

Devon Community Foundation

COVID-19 Response Weekly Briefing 30 April 2020

Hello everyone and welcome to this week's briefing. We'd like to make this as useful and interactive as possible, so welcome feedback and suggestions about content.

If you know anyone else who'd be interested in receiving the briefing, feel free to forward, and encourage those to whom you forward to email nicola@devoncf.com to be put on the mailing list. Briefings will come out on a Thursday.

Click on the **BOLD COLOURED** links to be redirected to useful resources - Right click on the links if you want to open it in a separate window.



How Resilient is Devon? a look at the data

This week, a quick look at some different ways of assessing the potential impact of the crisis on places, and their likely resilience, and what this says about places in Devon. Non data nerds may want to look away now.

A [Centre for Towns report](#) overlays aspects of economic exposure to COVID19, with demographics, and data on wellbeing and isolation. It suggests that coastal towns reliant on tourism are especially badly affected economically. Devon town economies most heavily reliant on accommodation and retail: Exmouth, Sidmouth, Bideford, Northam, Kingsteignton, Brixham, Ilfracombe, Tavistock, and Dawlish. However, their relative isolation might, despite their older age profiles, contribute to lower infection levels. Plus, our coastal towns register relatively high wellbeing scores, presumably included as a proxy measure for resilience.

[This](#) account of research by Tortoise Media uses retail data to understand actual rather than predicted impact. The key for small towns is what proportion of its pre-crisis trade was based on locally resident consumers – effectively whether they are within walking distance. And of course, smaller tourist towns score poorly. Of the twenty small towns with the biggest losses, we can claim Barnstaple, Bideford, Kingsbridge, and Dartmouth.

This [RSA article](#) shows that West Devon, the South Hams, Torridge, Torbay and East Devon are all in the top 20 local authority areas in terms of those with the highest proportion of jobs at risk as a result of the crisis. It suggests around 30% of jobs are potentially imperilled in these areas – that's nearly 51,000 jobs across the county. Exeter is in the bottom 20.

NPC has had its own stab at compiling and comparing relevant [data sets](#), setting the proportion of single-person households and medically vulnerable residents against relative deprivation and number of registered charities, at local authority level. This way of looking at things suggests East Devon, with an elderly and solitary demographic, might be at higher risk, although it has a high number of charities per square inch to help mitigate.

Anyone who finds this stuff interesting, and would like to discuss what appears to be most useful/provide counter-examples, please do be in touch.



Spotlight on ... Mental Health

Over half of people say the crisis is affecting their wellbeing and nearly half are reporting high levels of anxiety. Certain groups may be especially at risk, or have particular challenges: older people more isolated, care providers under stress, people with existing medical conditions, etc.

This can be as a result of:

- Increased isolation through home working, school closure etc. (social media is a vital connector, but can also exacerbate anxiety).
- Anxiety surrounding financial and health worries
- Stress for key workers

Most of the mental health challenges experienced are stress and anxiety, but also loneliness, depression, even suicidal behaviour. So there are acute, but also long-term impacts.

Statutory support, or the structures that enable it, are under pressure, or absent currently. Much mental health support for children, especially early intervention work, is schools-based, with obvious implications currently (we will be looking at the specific situation of children and young people in subsequent briefings, so have not considered this in detail here). There is also concern from mental health charities about the curtailment of rights for mental health patients detained in hospital as a result of emergency legislation.

There are twin concerns for the sector:

- The challenge of providing adequate support for those with existing mental health issues under the changed conditions imposed through lockdown
- The additional threat to mental health that the crisis itself is posing, both to those already suffering, and to those seeking support for the first time, and how this will manifest in terms of longer-term need.

Responses/Action being taken:

Mental health has had a high media profile over recent weeks, with a plethora of ideas for maintaining wellbeing through physical exercise, purposeful activity, routines, connecting with nature, linking to others and asking for help. For example:

- Public Health England's guidance is [here](#).
- [Mind](#) has some really good ideas on stuff to do and how to keep well, including advice for people with existing illnesses, online groups, and there's a specific section on advice for people who have anxiety around washing their hands.
- Help for Heroes has drawn on its experience of supporting individuals experiencing PTSD to produce '[A Field Guide to Self-Care](#): Supporting our NHS', anticipating a need amongst NHS frontline workers.
- The Government has also announced a £5 million grant for mental health, to be administered by Mind.

In Devon ...

Devon County Council has [advice](#) on how to maintain positive wellbeing.

Devon Partnership Trust is minimising its face-to-face contact with people as far as possible. It has published some [advice for carers](#) during the pandemic. It also links to other organisations such as resources from [TalkWorks](#), and references the five ways to wellbeing [toolkit](#).

Nearly all third sector mental health support providers have both moved to remote working, either phone-based or online. Some, for example, Youth Arts and Health Trust, have expanded their capacity to meet strong demand both through referral and self-referral from social media. They have supplemented this with a physical arts pack delivered by post. Devon Mind has set up a dedicated phone service, Chatty 10, where isolated people can call for a 10-minute chat. Our local estate agents in Crediton has set up a similar service!

We've been in close contact with many of our grantholders with a focus on mental health, and have observed the following:

- The **distancing measures** initially resulted in the cancellation of most existing services and therapy sessions.
- However, these small organisations have been remarkably **quick to respond** and adapt. Their specialist understanding of the needs of the people they support is standing them in good stead.
- Many services have become telephone based or gone online (the DCF crisis fund has financed provision of tech or additional expenses, either for staff or individuals being supported). This is a most realistic option for clients with whom the organisation has already built a good relationship. It is more difficult (though certainly not impossible) to work with new clients in this way.
- **Unequal access to suitable tech** for supported individuals is a significant inclusivity challenge.
- The changed circumstances have required additional capacity to cope with new demand for some organisations.
- There are issues of **confidentiality** with using remote methods (especially with other household members potentially present). And there are of course **safeguarding** considerations that effectively prevent most in-depth therapeutic work under these conditions. But there is great value in providing a safe, 'holding space' for vulnerable individuals, maintaining relationships, and providing continuity and stability.
- Opportunities to **link with peer organisations** and compare notes on what works and what doesn't are valuable – DCF has facilitated some of these.
- Understanding the **potential of technology** to provide creative solutions to changed circumstances in the medium term, rather than simply replicating face-to-face activities as an initial emergency response, happens more gradually and is a steep learning curve. An example is the possibility of maintaining contact with vulnerable young men through the chat functions on online gaming platforms.



DCF Funding Update

Crisis grants made since the last bulletin. We're publishing grants data weekly through [360giving.](#)

Foxhole Community Association - £5000

Paignton

Provision of regular meals for the elderly and low income families within the community

Recovery Devon - £800

Across Devon - although being online, reach will extend beyond county border

Working with selected partners to provide online Recovery Devon Dailies, short video blogs to support mental health recovery

Ottery Community Volunteers - £1000

Ottery St Mary and surrounding villages

Providing community support to vulnerable and self-isolating residents through prescription and food deliveries, a food bank and a telephone befriending service

Bovey Parish Coronavirus Action Group - £1600

COVID19 Bovey Tracey Parish including the Ward of Heathfield

Supporting older and self-isolating residents with food and prescription deliveries and telephone support

Make Lunch Bere Alston United Church - £2000

Bere Alston

Providing regular food boxes to combat child hunger during school closure

Whitleigh Community Trust - £2,050

PL5 neighbourhood

Co-ordination of collaborative support to offer help for vulnerable and self-isolating members of the community

FORCE Cancer Charity - £3774

Outreach locations of Tiverton, Okehampton and Honiton

Providing remote counselling to cancer patients with changed treatment plans and/or cancelled operations

Sense Abilities C.I.C - £3980

Torquay

Provision of Activity Packs to provide sensory activities and stimulation for families with children with additional needs

Exeter Citizens Advice Bureau - £4000

Exeter

Relating to setting up of remote support for members of the community and remote supervision of staff and volunteers

Led by Dreams - £4616

West Devon

Supporting people facing incidences of domestic abuse, the number of which have increased due to social distancing

Early Nourishment CIC - £964

Barnstaple

Provision of online and 1:1 infant feeding support for new mums and virtual peer support to help minimise incidences of post-natal depression during coronavirus

Link Academy Trust - £2000

Near their schools - Newton Abbot, Totnes, Crediton area and East Budleigh

Continuation funding for purchase of food hamper items to help prevent child hunger

Exeter Community Initiatives - £3450

Exeter

Provision of 'Make and Do' activity packs for families with children aged 4-7 years old who have been identified as requiring additional support whilst schools are closed

YMCA South Devon - £5000

Torbay Paignton and Torquay

Supporting young people with a 'Fit for Life' programme, an IT based social activity programme to replace regular group sessions and individual support, to include counselling and educational resources

Riviera Life Link - £5500

Torquay, Paignton and Brixham

Providing food and baby hampers to vulnerable families in Torbay

Coastal Youth Action - £1400

Teignmouth

Provision of mental health first aid packs for young people to engage in interactive online cookery and craft activities

Catholic Children's Society (Plymouth)- £2000

Plymouth

Providing essential items to families facing financial poverty

The Northam Care Trust - £4020

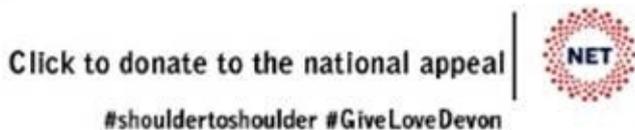
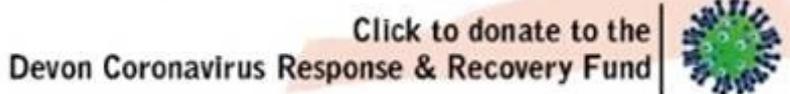
Bideford

Provision of IT items and internet connectivity for adults with learning and physical disabilities to access virtual sessions organised to replace usual day centre sessions

Age Concern (Teignmouth and Shaldon)

Teignmouth - £4800

Supporting the needs of vulnerable older members of the community by delivering shopping, prescriptions and cooked meals and establishing a telephone befriending service



Food and Nutrition : call for input

Next week we'll have a focus on the impact of the crisis on need in this area, and on the organisations who work to support those affected. Please do be in touch with any stories, examples, reflections from your own experience, or with details of people and organisations we ought to talk to. Please email: [**insights@devoncf.com**](mailto:insights@devoncf.com).