

Devon Community Foundation

COVID-19 Response Weekly Briefing 14 May 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.





Smaller Organisations

This week we feature a couple of pieces of work – one local, one from further afield – that shed light on the ways in which the crisis has affected the very smallest organisations. Definitions vary, but it's generally accepted that organisations with an annual income of less than £50,000 are qualitatively different from larger concerns, with a distinct set of influencing factors, vulnerabilities, and elements of resilience.

In Devon we are blessed with a higher-than-average proportion of very small (or 'micro') organisations (though precise numbers are very hard to come by as many are not formally registered as charities or otherwise). These are frequently hyper-local, or very specialised, and know their stuff and their communities extremely well. They are a huge asset to the sector, but we need to understand their particular situation in order to support them effectively.

POP+ conducted a survey of 125 VCSE organisations active in Plymouth in April, to help them understand the challenges different kinds of organisations are facing, and the support they most need. A third of respondents had annual incomes of under £10,000. A [summary](#) of the results outlines several interesting elements:

- Micro organisations were likely to be at one of two extremes – either they had extremely low outgoings without heavy reliance on external sources, and were therefore well able to weather this storm (whether or not they were actively functioning), or
- Those micro organisations reliant on (relatively small amounts of) traded income are in a particularly vulnerable position: they may have been practically self-sustaining before the crisis, but are now left in a very serious position.
- The same is true for those micro organisations with small public-sector contracts.

POP+ consider improved and strategic funder collaboration to be critical to ease the disproportionate burden on small organisations seeking small amounts of money from multiple sources. This is generally applicable, but a situation exacerbated by the current crisis.

Stripe Partners take an ethnographic approach to understanding the world. Their work is detailed, thoughtful, and methodologically innovative. They have been working with the help of the National Lottery Community Fund's Digital Fund to understand the world of micro social organisations in a series of UK contexts. They've now published their report (highly recommended, if you're that way inclined - I am), along with a [blog](#) that explores the organisations' responses to the COVID-19 crisis, asserting:

- These organisations are uniquely well-placed to respond to local need, using their knowledge to identify those most in need.
- Micros have shown great flexibility, and an appetite for the new in embracing digital alternatives to their usual face-to-face work.
- But the research agrees that some are extremely financially vulnerable, especially those with fixed overheads such as buildings to maintain.



Spotlight on ... Rough Sleeping

Acute homelessness has significant implications for other aspects of life, especially health. The life expectancy for a homeless person is an astonishing 30 years lower than for the rest of the population. This, combined with limited access to washing facilities and limited ability to self-isolate, means those living on the streets are particularly at risk of contracting coronavirus.

In response to the coronavirus outbreak, the government asked local authorities across the UK to provide accommodation for those who were sleeping rough, and for those who were in accommodation where it was difficult to self-isolate, by 27th March (four days after the lockdown was announced). They were also asked to seek ways to stop people congregating in day centres and street encampments, due to the risk of transmission. £3.2 million of emergency funding was announced by the government to help with this and councils will be reimbursed for the cost of providing accommodation and services to these people.

In Devon ...

Pre-COVID rough sleeping figures for Devon show significant internal variation. Mid Devon, Teignbridge, East Devon and West Devon have barely any rough sleepers, while Exeter has a bigger problem proportionally than Birmingham or Manchester. The government's 'everyone in' strategy has resulted in a huge partnership effort between public and voluntary sector organisations, with dramatic results.

A lot has happened in a very short space of time. Many groups and organisations working with homeless people in Devon have had to dramatically change the way they work. St Petrock's in Exeter said

"the main difficulty resided in the sudden and completely unprecedented nature of the outbreak; like everyone else, we did not have any prior experience or ready-made plan to draw upon, and had to make a lot of big changes extremely quickly."

St Petrock's have been using the relationships they have already build up with many of their clients to deliver vital services in their new accommodation. Donations of clothes and other necessities has dropped off, as they cannot be easily received, but they have set up an Amazon Wishlist instead. They are also addressing laundry with a local launderette, and are working with many groups on delivering meals. The Shekinah Mission, who have a range of services for

homeless people across Torbay and Plymouth, have said the main challenge for them in continuing their services has been keeping to social distancing rules. This has been echoed by other services such as Bread of Life Outreach who operate in Exeter and Mid-Devon, who said the main issue they were experiencing at their soup kitchens was encouraging people they are serving to move on once they have been served.

There are benefits for rough sleepers who have been newly accommodated: safety, shelter, privacy and comfy beds, and many are enjoying the luxury of having a TV in their room! But the organisations we spoke to also talked about major difficulties many people are experiencing. St Petrock's said

"Lockdown isn't easy for anyone though – and the lifestyle transition (from sleeping 'out' to being inside all the time) has been a huge adjustment for some. Many people we work with have trauma backgrounds; the current restrictions and uncertainties can reinforce early experiences where they've had no control or negative experiences of authority. We're all a bit emotional at the moment anyway, and for some people we're working with, the additional pressures of being inside around others can trigger anxiety-based responses and negative coping mechanisms."

Access to some services is limited as appointments are only available via telephone, and many rough sleepers are not tech-savvy, but, like everyone, they have been learning quickly and now St. Petrock's clinical psychologist, who usually works from their day-centre, is fully booked with appointments via Zoom. The process of identifying and accommodating newly homeless people has also become particularly challenging, as drop-in services are reduced, or have closed, but organisations and local authorities are continuing to work together to meet these needs.

Looking ahead

Whilst this time is very difficult for rough sleepers, this period of relative stability is an opportunity for people to access and engage with support services.

Organisations we spoke to talked of a “once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reset homeless services” and said they hoped this could be a “fresh start for many”. They hoped that many of the people they are supporting, particularly longer term rough sleepers, who may have been described as ‘hard to reach’, will be able to establish the correct specialist support to be able to move on to more permanent accommodation when lockdown restrictions ease. However, Shekinah Mission is worried that there will be a spike in homelessness once restrictions start to lift, as evictions that were put on hold recommence, and St. Petrock’s worries that sufficient accommodation will not be found for those who are ready to move on after the lockdown ends, as this is not easy in the best of times. They also say:

“However, not everyone is ready for their own tenancy; providing longer term accommodation is a huge undertaking, and will require a citywide, cross-sector partnership response – and significant investment – to be effective on a large scale.”

Some examples of local activity

[Churches Housing Action Team \(CHAT\) Mid-Devon Ltd](#) – Have had to close the reception area so are not able to offer showers, or do washing, but are continuing foodbank provision for homeless and those struggling to access food, by appointment.

[Thrive Project Torbay](#) – Providing food parcels and takeaway meals, as well as toiletries and pet food to homeless and helping them access support services.

[PATH Torbay](#) – Community café has had to close, but they are providing take away hot meals and packed lunches as an alternative. They have also been continuing their foodbank provision, including providing non-cook food parcels for people who have been housed in hotels.

[Alabare Christian Care and Support](#) – Providing people in their supported housing in Barnstaple with items such as kettles and microwaves, and providing staff with PPE so that they can continue to support them if they need to self-isolate.

[All Nations Ministries, Plymouth](#) – providing lunchtime takeaway service for people who would otherwise visit their Tuesday drop-in service. They are also using this to ensure they keep in contact with these people.

[The Amber Foundation](#) (based in Mid-Devon) – Providing disposable crockery for young people living with them, and extra training in infection control and PPE for staff, to ensure that residents are kept safe.

[Shekinah](#) – Providing food, toiletries and clothing to clients who have been accommodated and staff from their drop-in centre, which has had to close, are working to support these people. They are working with Hamoaze House to cook and deliver one main meal a day and provide snacks and drinks. They are continuing to provide flexible services by phone and video conferencing.

[St Petrock’s](#) – Delivering hot breakfast and lunch on weekdays to those who have been recently housed in hotels, and have worked with Exeter’s Free Food Network to ensure meals are delivered on evenings and weekends. Keeping in regular contact to support people who would usually visit their day-centre. They are continuing to supply people with clothes and other necessities and continuing support through their clinical psychologist.

[Bread of Life](#) – Continuing to operate their soup kitchens, but encouraging people to move on after being served to help social distancing.

[St Thomas Food Fight](#) – Delivering food parcels to a spot in St. Thomas, Exeter for anyone to take, as well as providing a board with information on coronavirus guidelines and support available for people, with leaflets to take away.



DCF Funding Update

Take a look at this page of our [website](#) for the latest stories relating to grantmaking from this fund.

Exeter City Community Trust - £3000

Exeter
Delivering shopping, prescriptions and emergency food parcels and co-ordinating a telephone support line to address isolation and loneliness for older people, including veterans

City of Exeter YMCA - £1240

Exeter
Supporting the mental and emotional health of families known through regular youth services with remote advice, food parcels, activity packs and prescription collections

Co-Lab Exeter - £9990

Exeter
Emergency stopgap provision of professional laundering facilities for 70-90 homeless people housed as a result of the crisis but with no access to laundry facilities. A longer-term solution is being sought

Encompass Southwest - £1675

North Devon & Torridge
Additional staff time to allow after-hours support for vulnerable clients, as well as (but not limited to) provision of mobile phones to maintain contact with eg those at risk of domestic violence

Bradninch Together - £974

Bradninch Parish
Setting up a community group of volunteers to provide support to those who are self isolating, vulnerable or facing financial hardship and setting up a village website to provide a central point of information during coronavirus and beyond

Ottery St Mary & District Help Scheme - £2364

Ottery St Mary and District
Setting up and running a telephone support line with advice, information, emotional support and befriending for those with health and social care needs and their carers

North Devon Against Domestic Abuse - £4604

North Devon & Torridge

Set-up and promotion of a live web-chat function that will enable those suffering domestic abuse to reach out for locally informed support in a safer way, and at times that are convenient

The Pioneers Project CIC - £4625

Plymouth

Provision and distribution of food parcels on a deprived estate in Plymouth; facilitation of remote small-group session to support mental health of vulnerable young people

SAFE South West - £4000

Throughout Devon

Purchase of quality material to enable a team of volunteers from three community groups to make scrubs for GP surgeries, care homes, hospitals and Hospices, helping to keep staff and patients safe

RE4orm - £3752

Torbay

Providing 800+ meals a week across Torbay to families with children who usually receive free school meals

HOSPISCARE - £4356

Exeter

Extending bereavement support for families of patients to the wider community, to those who are grieving in isolation or unable to access usual places of worship and setting up of a referral line for professionals working with C-19 patients, families and death

Tor Support Services - £5132

Okehampton

Provision of video and audio counselling sessions for young people affected by mental health issues

Street Factory CIC - £7300

Plymouth

Distribution of IT equipment and delivery of online tutorials to provide digital up-skilling to community members, enabling remote connection to family, peers and support groups in support of on-going mentoring

Plymouth Argyle Football in the Community Trust - £1701

Plymouth

Delivery of a series of online led activities to engage 100 children in a learning and physical activity programme during restrictions in school opening and regular physical activity

Students & Refugees Together (START) - £5830

Plymouth

Adaptation of working practices to be able to continue to provide holistic support to refugees and asylum seekers in Plymouth. In particular to keep vulnerable children in school, inform refugees or revised medical arrangements, and support emergency rehousing of homeless refugees

OHOB Ltd - £1176

Devon

Up-skilling of volunteers with health & safety and manual handling training and covering costs to enable the collection of and delivery of essential items for refugees and asylum seekers and the wider community through homeless projects and food banks

Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust - £10,000

Okehampton, Holsworthy, Tavistock and surrounding villages

Provision of food hampers and IT equipment for families known across the Trust who will benefit from support, helping to ensure children from the schools have access to nutritional meals and engagement in activities to reduce educational disadvantage during school closure



Coronavirus
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Devon Coronavirus Response & Recovery Fund



Click to donate to the national appeal



#shouldertoshoulder #GiveLoveDevon

Call for Input : BAME/Refugees/Asylum Seekers

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.