

1. Hubs Support

VCFA recruited and signpost 717 volunteers directly to the Hubs, since April. We have now reverted to recruiting volunteers for the VCF sector organisation and not just solely for the Hubs. There has been a significant fall in the number of volunteers available as people start returning to work.

Our volunteers all expressed concern around the anxiety and physical fitness levels of those shielding/isolating at home alone where there is no immediate support.

This includes communication, especially where there may be language difficulties, getting those concerned to interact socially, out into shopping and other daily tasks, adapting to social distancing and dealing with transport where they do not have any of their own. e.g. use of public transport and 'ring and ride' when the message has been stay at home and keep off public transport.

Befriending and buddying has been suggested as part of a solution. There needs to be a co-ordinated approach to helping these groups of people to come to terms with what they are going to find as they come out of isolation when a lot of their previous support will no longer exist.

Most volunteers we get are from the fit and healthy retired who are currently shielding/isolating as such not available. People who are unemployed or on benefits do not volunteer due to risk of sanctions.

2. Business Support Grants

With the exception of New Springs Community Project and Age UK none of the other local VCS organisations have been able to access support from the Discretionary Business Grants which has left almost all those with premises struggling to survive.

3. State of the VCF Sector in Bury

A survey of the local sector has shown that approximately 60% of local community groups have less than 3 months operating costs and may close by the end of the year. In order to try and generate income most are returning to work within the next few weeks.

VCF Covid-19 Impact Survey - Initial finding show

- 50% of VCF organisations have reserves for fewer than 6 months (of these, 8 have reserves less than 3 months)
- The loss of monthly-income ranges from £300 per month - £20k per month;
- Inability to pay rent and utility bills due to lack of funds
- funding opportunities being overwhelmed with the number of applications, so have been closed;
- just under 50% indicate that physical distancing is main factor in prohibiting normal service;

Groups who have been seeking help and support have also stated

- **Lost income to VCF during lockdown and due to social distancing** – an urgent need to recoup lost income find alternative sources to ensure sustainability.
- **Volunteers** – As people return to work the pool of volunteers will shrink drastically
- **Day centres** - How soon can they start giving support to dependents and much needed **respite for carers?**
- **Dependency** - will need to be reduced gradually on help with shopping, medication collection, frequency of support and welfare calls
- **Mental Health issues** (e.g depression and agoraphobia) due to restrictions/isolation, managing this going forward and returning to face 2 face support
- **Rough sleepers** - Move on plan and alternative accommodation for those currently housed by Bury council
- **Increased financial hardship** due to reduced income/, Furloughed or lost jobs all need help with debt management
- **Support** – continued demand on food banks and need for
- **Carers who carers relief has been cancelled or postponed** during lock down period – getting this started again
- **Consistent Communication** – need for consistent communication across VCF, as we move to recovery phase
- **Social Distancing** – Policies and guidance needed for shared VCF space in buildings and workplaces

Smaller community groups have raised concern about the cost of a COVID safe return to work. VCFA have produced a Risk Assessment & Checklist [please click here](#) to download or view the Covid-19 Risk Assessment.

4. Funding

We have been raising awareness of funding opportunities via our Funding Bulletin, Bury VCFA Website and twice weekly newsletter. Many local VCF organisations have been supported with funding applications. As a result, £501,224 has been brought into the Bury economy since April:

- 53 Bury Organisations have secured £387,990 for the govt COVID support fund via the lottery
- 35 community groups in Bury have secured £133,234 in COVID related support grants via Forever Manchester.
- 32 groups shared £29,296 from Bury Council's emergency COVID grants