

Looking to the near future – the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCSE) operating in Teignbridge/South Devon



Ten weeks ago our sector in Teignbridge responded to the COVID-19 crisis; delivery models were changed, new volunteers were recruited, existing volunteers redeployed, communication moved to digital and staff moved to remote working; centres and halls closed but maintained communication, others opened their kitchens for food preparation, new services were established to meet a new need.

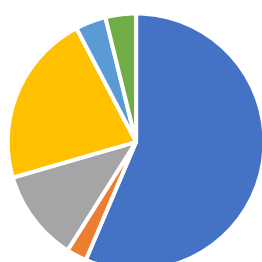
The VCSE sector remains critical to community life; it has been essential in supporting people through the crisis and will be essential in helping people reconnect as we see more movement restrictions start to lift.

Teignbridge CVS has asked the sector about the challenges and opportunities that face them in the short to medium terms.

Each organisation will have its own challenges, so this report picks up on common themes and key messages only.

The report comprises responses from over 80 organisations providing health and wellbeing services across the District.

ORGANISATION STRUCTURE



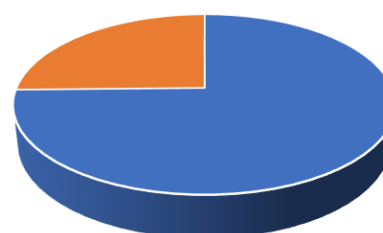
- Registered Charity
- Social Enterprise
- Community Group
- CIO/CIC
- Neighbourhood Group
- Other

WHAT KEY CHANGES WERE MADE TO SERVICE DELIVERY AS A RESULT OF COVID-19?

Key messages

In line with other service providers face to face service delivery stopped from late March 2020 and looked to continue our population in different ways:

- Staff moved to **home working** with online team meetings
- Where **services could be delivered remotely**, they were delivered by phone, online using Facebook, Zoom and Email
- **Services were refocussed** to meet emerging needs, primarily shopping, food delivery, prescription collection and delivery, isolation packs, toy swap packs and comfort calls



- Continued Operating
- Closed Service

- **Support and Social Groups were delivered online** including carer support, social groups, drama groups, peer support sessions, exercise sessions, youth groups, art and craft and more
- Where centres closed, including halls, animal welfare centres, cafes, collection points, many looked to provide their **space for the benefit of new and emerging needs**; to support hot meal preparation, to act as storage space for example
- An **increase in partnership working** is a key outcome for VCSE groups; Parish and Town Councils came together with voluntary and community groups, local residents and faith groups to form a local partnership response
- Key **contracted programmes continued** including Home from Hospital, Wellbeing, End of Life and Dementia programmes
- Groups moved to **delivery rather than providing centres for collection**; food-packs from foodbanks are now delivered for example
- Transport providers continued to provide **transport to key health appointments** but used vehicles to support meal deliveries, collection and delivery of shopping and prescriptions

HAS COVID-19 RESULTED IN AN INCREASE OR DECREASE IN DEMAND?

Key messages

- Most groups **initially reported a decrease in demand** as services from VCSE groups are primarily delivered face to face. As groups adapted their offer to meet new need they reported **high demand for these new services**
- Some groups reported a change from being **proactive to reactive**
- For some, primarily youth provision, **more young people accessed** groups who would never attend a face to face groups session
- Teignbridge reported a **significant increase in the number of volunteers** recruited to support delivery
- Groups, Wellbeing Co-ordinators and Social Prescribers report a **decrease in GP referrals** as GPs themselves saw a decrease in patient appointments
- Initially Mental Health was not reported as a key area of concern, but the last few weeks has seen a **significant increase in support for mental health**
- **Significant increase in demand for shopping and food**
- **Increase in partnership working** reported
- For those groups supporting concerns that are **environmental, climate, animal welfare etc** there is some reporting of **reduced engagement** as people have looked to support the needs of other people rather than other issues
- For groups providing **financial and welfare advice there has been a change in demand**; there is a hold on debts, bailiffs cannot call, evictions cannot be made; however requests for help with employment and furlough and benefit claims are higher and groups report an increase need for advice and professional help in areas of family law, ie relationship breakdowns, child access, abuse.

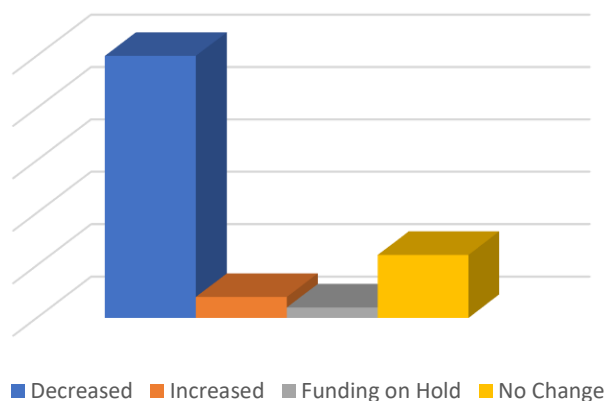
"It's hard to say –
it's different"

HAS YOUR GROUP INCOME BEEN IMPACTED BY COVID-19?

Key messages

Where there has been a loss of income -

- Loss of donations
- Loss of renewed membership at AGM
- Loss of income from rent, sales, paid-for services
- Funding diverted to health causes
- Funding to NHS Charities rather than Community Charities

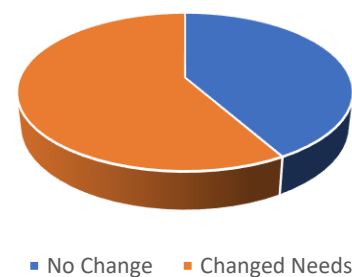


49% of groups have successfully applied for grants to meet COVID-19 activities
65% of groups have a Reserves Policy

HOW HAS YOUR STAFFING BEEN IMPACTED BY COVID-19?

Key messages

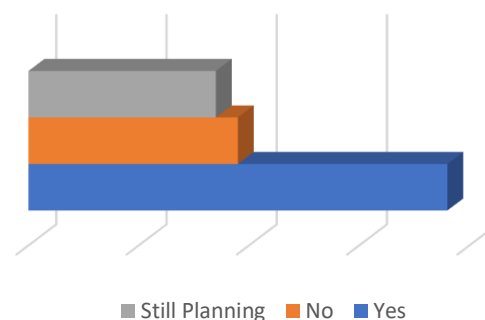
- 15 organisations have made use of Government Self-Employed and Employee Schemes including furlough scheme
- Groups have collaborated to share employees and volunteers
- Significant number of volunteers over 70 years so shielding or self-isolating resulted in initial impact on capacity
- Overwhelming response from community who have volunteered to meet need
- Staff and volunteers redeployed by organisations to meet need



DO YOU HAVE PLANS IN PLACE TO RETURN TO preCOVID-19 WORKING?

Key messages

- Many organisations **still waiting for clarity** from the Government particularly those offering space
- Groups remain unclear on **how long social distancing will be in place** but all expect it to be a requirement for many months which will impact future service delivery
- **48% of groups have carried out a risk assessment and have a plan in place** but primarily focussed on returning to office space and expecting some staff to remain home-working
- Many groups expect a **second wave of COVID-19** which is impacting plans
- Most groups expecting to take **'baby-steps'**
- No group reported a return to 'as it was' with most reporting a **'new norm'** for the future
- **Mutual Aids and Informal Community Response groups** are looking to how their services are needed in the future



SHOULD WE EXPECT A CHANGE IN SERVICE OR ROLE OF VCSE PROVIDERS IN THE FUTURE?

Key messages

Most groups still unsure what their 'new norm' will be but ...

- Majority of groups reported that **new services developed to meet needs during COVID-19 had been well received and they will continue**; many young people and families have appreciated being able to access services digitally so these will continue
- Groups looking to **harness the support of the many people who came forward to volunteer** during the crisis to continue to deliver in the future
- Most groups looking to **retain a digital offer** and many to **increase their digital offer**
- Strong desire to **continue with improved partnership working and collaboration**
- **Concern on how to meet new demand** created as a result of COVID-19
- Groups want to **build on successful redeployment and working from home**

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL VCSE PROVIDERS IN THE FUTURE?

Key messages – Challenges

There were two key themes reported: **financial stability and being able to operate safely**

- Returning to face to face services where safe distancing is required
- Fear of a 2nd wave
- Increased need for mental health support
- Operating safely including safe distancing and predicted tightened Health and Safety requirements
- Reengagement of people in face to face services who may be fearful of taking part
- Engaging volunteers and clients in new digital approaches
- Meeting the expectation from increased service delivery during COVID-19
- As services are redesigned how across all agencies how do we know we are meeting the needs of our population

Key messages – Opportunities

Increased Profile and Trust : Opportunities to be Creative : Increased Collaboration

- Increased profile of VCSE groups means increased service provision and engagement
- Increased capacity as more volunteers engaged
- Potential for new ways of working through collaboration and partnership
- Stronger staff teams who are flexible, creative and resilient
- Improved networks / networking
- Flexibility in delivery solutions including digital; improved confidence and innovation in using technical solutions
- Improved productivity will increase capacity
- Improved knowledge of the needs of our communities and people
- Younger volunteers will provide a fresh approach

ANY FINAL MESSAGE?

- How are groups going to manage financially if their key services were not COVID-19 related; majority funding brought forward to meet COVID-19 need – is there anything left for other vital services that have fallen through the net?
- Need for some new local networks and partnerships from our CVS – food, domestic violence, mental health
- Has identified that Local is the solution that works and need Commissioners and Government to recognise that support, resources and services should focus on local