

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



As we're approaching December and more talk about potential vaccines against Covid-19 it's natural that we all start to think of this period as one of a new chapter.

More than ever, with the backdrop of Covid, there's a real air of 'next phase' in our tentative steps forward the festive holidays. We all understand that it's on us to think and behave differently.

This theme is at the top of our minds as we think about the way we need to move forward and structure our delivery for a changed world.

In Communities 1st we're working with local groups, volunteers and partner organisations to review what is working now, where any possible gaps are now and planning for the future.

- **Our Centre for Voluntary Service (CVS)** is re-contacting our 280+ member organisations to take part in our third 'Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) Resilience Survey' to help measure the impact that the coronavirus is having on the sector.
- **Our Volunteer Centre** is providing one-to-one support for over 20 local groups and charities in developing/re-imagining volunteering roles for their organisation(s) and getting their volunteering programmes back on-track in the 'new normal' times ahead.
- **Our Compassionate Community Connector Team** are busy developing plans to support individuals over the holiday season and beyond.

I want to thank member organisations for keeping in regular contact with Communities 1st during this time and thank volunteers and volunteer leaders alike in working to support local people and communities.

Communities 1st Virtual Variety Advent Calendar

Communities 1st are putting together an online advent calendar, to deliver some festive cheer into local homes this Christmas!

Two of their brilliant volunteers, Pat and Steve, have recorded themselves performing a Christmas hit for every day in December. These videos will be shared to as many people as possible via Communities 1st social media channels and partner organisations, to ensure everyone has the chance for a singalong this year.

You could still be involved in the virtual advent calendar- sing a song, perform a poem or even tell a joke! Send your entries (no more than 3 minutes please) to patandsteveadvent@gmail.com by December 5th. Try to avoid using commercially produced backing music, have a plain, well-lit background, and remember to smile!

Lots of vulnerable people will be isolating this Christmas, and will be missing their families more than ever. Whether you're singing your hearts out on a family Zoom call, or just enjoying a quiet carol, Communities 1st hope their volunteers' virtual variety advent calendar will bring some sparkle to Christmas.

CVSBEH has produced a [list of grants and funding opportunities](#). The list is updated fortnightly and we will endeavour to provide the latest information but recommend you check the details online before beginning any application.

East Herts Council

EHDC have secured funding to support local foodbanks with their delivery throughout East Herts.

The funding is being administered by CVSBEH and grants are available up to £2,000. To register an interest, please contact [Susan Lankester](#) for an application pack.

What we didn't fund and why

Four reasons why 50% of applications didn't success in getting funding and 11 tips to make sure your next one does.

Helpful advice from Catalyst [here](#).

We are now into the second period of national Covid-19 restrictions. We are working hard in Watford to keep the infection rate as low as possible. The council is engaging with residents who have the virus, advising on how to self-isolate and working with them to find out where they have been and who they have met so they can be notified and access any help to support them isolate. Even with this, the number of people with Covid-19 is higher than we would like and we know Watford General Hospital is dealing with a growing number of cases, putting pressure on their staff and capacity.

We are currently seeing a rise in Watford amongst our over 60s residents, which we know is worrying because the virus can be particularly serious in this age group. One important way to keep safe is to take extra care when supermarket shopping as we have had some indications that people are catching the virus this way. If you can organise a home delivery or, if not, try to reduce the number of trips to the shops you take.

Watford Helps - If you, or someone you live with or know, is finding it difficult to manage at the moment there is local support available through our 'Watford Helps' scheme. To contact Watford Helps call the Herts helpline 0300 123 4044 or visit www.watford.gov.uk/watfordhelps who can then link you with local volunteers.

W3RT CVS continue to support the community and the charities and voluntary groups working within it, with a regular forum for organisations across Watford and Three Rivers to share updates and find much needed collaborators. This month's forum was held on the 13th November 2020 and attendees represented a wide range of groups. Attendees were each given 5 minutes to share updates from their organisations and to ask questions to the W3RT CVS teams as well as the other attendees. Towards the end of the meeting, one attendee thanked W3RT CVS for hosting the forum and said that it was extremely useful to learn about other organisations in the community. They added that he was looking forward to connecting with them to see how they can work together in the future.

This format of W3RT CVS Voluntary Sector Forum has been running since September and has seen various organisations collaborate on projects to support the community in Watford, Three Rivers and overseas. For example, back in October, a collaboration between Hand on Heart and Chorleywood4Refugees was made possible through the Voluntary Sector Forum leading to 44 boxes of donations being delivered to refugees in Greece. You can find out more about this project [here](#).

The Voluntary Sector Forum is held on the 2nd Friday on a bi-monthly basis. However, the next forum will be on the 11th December 2020 at 10am to continue supporting organisations during the pandemic. To attend, [click here](#) to sign up through our Eventbrite page.

If your organisation was unable to attend a forum, please contact the W3RT CVS team via email and minutes from forums will be sent to you.

