

Devon Community Foundation

COVID-19 Response Weekly Briefing 28 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.



Social Connection

This week we look at a wide-ranging [report](#) published in mid-May by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on [Social Integration](#) with the think tank [British Future](#), on various aspects of social connection highlighted by the COVID-19 crisis.

The report brings together evidence and testimony from a range of sources and considers not only immediate impacts, but also potential legacies. For example, it marshals some interesting evidence on aspects of **digital exclusion**, and suggests the crisis has shed some welcome light on a long-term social issue that requires more policy attention.

But it's the discussion of **social isolation**, and the related one on **mutual aid** groups that I found most stimulating. We'll leave mutual aid for another day.

- The crisis has resulted in twin dynamics: on the one hand an increased sense of belonging in many places, and of connection with neighbours as we all feel the effects of the virus. Interestingly, the uniformity of most people's situation, especially in the early days of lockdown, has meant those who habitually felt isolated and excluded from social life may have actually have felt closer to the common experience – less the 'odd ones out'.
- On the other hand, many people have been thrust into very challenging circumstances, cut off from their usual support networks and having to adapt to much less social interaction than they are used to.
- The report also points out that there have been pockets of resentment, even vigilantism, which, along with conspiracy theories, tend to flourish where there is no opportunity for face-to-face interaction and 'seeing for yourself'.

In this context, the report considers different groups of people and their respective risk and protective factors surrounding social isolation. This is extremely useful for organisations planning support activities, and for funders trying to ensure that their resources are distributed appropriately, and rightly acknowledges the personal and community resources on which individuals can draw to mitigate some effects of the crisis. Here are some examples:

✓ = Protective factors ✗ = Risk Factors

Those deemed clinically vulnerable

- ✓ Identified and given support by local organisations
Likely to be contacted by support services
Higher trust in neighbours if older
- ✗ Required to self-isolate at home
Higher levels of digital exclusion
Usually not in employment

Older People

- ✓ Stronger links with and higher trust of neighbours
- ✗ Higher levels of digital exclusion
- ✗ More likely to live in single-person households

Those who live in rural areas or small towns

- ✓ Villages and small towns are often more tight-knit communities with high levels of mutual and faith-based support
- ✗ Older population
- ✗ Some rural areas may have limited broadband and mobile connectivity

Homeless people, including those with no recourse to public funds

- ✓ Mutual support from those in similar circumstances
- ✓ Committed civil society organisation
- ✗ High levels of digital exclusion
- ✗ May not be known to support services
- ✗ Some may have a desire to avoid contact with Government authorities
- ✗ Higher levels of mental illness

The report makes an important point about the essential links between practical logistical help, and friendliness, empathy and chat, to combat social isolation. It's not just the what of COVID support, but importantly also the how.

Finally, the report advocates pooling learning about ways to promote social connection through the [Connection Coalition](#), convened by the Jo Cox Foundation, along with Nesta, Facebook, and a number of leading charities, in response of the COVID-19 crisis, to 'coordinate, amplify and inspire efforts to reinforce meaningful connections'. Anyone with any experience of this, I'd love to hear from them.

Spotlight on ... Young People



The Covid-19 crisis is having a significant impact on people's mental health and livelihoods across the world, including a disproportionate effect on young people.

- A survey by the [Royal Society for Public Health](#) (RSPH) found that 70 per cent of 18 to 24-year-olds are experiencing more [anxiety](#) than usual, compared with 47 per cent of over-75s.
- Early figures suggest that young people are more likely to work fewer hours and be made redundant. For many young people their education has been interrupted and they are now looking to start their careers in what may be a very uncertain job market. This [Resolution Foundation report](#) finds that 'with education leavers most exposed to this surge in unemployment, and young people most affected by job losses so far, an additional 600,000 18-24-year-olds (including those who left education in recent years) risk being unemployed this year.'
- The national charity Centrepoin, which supports young people facing homelessness, has seen a 36% increase in demand for its services since the lockdown began.

As a response to this pandemic, many support services and social groups have been forced into the online space like never before. Social media can play an important role in young people's lives; the RSPH research finds that 91% of young people use the internet for social networking. However, 7 in 10 young people report having experienced cyber bullying as a result. Although there remain major concerns around the dangers of this reliance on social media, it has become a way to stay connected and access support and we have seen many positive examples of people offering help and support via these channels. However, access to digital equipment can be a barrier for some, and additional support to access and use the internet safely is required. The groups we spoke to agree that there will be numerous mental health issues facing the next generation following lockdown and children's and youth workers will need to be equipped to offer them the best support.

In Devon

Although schools have been closed to the majority of students throughout the lockdown period, they have still been an important source of support for the county's young people. **Tiverton High School** continues to produce its weekly student bulletin full of resources and activities and an online mental health provision has also been available to students. **Cranbrook School** recently celebrated Mental Health Awareness week and sent mental health toolkits home to all students.

Devon is a popular destination for University students, many of whom have also found themselves in some difficult situations due to COVID-19. **Plymouth University** is offering its students a range of [webinars](#), including: Graduate Recruitment in a Time of Crisis, Job Search Techniques in a Turbulent Market and Phone and Video Interviews.

Despite the worrying outlook, Devon County Council has purchased the Flybe training academy at Exeter airport. [Exeter College](#) will run the new academy, offering opportunities for young people across the region as well as adults who are looking to retrain or upskill into a chosen career.

There are many groups and organisations working hard to make sure our young people are well supported during this time, as well as maintaining their existing services which act as a lifeline to many young people and their families.

Youth Arts & Health Trust

Are continuing their art therapy provision online and have sent out boxes of arts supplies to young people they support to allow them to participate at home.

Young Devon

Created an online hub with resources and information, as well as inspiring stories. They have had to close their centres but are offering one-to-one and group sessions online and via phone.

Plymouth YMCA

Are Providing 'Emergency Youth Isolation Packages', which consist of food packages, distance learning resources, home-health equipment and wellbeing resources.

South West Family Values

Are offering additional CBT interventions to work with young people who show a decline in mental health due to COVID-19.

Balloons

Are providing new training for their bereavement workers to support young people in light of coronavirus.

South Molton and District YMCA

Have started virtual youth groups to replace their in-person clubs

Routeways Centre Ltd

Are providing respite activities for young people, where usual provision has been cancelled.

Love Sports Project CIC

Providing street-based engagement for vulnerable young people at risk of criminal exploitation and other safeguarding concerns; plus remote support through dedicated phone line as a trusted point of contact, to maintain contact with them, promote on-call support services, encourage YP to follow government advice. Usually funded through surplus from their other sessions, currently replaced by DCF funding.

YMCA South Devon

Delivering their 'Fit for Life' programme to young people virtually. This is a bespoke non-judgemental support together with an opportunity for young people struggling with mainstream education to gain life skills and qualifications in order to enhance their personal growth and development.

Coastal Youth Action

Creating and delivering mental health first aid packs for online interactive sessions with a qualified youth worker specialising in mental health first aid, for young people and their families/carers. This includes ingredients for 'cook together' sessions and supplies for craft sessions.

City of Exeter YMCA

Providing emotional and wellbeing advice through telephone, video and text chat; collecting prescriptions for families self-isolating. We will also use the grant to offer food packages for any families who have lost employment and/or can't access their regular foodbank, again due to self-isolating.

Tiverton Co-Operative Learning Partnership

Provided mobile wifi 'dongles' to issue to students across the TCLP to allow them to access the internet at home in order to complete work set by teachers online while schools are closed and during times of self-isolation

Tor Support Services

Have moved all their counselling services for YP online.

Sound Gallery CIC

Aims to provide educational and creative experiences through online and remote music technology and mentoring sessions for fragile young people aged 12-25 years who live in Exeter and East Devon and have mental health issues ranging from anxiety, depression, OCD or are struggling to cope with feelings of loneliness and alienation and other mental health issues related to the coronavirus pandemic and social isolation restrictions

Livewell South West

Have a mental health support line for young people in Plymouth that is open 24/7

The Youth Genesis Trust

Are hosting their youth groups as online spaces and have specialist youth workers available via text and Facebook messenger

Splitz Devon

A Young Person's Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (YP IDVA) provides client-led support to victims of domestic abuse aged 14-18, and up to 24 in special circumstances, who have been in or are currently in abusive relationships

DYS Space

Have an online hub and a service where any YP can say they want to be contacted by a youth worker (text or phone). They also have zoom group video meetings, and a chat room.

Exeter Wellbeing

Have recently taken on youth community connectors

Call for Input : Dementia

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.



DCF Funding Update

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

Exeter Food Action - £1000

Exeter and East Devon

Additional staff hours and mileage costs for co-ordination and delivery of surplus food from manufacturers and wholesalers to food banks, hostels, soup kitchens and community support groups

bthechange - £2100

East, Mid, Central & North Devon

Increasing staff resource to support women within the criminal justice system with a 'Survive & Thrive' programme to help them adjust after release from prison

Churches Housing Action Team (CHAT) Mid-Devon Ltd - £4262

Cullompton, Tiverton & Districts

Providing food booster packs for the families of children who receive free school meals to supplement food vouchers

Age Concern Crediton - £259

Crediton & District

Purchase of PPE to enable support of and safety of older members of the community and staff/volunteers delivering shopping, prescriptions and a weekly hot meal

PLYMOUTH PIE CLUB CIC - £10,000

Throughout Plymouth City and surrounding areas

Provision of 2-course meals for older and vulnerable people, including those who usually access the park community cafes

Sound Gallery CIC - £3322

Exeter

Using music as a medium to provide mental wellbeing support to young people aged 16-23 living in supported accommodation

The Country Food Trust - £5000

County-wide

Sourcing food from countryside connections to distribute to local organisations providing meals and emergency food parcels

Soul Singers CIC - £554

Plymouth

Provision of remote singing sessions for mums with young children and new mums to help improve mental wellbeing

Torbay Community Development Trust - £9994

Torbay

Continuing staff costs to provide a community helpline for support and advice, linking to volunteers and signposting to appropriate support agencies; helpline open 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm

TRIP Community Transport Association - £5000

Honiton

Co-ordinating a range of services to support older and vulnerable members of the community, including emergency transport, befriending, shopping and hot meal deliveries

Friends & Families of Special Children - £4994

Plymouth and surrounding area

Provision of IT equipment to enable co-ordinated remote support, help and advice for families with children with disabilities or additional needs, many of whom are undergoing 12 weeks of shielding

Open Door Exmouth - £2000

Exmouth

Distributing emergency food and toiletry items and running a telephone helpline to provide advice, support and signposting to other available services



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