

8 September 2020

Hello everyone,

Welcome to the fortnightly 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 normally 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.





"Between a rock and a hard palce"

The Institute of Voluntary Action Research [Covid Briefings](#) continue to shine a (refreshingly brief) and direct light on how the crisis is affecting voluntary organisations of all shapes and sizes across the country. The most recent (there are now nine), '[Between a Rock and a Hard Place](#)', highlights the emotional toll on VCSE leaders, especially as time passes.

- There is considerable anxiety about staff welfare, after months of remote working, and little let-up in many people's workloads. It's becoming increasingly evident that the informal emotional support afforded by an in-person working environment is very difficult to maintain remotely, especially over extended periods.
- As lockdown eases in many places, and VCSE leaders are increasingly immersed in responding to changed landscapes, and planning for an uncertain future, the situation is becoming more complicated. Staff, volunteers, and service users all have differing appetites for reinstating usual working practices. Any return to face-to-face engagement brings with it a new administrative and potentially resource burden, and, as people are realising, face-to-face is often a long way from what people were used to pre-Covid.
- Organisations have responded to the challenges of returning to in-person working through being flexible about staff returning to face-to-face work, and through teaming up with other local organisations to ensure service users have balanced access to in-person opportunities.
- The briefings have shown how the emphasis has gradually but clearly shifted for leaders in terms of the urgency of forward planning versus the energy required to keep an emergency response on the rails. It's become essential for leaders to consider their organisations' future strategic priorities, with significantly changes financial positions in many cases. Alongside this is the recognition that a linear progression through emergency response to recovery and renewal, is unlikely to transpire.

Resultant messages for funders:

- As before, flexible, long-term funding, based on trust and mutual learning, is key. Funders are urged to revert as soon as possible to conventional funding cycles.
- There continues to be interest in collaborative working, and in finding a collective voice to share thoughts and experiences and to promote holistic solutions, and there is a clear sense that there is a role for funders in supporting this, either in facilitating for resourcing access to support, or in acting as a fulcrum for collective messaging.

Don't forget, these briefings are based on group conversations between VCSE leaders, convened by IVAR. Do join in – details on how to sign up are on the briefings web page.



Spotlight on ... Criminal Justice

The criminal justice system in the UK has been severely disrupted during the pandemic with courts closing, hearings being adjourned indefinitely, and a move to remote hearings where possible. There has been a prioritisation of cases based on impact and severity, meaning that whilst emergency cases and public safety are prioritised, other cases such as those involving harm to children have had to be postponed. Many people are left in a state of uncertainty as the outcome of their case, including those on remand awaiting trial. This situation is likely to continue for a sustained period as the courts are struggling to deal with the volume of the backlog whilst having to socially-distance in courts not designed for distancing.

The effect of isolation on mental health for those detained, or separated from their children, has been magnified with visits (including from legal representatives) having been stopped during lockdown, and social distancing rules in prison meaning extra-long periods locked into single cells, and formal education, arts and skills programmes halted. At the same time, those on bail must live with the uncertainty, and victims have a long wait for justice.

The good news is that human rights charity [Justice](#) has been testing whether technology can support virtual jury trials that are fair and enable effective participation. Another charity, the [Centre for Crime and Justice](#), notes a fall in the prison population during the pandemic (seemingly because of levels of recorded crime reducing during lockdown, the backlog in the hearing of cases, and automatic early releases), which has made it easier to control the virus spread within a prison environment. The Government has just announced an end to the early release scheme, and with the courts hearing more cases again, this may not continue. Nationally, the membership organisation [Clinks](#) supports, represents and advocates for the voluntary sector in the criminal justice system. It has a dedicated Covid webpage, and is working closely with government to ensure VCSE voices are heard at this time. It recently submitted evidence to the Women and Equalities Select Committee about the impact of Covid-19 on black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) people in the criminal justice system.

[The Prison Reform Trust](#) is also monitoring the situation in prisons closely, providing evidence to government committees, and, among other things, advocating for the rapid facilitation of video calls to enable contact between prisoners and their families.

[Pact](#) (Prison Advice and Care Trust), which supports prisoners and their families, has launched an emergency appeal to support their work with locked-down prisoners, and for those leaving prison, emerging into a changed world.

In Devon ...

Among other services, [Step One Charity](#) supports people in the criminal justice system in Devon to reintegrate into community. During lockdown it continued to offer tips on wellbeing.

[South West Community Chaplaincy](#) works with adults before prison release and continues through the first weeks of reintegration. Whilst prison visits were suspended, it sourced secure handsets so that people could keep in touch with their families.

The [YMCA Perspectives Project](#) exists to empower, educate and mentor young men caught up in the Criminal Justice System.

[bthechange](#) is a social enterprise based in Exeter which offers support, guidance and education to those who are at risk of breaching the law, first-offenders, or prisoners on release from custody.

[Peninsula Women's Alliance](#) has women's navigator outreach workers right across Devon. They are connected to women's centres and special women's services which includes collaboration with The Sunflower Women's Centre (Trevi House) in Plymouth, and Resilient Women (CoLab Exeter & North Devon). The workers understand the difficulties faced by women on probation, facing court, leaving prison or experiencing frequent 'brushes' with the Police. They have continued to run regular support sessions using a variety of remote media and digital systems throughout lockdown.

[Landworks](#), on the Dartington Estate, provides a supported route back into employment and community for those in prison or at risk of going to prison. Skills, crafts and gardening are all on offer.

[Julian House](#) runs a prison resettlement service across Devon and Torbay, including transitional housing support with a focus on developing independent living skills and into employment opportunities to reduce the risk of repeat homeless and re-offending.

[DCC's youth offending service](#) works in partnership to help young offenders or those at risk of offending, as well as support for victims, and offers of liaising for restorative justice.

[Storybook Dads](#) originated in Devon, with its headquarters now in HMP Channings Wood. Parents in prison all over the UK record messages and stories for their children or make gifts and crafts like calendars. Recordings are sent to the editing team of inmates in Channings Wood who are trained to use industry-standard software to produce special gifts for the children.

[Restore Support Network](#) has a regional office in Exeter. It provides personalised support for older people in prison prior to release, as well as for those with criminal convictions in the community who are over 50 with physical, mental health or social care needs. During the pandemic, in the South-West, it changed its usual service to one of providing a help line, run by those with lived experience, particularly useful for those on short sentences who are more at risk of Covid-19 due to health and age characteristics.

[Seetec](#) provides probation services across Devon, with some community payback groups running as well as employment advice and assistance, mental health support, drugs and alcohol rehab programmes, practical and social skills training.

DCF Funding Update



Coronavirus | 
Click for our help & support

Click to donate to the
Devon Coronavirus Response & Recovery Fund | 

Click to donate to the national appeal
#shouldertoshoulder #GiveLoveDevon | 

Buckfastleigh Community Development Project Trust - £3100

Buckfastleigh

Providing counselling services for young people attending youth club as they prepare to return to school and/or college and seek employment.

Tiverton Vineyard Church - £400

Tiverton

Mental Health First Aid training for staff to enable better support for Job Club attendees.

After many weeks of successful grant making that has concentrated on the people directly and immediately impacted by the virus, in June we began to turn our attention to the charities and groups themselves. It was clear, from direct conversation and our wider research, that some charities anticipated being highly impacted financially by the pandemic.

- Many big funding bodies, on whom some small groups and charities rely for income, closed or changed their usual grant-making activities throughout the lockdown months.
- Other in-house fundraising opportunities and events were unable to go ahead
- Charities faced increasing costs due to extra demand on and diversification of their services

DCF have been pleased to have been able to offer a reprieve from financial pressure for some local groups for a short time with our Core Cost Support Fund that launched in August. This fund offers groups a one-off grant that aims to mitigate their running costs for four months and enables them to cover expenses like rent, utility bills, insurance, salaries etc whilst they 'regroup'.

Unfortunately, our limited time and resources have not allowed us to make an open call for applications to this fund. We have however, made careful and deliberate considerations to help as many groups as we possibly can, as fairly as we can, starting with those that already have an established link to us. Invitations and applications to this fund are still in progress and will be ongoing until such time as the fund is spent.

So far the Core Cost Support Fund has distributed nearly £30,000:

Devon & Cornwall Refugee Support
Plymouth - £4,000

Balloons
East Devon - £4,000

Churches Housing Action Team
(CHAT) Mid-Devon Ltd
Mid Devon - £4,000

Young At Heart Club
Mid Devon - £2,500

Youth Arts & Health Trust
Exeter - £1,857

Home-Start Exeter and East Devon
East Devon - £4,000

BOUNCE! Brighter Futures Foundation
Mid Devon - £2,400

Torrington & District Men's Shed
Torridge - £500

Fotonow CIC
South Hams - £4,000

Significant Seams CIC
Mid Devon - £2,040