

Herts Community Solutions is a network of voluntary sector support organisations working in Hertfordshire to support the health and wellbeing of our communities



EMERGING TRENDS

As we move into the recovery period and out of the current lockdown, we have been reflecting on emerging trends amongst the organisations we support. We recognise the need to collaborate, now more than ever, in order to strengthen our offer to the community, for example, by working together to care for our members and also in order to co-produce future projects. As organisations find they need to operate differently and perhaps offer a more focused range of programs, they are seeking other organisations to offer additional services, in the hope that working to strengths provides better outcomes for communities.

The coronavirus pandemic has forced many organisations across Hertfordshire to work collaboratively to meet the rapidly changing social needs that have become apparent. Collaboration between third sector organisations and Hertfordshire County Council has never been so good, with regular meetings being held where the needs of the community can be discussed and addressed in partnership to ensure that the right services are deployed to the right people by those best placed to deliver them, be that statutory provision or charities. These relationships, built during times of adversity, have led to truly co-produced programs, designed to support vulnerable people. By working in partnership, these have been developed to be cost effective solutions that would not have been envisaged previously.

Collaborative approaches have provided opportunities for HCC, the two CCGs and third sector organisations to find novel approaches to supporting the needy. The world has changed and each change casts ripples into the pond. For example, the need to undertake medical appointments online, means surgeries don't see as many people face to face, but often need to bring people in for on the day appointments. This in turn impacts on Community Transport, who would normally work with the elderly and vulnerable to provide transport for scheduled appointments. Without a shift in the approach of Community Transport, surgeries cannot see patients on the day, this could impact on health. By working together, these challenges have been met head on and before they have become an issue thanks to regular conversations and sharing of ideas.

Volunteers both new and old are going to be needed as organisations and services begin to reopen. With the right support and mitigations in place, we will be able to bring back some previously active volunteers once restrictions are relaxed but our future depends on having more volunteers than before to help us survive.

For the first time, it feels like there is one common purpose, to make a difference to the lives of people in Hertfordshire, and all interesting parties are working together to make that happen. It is that cooperation that will leave a positive legacy for people across the county for many years to come.



As we move into the recovery period and out of the current lockdown, we have been reflecting on emerging trends amongst the organisations we support.

It is perhaps not surprising that 8 organisations out of the 113 recently surveyed by Communities 1st believe that without significant support, they will last 6 months or less. The cost of responding to Covid-19, coupled with lost income and lost fundraising opportunities also means that those organisations who believe they will continue, will often have to offer a reduced service in order to do so.

It seems inevitable that the most vulnerable in our society, who often rely on the services and activities provided by the voluntary and community sector, will be significantly affected this change. If our sector is to continue underpinning statutory support from health and social care, assurances about its long term future and sustainability will need to be addressed.

Finally, we are seeing changes to the volunteering landscape- at least in the short term. As many volunteers are from the older generation or may be considered clinically vulnerable due to health conditions, they have not been able to volunteer outside of their homes during this crisis. That said, there has been a massive recruitment of new volunteers to meet the Covid response. We realise that many individuals who signed up to volunteer in response to Coronavirus had never previously done so. We have taken on many working age people who would otherwise have not had the time or inclination to offer their service before now. Many have found this to be an enriching and eye-opening experience and we have a real opportunity to create a lasting legacy of community goodwill if this is handled effectively. This needs to happen soon as these volunteers are gradually returning to work and in order to retain them, we will need to make roles flexible in order to fit around paid work.



As we approach the end of shielding, the voluntary sector is picking up the role of supporting those vulnerable people who are in need of extra support from our colleagues at HCC. We are pleased to be coordinating that in Dacorum to support people in our community when they need it.

This includes our work with Store2Door which will take on the delivery of food parcels for those currently getting those, and prescription deliveries for those in need. We are continuing to offer these services to those who are not shielding but vulnerable so feel free to refer people to Deborah and the team.

We are also continuing to transport people to medical appointments through our Community Cars scheme. As the NHS is increasing its number of regular appointments and people are gaining more confidence to attend the numbers are rapidly increasing. We are also looking at how we adapt the service to meet the new set of needs that GPs and Hospitals have when transporting patients. The rate of change is great for our volunteers, with these changes and the need for PPE and protective approaches to cleaning, it is an exciting time. The need for ongoing support to our volunteer drivers will continue as those over 70 return to volunteering in August.

Our aim through our network we can address the current needs of people across Dacorum and over the coming 6 months we will work with our partners and those with needs to help build independence and skills that allow all residents to look after themselves where possible.



CVS for Broxbourne and East Herts (CVSBEH) has always supported the work of local organisations by helping to co-ordinate efforts across the sector as well as delivering community-centred initiatives such as Wormley and Turnford and Bountagu Big Local projects and the Building Better Opportunities (BBO) project which aims to tackle the root causes of poverty and unemployment, such as physical and mental health issues, homelessness, addiction and much more.

The importance of these projects is even more evident as we move out of lockdown and try to establish a 'new normal'. We are looking at ways of setting up wellbeing hubs using our existing buildings and projects to increase people's control over their health and wellbeing and upskilling the workforce, working alongside professional-led services, but delivering at a neighbourhood level.

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HALFLS funding will be supporting the delivery of courses in digital skills and our BBO mentors will be working hard, in partnership with other services, to identify local employment opportunities. We are currently working with both district councils to organise a joint project working closely with Jobcentre Plus to ensure that additional support for those finding themselves unemployed is available and accessible through community information points and venues. Our Job Clubs will be helping with applications, CV writing and, more importantly, working hard to increase confidence and identifying and referring those with poor mental health to Mind and other local partners.



HCF Training & Development will be launching a new programme of online training in September 2020 and all our courses have been revised in light of the pandemic, to ensure they are relevant to support the county's most vital needs. We are adapting all our training provision for 2020/21 to support the Hertfordshire VCS workforce to be able to manage some of these emerging trends. For example, we will be running sustainability courses to support the preparation of financial reports for funding applications, grant writing and in digital fundraising. We will also be running online safeguarding training refreshers, mental health first aid and Volunteer management training.

Also, alongside our Workforce Development Grants that have already been launched we will also be offering a NEW Impact Reporting toolkit. If organisations are going to survive the year ahead, they need to be able to effectively evaluate their impact and communicate it effectively to stakeholders, to continue to secure funding.

There is also an increased awareness emerging around the sector's approach to equality, inclusion, and diversity. There is a growing need to provide workforce training in unconscious bias, creating a diverse and inclusive workforce and digital inclusion. HCF Training & Development will be integrating more training in this area into its programme.

Helen Gray, Foundation Director at Hertfordshire Community Foundation has recently written an article for the LEP on a number of key emerging issues facing the county, 'As the impact of Covid-19 is felt we expect to see a dramatic rise in mental health issues, an increase in poverty as unemployment increases, an increase in drug and alcohol addiction and in domestic violence... At a time when many people will turn to a local charity our greatest concern is that the sector contracts to a point where there is insufficient support for local people when they need it the most'. In addition, a loss of income for the VCS Sector from events, paid for services and a reduction in capacity to resume normal business has had an enormous impact on the financial stability of the county's voluntary sector.



The Herts Sports and Physical Activity Partnership (HSP) has launched its support packages as part of its offer to improve the lives of some of the county's most vulnerable and disadvantaged young people. The packages are aimed at community groups and other organisations wishing to deliver programmes for young people during the forthcoming school holiday period.

HSP – based at the University of Hertfordshire – has developed a support package, in partnership with national charity StreetGames UK, in response to a growing body of research on the triple inequalities of holiday hunger, isolation and inactivity faced by young people. Coupled with this has been the disproportionate impact on the most disadvantaged communities, in terms of intellectual, physical and emotional development of the young people from those areas, as part of the current and ongoing Covid-19 arrangements.

The HSP package includes funding of up to £1,000 for eligible groups, from Sport England's Tackling Inequalities Fund. Further details of the HSP Summer Holiday Project funding can be found [here](#) It also offers support around training, food - including access and advice on nutrition and healthy eating - sport and physical activity programmes, marketing and simple monitoring and evaluation to evidence the impact of their interventions.

To help with this the Herts Sports Partnership have funded three courses that are available to those operating summer provision to disadvantaged families this summer. These courses are Safeguarding & Protecting Children, Managing Challenging Behaviour and Getting Young People Active Remotely. More details can be seen below, please click the links in the titles to book your place.

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Safeguarding & Protecting Children, 2.5 hours Date: Wednesday 22 July, 2.00pm

Managing Challenging Behaviour, 3 hours Date: Wednesday 22 July, 1.00pm

Getting Young People Active Remotely, 90 minutes Date: Thursday 23 July, 10am

For further information and resources on everything you need to support your local community with a summer holiday activity project, please visit our Summer Holiday Project Support page on our website. If you have any questions relating to any of the above please don't hesitate to contact us on courses@sportinherts.org.uk



At North Herts CVS we think the emerging trends are likely to be:

- big changes to services needed in the community - likely to be greater need for mental health support and possibly coronavirus-related longer term physical consequences, financial need etc etc.
- concerns about how (or whether) many charities can survive as a result of suspension of fund-raising events and less income from donations
- concerns about when and how support groups and activities can resume in view of coronavirus transmission concerns
- concerns about venues eg how community centres hosting many community groups are going to manage loss of income
- the impact on numbers of volunteers available especially older people who often make up trustee boards
- need for greater IT literacy as some services have to be on-line for the foreseeable future
- new opportunities. maybe an upturn in new small local charities seeking to address these needs - start-up funding permitting

different focus from funders now that emergency funding is ending and transitional funding being considered for adapting the to fall-out.



Embracing Technology

The first major effect of the lockdown was that charities and other organisations could no longer work in the same way as they had done before. We began to hold meetings over platforms such as Zoom, and Microsoft Teams and we were unable to run usual services in such as our Getting Together clubs. Therefore, the initial few weeks under lockdown required a change in working conditions to ensure our services continued and end users, some of whom are the most vulnerable in society, continue to have their support systems in place.

In those first few weeks, difficulties were bound to occur as everyone adapted to new ways of communicating with each other and delivering services. However, our new call centre was launched, and this allowed our service users to keep in contact with us and to request help, whether that be food boxes, prescriptions pickups or personal shopping. We also received numerous bids from local organisations who could no longer run their services in the same way, and we assisted them with funding to help transfer these services online or to fund new services/projects which would benefit the community. Finally, we also held weekly forums with various groups including several of the Covid19 support groups that formed in response to the pandemic to find out what their needs were and the changing need of the community as a whole.

However, we acknowledged the desire for organisations to restart offline services as soon as possible and to ensure that charities who are restarting their services have the relevant level of support and if required, assistance with any funding they may require. Therefore, we are aiming to connect with these charities in the coming weeks to identify which of the services are reopening so that we can highlight this to the community and to provide them with assistance whether necessary.

This newsletter is being compiled by Community Action Dacorum on behalf of all the partners.

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