally has a need and people want to volunteer. Our community work cannot take place without volunteers so hopefully this will continue.
- We are getting into contact with new people in our community both as volunteers and beneficiaries.
- Number of people willing to volunteer, particularly younger volunteers.
- An increase in people volunteering now may help us in the future as people see it as a positive thing to do.

Other issues or areas organisations raised

Organisations were asked are there “*Any other issues or areas you want to raise?*” The following issues in particular were highlighted.

Stress to staff (and volunteers)

As previously discussed several organisations identified some positives of staff working from home, however many organisations also expressed concerns about the potential negative impact of this. Organisations also raised concerns about “added stress” that staff (& volunteers) had been experiencing during the recent period:

“Burn out will be a serious consideration as many staff feel constantly connected at home to work. There is a growing expectation from funders, stakeholders etc. that people are available 16 hours a day. This is going to lead to very poor mental health in the future.”

Mental Health ‘Explosion’

Many organisations highlighted a belief that the current situation would lead to a significant increase in the need for mental health and other support:

“The current crisis will inevitably create a “mental health explosion. Issues will include the psychological effects of self-isolation, unemployment, exposure to domestic violence, increase in gambling addiction, financial issues, lack of physical exercise and lack access to nutritious food. Community organisations like ours will see a huge increase in the demand for our services and we are concerned how this will impact on our staff, volunteers and service users alike.”



Paying for Covid-19 response

During this research several organisations talked about the financial challenge of delivering Covid-19 response activities, especially at a time when many income streams had ceased.

“Being asked to do C19 response but no recourse to funds from central government - we had to find our own funding, and this feels fundamentally unfair.”

“Concern that the current crisis may lead to a long term shift in big pots of funding (e.g. lottery etc.) that will mean that many small and local organisations cannot access them.”

Recommendations

1. NHS, Local Authorities and other funders and commissioners commit to putting in place a strategy for longer term, joined up investment in the VCS.
2. All Partners formally recognise the social and economic value of volunteering and actively plan to better connect the volunteering infrastructure across NHS, VCS and LAs. This includes: working together to consider developing and adopting a volunteer passport; investing in volunteer training and development across sectors; and working together to develop a WY&H wide integrated volunteering strategy.
3. Commissioners and funders work together to simplify contracting and commissioning arrangements including monitoring requirements and to develop a shared application format.
4. The Partnership works with the VCS to put in place a workforce offer which enables the further development of: workforce capacity including health and well-being; finance and business adaptation; governance and planning.
5. All partners ensure the VCS and community voice is listened to and reflected in service design and delivery from the outset.

Appendices

Reports by Local Authority area:

- Bradford
- Calderdale
- Craven
- Harrogate
- Kirklees
- Leeds
- Wakefield