



COVID-19 and the Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) in Gloucestershire: A situation analysis

17th April 2020

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Executive Summary

This report collates the experiences of 58 VCS organisations in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, each of whom participated in an information gathering exercise during March and April 2020. All of these organisations work with vulnerable groups across Gloucestershire, including disabled people and people with mental challenges. They offer a variety of activities, services and support, and include organisations providing frontline services as well as specialist care (including palliative care). The report outlines the challenges experienced by these organisations as a result of the crisis, and the range of potential solutions that were identified. Case studies are given to highlight the nature of these challenges and adaptations being made.

The **challenges** experienced by the organisations fell into **three main groups**:

1. **Financial implications:** both in relation to **short-term challenges** and **long-term financial insecurity**. These ranged from losing income due to cancelling activities or closing services, developing online functionality, ceasing fundraising, uncertainty about delivering to grants from external funders, and covering staff costs.

Almost three-quarters of the organisations (72%) described **experiencing financial difficulties or requiring additional funding** to enable the continuation or expansion of their services. For **over half** (57%) of these organisations, the crisis presented an **existential threat to their current services** for which they were seeking financial assistance.

2. **Logistical implications:** logistical challenges were identified in both **continuing and adapting services**, including as a result of reductions in staffing capacity and due to an influx of new volunteers. A quarter of organisations (26%) reported operating with reduced levels of staff and volunteers.

Challenges also related to transitioning to online and telephone services, as well as use or maintenance of certain physical spaces. **Over half** (60%) of the 58 organisations were **already looking at developing online or telephone support**, either by expanding current services or creating new ones. Logistical challenges for individuals accessing support were also highlighted.

3. **Impacts for individuals:** Concerns were identified for the organisations' beneficiaries, particularly those which would result from **people being in isolation**. This included concerns about people becoming socially isolated, and being able to have their basic needs met (including due to logistical issues in accessing support). Concerns about the **mental health** of beneficiaries was a particularly **dominant theme**. The **impact for certain vulnerable groups**, including children and families, and those already experiencing financial difficulty, was highlighted. Concerns specifically relating to contracting the virus and about people's physical health were also raised.

In responding to the current crisis, a variety of **potential solutions** and **adaptations** were highlighted by the organisations (although these could cause additional financial or logistical challenges). This included



work already being done or which organisations are already planning to do, such as **developing programmes of practical support** or **finding innovative ways to continue existing services**.

Examples of organisations working collaboratively within and across sectors have emerged since the initial version of this report was produced. The report supplements information provided by the 58 organisations with details about an additional 36 services known about by Barnwood staff which are operating across the county to support people during the crisis.

The report outlines ideas suggested by respondents about **what would help to sustain their work** and **support the beneficiary groups** they work with. These ideas fell into **four key areas**:

1. **Financial support/donations for organisations**- both to support existing costs and to set up new services in response to the crisis (for example, to purchase technology)
2. **Financial support/donations for individuals**- including grants and loans to enable beneficiaries on low-incomes to buy food and essential supplies
3. **Collaboration with other VCS organisations**- to enable mutual support, avoid duplication, and share skills and assets (ranging from specialist advice about producing Easy Read information to arranging alternative use of empty venues)
4. **More information**- a need for accessible information about services to signpost beneficiaries towards, as well as clearer guidance available for organisations about government support and potential stop-gap funding

The report concludes with a series of **case studies** which illustrate the **interwoven nature of the challenges** being experienced by these organisations and the ways in which they are seeking to adapt in order to support vulnerable groups during the crisis.

Recently announced government funding of £750m for small and medium-sized charities will potentially be available to the organisations who participated in this information gathering exercise. However, the criteria and timescales for receiving government funding are yet to be determined, and it is likely that there will still be financial shortfalls given the anticipated loss of £4bn in the sector during the first 12 weeks of the crisis.¹ Several Gloucestershire VCS organisations supporting vulnerable groups across the county have launched **emergency appeals**, despite the recently announced funding.²

A **new collaboration of Gloucestershire Funders** has also been announced which seeks to help streamline the process for VCS organisations in the county looking to access local sources of funding. For more

¹ See: *Government funding for charities: An important start but more is needed* <https://blogs.ncvo.org.uk/2020/04/09/government-funding-for-charities-an-important-start-but-more-is-needed/>

² See: *Urgent appeal launched to help Hospice at Home service free up vital NHS beds in Gloucestershire* <https://www.gloucestershirelive.co.uk/news/health/urgent-appeal-launched-help-hospice-4016053>



information, please see: <https://www.barnwoodtrust.org/news/gloucestershire-funders-COVID19-response/>

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Introduction

Given the unprecedented situation we are all experiencing in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, Barnwood Trust has produced a situation analysis of VCS organisations in Gloucestershire. Over 340 organisations were contacted, initially via email, to find out:

- What support organisations needed as a result of the outbreak
- What challenges there were where organisations were operating
- What organisations were already doing to adapt and respond

There was also an offer to take part in a conference call with other organisations, chaired by Georgia Boon (Director of Partnerships) at Barnwood Trust. Two of these calls were held on Thursday 19th March 2020.

This is an updated version of an earlier report produced at the beginning of the crisis (dated 20th March 2020). The views of 39 organisations were captured in the original report, however, a total of 58 organisations have now responded to the request for information and their views are encompassed within this report. Fifty-one organisations responded by email and a further seven took part in the two conference calls. Six organisations contributed both by email *and* the conference calls.

The 58 organisations who responded operate across the county and support a range of groups including disabled people and people with mental health challenges, older people, vulnerable children and families, those in food poverty and people experiencing (or at risk of) domestic abuse. Although ostensibly a health crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic is creating (and exacerbating) crises which could disproportionately affect many of these groups^{3 4}. A more detailed breakdown of the organisations involved in this report can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

In order to gain a broader knowledge of the organisations involved in this situation analysis and of the other services responding to the COVID-19 crisis in the county, supplementary information has been gathered from a variety of sources, these are indicated as applicable.

In bringing all of these sources together, the Research Team at Barnwood Trust have identified **three key challenges and concerns** for organisations as a result of the outbreak:

- **Financial** implications for organisations (in both the short and long term)
- **Logistical** implications for organisations (including continuing and adapting services)

³ <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/human-rights-uk/coronavirus-effect-human-rights>

⁴ <https://www.jrf.org.uk/blog/covid-19-greater-health-risk-people-low-incomes-we-can-give-life-line>



- Concerns about **impacts for individuals** (including social isolation, mental and physical health and basic needs)

In addition, there were also a number of ways organisations said they were adapting and responding to the crisis as well as indications about the types of support that may be useful as the crisis continues.

This report, therefore, has been structured in the following way:

- **Section One** explores the challenges and concerns raised by the 58 organisations who took part in the situation analysis. These findings have been enhanced with additional information about the services these organisations provide, sourced through publicly available data, social media and the Charity Commission's website.
- **Section Two** highlights the ways organisations have been adapting and the potential solutions to limit the effects of the crisis for both the organisations themselves and the groups they support. The information in this section combines data from the situation analysis with supplementary intelligence gathered about 36 services in Gloucestershire (see [Appendix 2](#) for more detail). This intelligence has been gathered through existing connections within the wider Barnwood Trust team and publicly available information online and via social media.
- **Section Three** presents a series of case studies of organisations affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. These organisations all took part in the situation analysis and additional information sourced from websites and social media has also been included.

Due to the fast-paced nature of the situation, the variety of organisations involved and the challenges, concerns and solutions identified within this report are not necessarily representative of the VCS sector in Gloucestershire. This report is, however, intended to provide an outline of many of the immediate and long-term challenges and concerns that VCS organisations are facing as a consequence of the pandemic, as well as offering some insights into organisations' initial responses.



1. Organisational challenges and concerns

1.1 Financial implications for organisations

The **financial implications of the COVID-19 pandemic are stark and far-reaching**. Organisations large and small responded to say that they are **facing immediate financial challenges** as well as expressing **concerns about the long-term consequences of the outbreak**. In addition, organisations told us about the financial implications of adapting their services to be able to continue to reach those most in need, or to expand their services to support the civic response.

Almost **three-quarters of the organisations (72%)** who responded to Barnwood Trust described **experiencing financial difficulties or requiring additional funding** to enable the continuation or expansion of their services. Moreover, **over half (57%)** of these organisations indicated an **existential threat to their current services** for which they were seeking financial assistance.

Key Points in this Section

- Organisations are facing huge financial challenges in the short term and real financial insecurity in the long-term.
- 57% of organisations reported an existential threat to their current services and **Six organisations explicitly stated the survival of their organisation was threatened by the crisis**.
- The biggest financial challenges were linked to the **immediate cancellation of activities and the closure of services** that organisations were reliant on for their annual budgets. This was **exacerbated by uncertainties surrounding the crisis**, particularly the length of time services would be closed for.
- There was **uncertainty about the security of current and future grant-funding**.
- Where organisations were trying to adapt or develop online functionality, there were **challenges related to the costs of going digital**.
- Although organisations were clearly struggling financially, **many were looking to do their best to support their clients and even expanding their services to help people throughout the crisis**.

Immediate Funding Shortfalls

83% of the organisations who responded to Barnwood Trust to say they were experiencing financial challenges indicated that these related to immediate funding shortfalls as a consequence of the COVID-19 outbreak. The reasons for this included (**NB:** some organisations listed more than one reason):

	Frequency
Income shortfalls from closure of services and cancellations of activities	30
Staff costs*	13
Loss of income from donations	6
Uncertainties about external funding	5
Overhead Costs (rent, animal care, etc.)	4
Purchasing PPE	1

**Staff costs largely referred to routine paying of staff, however, one organisation indicated that everyone who delivers their services are self-employed and therefore are not currently earning anything whilst the service is closed. Similarly, one organisation said they had been forced to make redundancies.*

Organisations indicated that they were faced with **significant short-term challenges with potentially lasting consequences**. One organisation, for example, told us how they had financial reserves but did not want to use all of this up now as they wanted to be able to deliver particular projects in the future. Other organisations **wanted to protect their staff but were quickly running out of money to pay them**.

Within the two conference calls chaired by Barnwood Trust, a representative from the VCS Alliance and an arts organisation reported on the challenges they had been told about by the organisations they work with. They reiterated these findings that **organisations were struggling to survive**, would soon be unable to pay staff and that **income streams had dried up** because activities were unable to take place.

Long-Term Funding Shortfalls

Beyond the immediate effects of the crisis, organisations also reflected on the long-term financial implications of cancelling activities, not being able to fundraise and the general uncertainty surrounding everything currently.

Half of the organisations involved in this situation analysis discussed to some extent the long-term financial shortfalls they were facing. 86% of these organisations also had reported short-term challenges. The long-term threats included (**NB**: some organisations listed more than one challenge):

	Frequency
Disruption to funding streams (including, long-term effects of not being able to fundraise, disruption to assumed sources of income and a lack of reserves)	11
Uncertainty about funding and grants	7
The possibility of forced cuts to staff and/or services	5
A lack of room within budgets to make up the shortfall	4

Six organisations were explicit in suggesting that **the crisis posed a threat to their survival**. These organisations support individuals from a variety of vulnerable or marginalised groups including:

- Disabled children and their families;
- The BAME community;
- Individuals requiring hospice care and their families;
- Adults with learning disabilities; and
- Individuals experiencing mental health crises and suicide-bereaved families.

Two organisations told us how their **efforts to become self-sustaining was seen as a major contributor to their difficulties**. Rather than relying (solely) on grant-funding, these organisations had developed social enterprises and diversified their income sources. However, **the nature of the COVID-19 crisis meant that all of these income streams had ceased at the same time** and so the organisations were without any income. One said they would “probably be one of the first charities to go” without financial assistance.

The following table offers examples of the *nature* of the shortfalls organisations have discussed:

Organisation A	A shortfall of between £800 and £3,000 per client.
Organisation B	Assumed loss of £60,000 over the next three months – assuming no further grants are awarded during this time.
Organisation C	Immediate loss of more than £2,000 per week. 22% of income from seasonal activities that are not likely to be possible in 2020.
Organisation D	Immediate loss of £2,000 per week. A staff member has voluntarily reduced their hours. Potential annual loss of £200,000
Organisation E	Already experiencing financial difficulties. Worst-case is a shortfall of £100,000 in 2020-1.
Organisation F	Loss of at least £1,000 from delivery of services.
Organisation G	Potential closure of charity shops would have an enormous impact – accounts for £2million of income annually.
Organisation H	General costs at £50 per day
Organisations I	Potential loss of paying service-users would cost £60,000 per month. Cessation of fundraising events will cost £120,000 - £150,000 this financial year.

Organisation J	Forecasting a 75% reduction in service provision (March-September). A deficit of £92,000.
Organisation K	Forecast income loss of at least £400,000
Organisation L	Approximately £42,500 per month in staff costs and response services.
Organisation M	Up to £5,000 to ensure continuation of community services.

Within the conference calls held on 19th March 2020, there were specific references to two areas of uncertainty:

- a) Clarity on government advice and assistance
- b) External funders

In both calls reference was made to how organisations were unsure as to their eligibility for the government's economic interventions. For example, were charities regarded as small businesses and therefore able to claim a proportion of the relief grants, apply for the business-continuity loans or be able to access the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme in which staff can be furloughed and their wages (up to 80% or £2,500 per month) will be covered by HM Treasury?

In absence of any clarity, one organisation described the limitations of such interventions. Charities already do not have to pay business rates, so are not helped by their removal and many charities would not have the certainty of income or fundraising to be able to pay back any loans.

Indirectly, organisations were also unclear about the definition of *key workers* and the implications of the recently announced school closures on their staff. Clarity on this would have allowed them to know what activities they *could* still run and therefore, income they may still be able to generate or be losing.

Since the conference calls took place (19th March 2020), there has been some further clarity with regards to the definition of *key workers*. The latest information can be found [here](#). Alongside professions such as health and social care, public safety and security, education and food delivery, are workers 'delivering key public services'. These key public services are not, however, defined.



Moreover, on Monday 8th April 2020, Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak MP announced a £750million support package for UK charities⁵ in addition to the business interventions charities are already entitled to use. Of this £750million, £370million has been ring-fenced specifically for small charities and up to £200million will support hospices. Within the announcement, the Chancellor named disabled people, vulnerable children and people experiencing domestic abuse as specific groups that would be supported by this intervention alongside organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau. Moreover, the Government have committed to match-funding pound-for-pound, anything raised during the *BBC Big Night In* charity appeal (April 23rd) for the National Emergencies Trust (starting from at least £20million).

Whilst this appears to be an important intervention by the Government and may potentially provide a lifeline to some organisations including several of those featured in this report, **the VCS sector estimates there to be a £4billion black hole in funding over a 12 week period**. Therefore, this announcement may arguably be insufficient to save many organisations, however, it is an important first step⁶.

In the conference calls, organisations also felt there was **uncertainty regarding external funders**. Some discussed how their funders had shown immense flexibility and support, however, others noted a lack of communication about what funders were expecting and continued to request reports. One organisation had heard of a funder requesting their money back because the organisation was unable to fulfil their brief under the current circumstances.

Of the 58 organisations who responded to Barnwood Trust, **10 (17%) were seeking clarity from external funders**. It should be noted, however, that **several shared that their funders had been incredibly flexible**.

One organisation remarked how **the crisis had identified challenges with the funding models** within the voluntary and charitable sectors. Many organisations are reliant on short-term funding that restricts them to certain activities to which they must show immediate outcomes. Ultimately, they felt that the crisis has shown that such a model is unsustainable.

Again, there have been efforts since the original report was written to ease some of these challenges. Over the past fortnight, Barnwood Trust has been working alongside local and national funders to improve organisations' access to funding and reduce the need to write multiple application forms. This is part of Barnwood Trust's four point Keeping Strong strategy. Further information about support available for organisations can be found here: <https://www.barnwoodtrust.org/news/gloucestershire-funders-COVID19-response/>

⁵ Full details of the Chancellor's announcement is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/chancellor-of-the-exchequer-rishi-sunak-on-economic-support-for-the-charity-sector>

⁶ See NCVO statement: <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/about-us/media-centre/press-releases/2752-government-support-for-charities-ncvo-reaction>

Costs of Adapting Services

As can be seen below, many of the organisations involved in this exercise have sought to adapt their services to continue connecting with their beneficiaries and service-users. Nine organisations spoke about the financial challenges related to these adaptations. These included (**NB**: some organisations listed more than one financial challenge):

	Frequency
The cost of purchasing new technology	4
The cost of expanding or adapting existing technology	4
New costs associated with delivering their services (e.g. mileage to deliver food or providing childcare support to key workers).	3

Seven of these nine organisations had also spoken of the immediate financial impact they were facing.

Technology was evidently vital to organisations being able to continue some of their services. Such need was largely related to video conferencing technology and to support staff working from home, however, one organisation was also mindful of the limited access their service users might have and hoped to support them to purchase some of this technology to continue accessing, for example, home-schooling. Two organisations spoke of the cost associated with using more technology including **the cost of diverting phone lines and the expected increase in phone and communications bills.**

Aside from technological adaptations, organisations were also looking to adapt their offer to their local communities. Two of the three organisations who spoke of these challenges were aiming to deliver food to local residents. **One worked in a rural area and so required additional funding to reimburse volunteers for their mileage to deliver food to isolated communities,** the other required funding to purchase the shopping they hoped to deliver to their neighbours. The third organisation wanted to be able to support the key workers by offering to contribute to their childcare requirements.

Costs of Expanding Services

Eight organisations were responding to the crisis by expanding the services they offered, however, doing so required additional financial support. Six of these eight organisations were providing new services including:



- Offering something (as yet unspecified) to NHS workers;
- Expanding their offer to families;
- Distributing activity packs; and
- Delivering food and essential items.

Four of the eight organisations required additional staff (or additional funding to pay existing staff) to deliver their expanded offers.

[Case Study One](#) in Section Three of this report further illustrates some of the financial challenges VCS organisations reported facing.

1.2 Logistical implications for organisations

While many of the organisations we spoke to were mounting dynamic and innovative responses to the COVID-19 crisis, many also described facing a number of **novel logistical challenges** as the crisis began to unfold. Organisations have been getting to grips with **new technologies** and **new ways of working**, trying to work out how to continue looking after the **physical spaces** for which they're responsible, often with a **reduced staffing capacity** - or while trying to coordinate an influx of **new volunteers**.

Key points in this section

- A quarter (15) of the 58 organisations we spoke to were operating with a **reduced staff or volunteer capacity**, as staff or volunteers were either self-isolating or looking after children.
- Conversely, five organisations were either recruiting or being offered staff or volunteers, with attendant **challenges around coordination, training, and funding**.
- 60% of the organisations we spoke to were **developing or expanding service provision via telephone, video calls or online**. While many were doing so successfully, there were some logistical challenges associated with this, including limited organisational expertise and capacity, the necessity of purchasing equipment and undertaking training, and the added logistical complexities of organising multiple forms of service in order to serve clients with varying capacity and preferences.
- A few organisations responsible for **physical assets**, including venue spaces, allotments, equipment, and even livestock, were struggling with working out how to continue looking after them.

Concerns about volunteers and staff

The most common logistical challenges were around managing staff and volunteers.

Concerns fell into two broad groups:

1. Reduction in staffing / volunteer capacity



- Some organisations were reliant on staff and volunteers who are **in at-risk groups** and are therefore now self-isolating. One organisation worked with 300 volunteers, 90% of whom were over 65.
- As of 17th April, **a quarter (15) of the 58 organisations we spoke to told us that they were working with a reduced staff or volunteer capacity**, either due to staff members self-isolating, or staff members needing to care for their children following school closures. One organisation running a residential home noted (on 19th March) that there was uncertainty about whether their staff counted as ‘key workers’ whose children were entitled to remain in attendance at school (as noted in [‘Immediate funding shortfalls’](#) above, the government has since issued more guidance on this.)

2. Challenges related to **managing, coordinating and training volunteers and staff**

- Some organisations spoke about challenges with managing and coordinating **existing volunteers and staff**. These included no longer being able to provide food or activities for volunteers, volunteers and staff already being at maximum capacity, and struggles around coordination. There was a significant cross-over with the financial challenges outlined above, with several organisations worried about being able to continue paying staff. Two organisations whose services relied on self-employed professionals were worried about the impact of the loss of income for them. One organisation was employing frontline staff who would struggle to find work to do once frontline activities stopped.
- While a large number of organisations were struggling with reduced staffing and volunteer capacity, **five were recruiting (or were being offered) more volunteers**, which sometimes brought **challenges around coordination and training** - a couple of organisations described being ‘swamped’ or ‘inundated’ with offers of volunteers. One organisation was urgently looking into the need for new software to enable new volunteers to enter data and handle payments remotely. A rural organisation had new volunteers come forward to offer support with shopping and practical support, but were unsure they would be able to afford to pay the volunteers’ mileage costs, which would be especially high in a rural context.

Providing support services online or via telephone

Thirty-five of the organisations we spoke to talked about developing support services which could be **delivered online or via telephone**; some by expanding programmes they already had in place, but many by starting new services from scratch, sometimes in a matter of days. Many organisations were actively pursuing this and had useful ideas and expertise to share (see [‘What organisations are already doing’](#)), but a few were finding **logistical challenges** in doing so, including:

- **Lack of organisational expertise or familiarity** with relevant technology
- **Limited existing resources and infrastructure** to enable staff to work from home



- The necessity of providing **multiple forms of service** for people with different needs and preferences: as detailed further below, not all digital services are appropriate for everyone, so thought needs to be put into provision of multiple alternatives to ensure accessibility and take-up
- **Additional costs**
 - Purchasing new laptops or telephones to enable staff or volunteers to work remotely
 - Training staff and volunteers to use new technology, or to offer support remotely (one organisation which offered a counselling service noted that many of their counsellors needed to undergo additional training in order to be able to continue providing counselling remotely)
 - One organisation noted that this service was not currently included in the remit of their funded activities, so they'd potentially need permission from the funder.
 - Another organisation working primarily with people with visual impairments couldn't afford the additional cost of a diversion service on their telephone system, so was currently using a recorded message providing a mobile telephone number instead. They hadn't found that this was being used, and they worried that this is because their clients weren't able to write down the mobile telephone number provided.
 - There were additional challenges associated with the accessibility and universal suitability of this type of support; these are described in more detail [below](#).

One community-based organisation which was planning on mounting a volunteer neighbourhood support programme was facing logistical challenges of finding software which allowed their volunteers to log details remotely, and to manage money without exchanging cash.

Maintaining assets & spaces

A few organisations were facing logistical challenges around physical assets and spaces. Three organisations spoke about challenges around **keeping their spaces clean**, with two describing a shortage in cleaning products, and one a shortfall in funding which impacted their ability to pay their cleaner. Some urgently needed a **new space to offer continued services**; others were trying to work out how they would **maintain vegetable allotments** and gardens, or continue to **care for livestock** and animals. One expressed concern about the **future of the venues** they were using, which were charities themselves and facing uncertain financial prospects.

Specific logistical concerns associated with religious institutions

The Diocese identified a number of specific concerns which may well apply to other faith institutions. These included:

- How to continue safely providing chaplaincy services in hospitals
- How to prepare for an anticipated rise in number of funerals

- How to keep people safely connected in, for example, weddings and baptisms (these concerns were expressed before the government announced that events such as these would no longer be permitted).

Case Study Two in Section Three of this report further illustrates some of the logistical challenges VCS organisations reported experiencing.

1.3 Concerns about impact on individuals

This section looks at concerns expressed by the organisations about the beneficiary groups they support.

Key points in this section

- Concerns about the **effects of social distancing measures and social isolation** on beneficiaries, volunteers and staff; specifically concerns about the **impact on mental health** and difficulties in **meeting people's basic needs**. The impact for vulnerable people, and those already experiencing financial difficulty, was highlighted.
- Concerns regarding the **risk of contracting the virus to** beneficiaries', volunteers' and staff members' **physical health**

Impact of social isolation

Concerns about the **effects of social isolation** were widely expressed. Representatives of a number of the 58 organisations reported that the activities and opportunities they provide constitute the only social/face-to-face contact their beneficiaries have. One organisation, for example, reported that the activity they organise was often their beneficiaries' only regular commitment: time when they leave their homes and socialise. They believed that their beneficiaries would be extremely isolated during the coming weeks, as they are in the high-risk category. The representative of another organisation reported that their response to the crisis would focus on negating the effects of "even more social isolation" for the families they support. Concerns about the **impact of social distancing measures and increased social isolation on people's mental health**, and the **challenges of meeting people's basic needs** during this time, were key themes in the responses.

Specific concern about the impact on vulnerable children and families

A number of organisations reported being concerned about the impact of social isolation on vulnerable children and families. One respondent, for example, highlighted **particular risks for children living in complex family situations** where parents struggle to parent. The risk was seen as being especially high for children in families that do not have access to social services and who will now no longer be in school. The representative of another organisation reported concerns that **many families** in the area within which they work **would not be able to cope** with caring for their children full time at home during such a challenging period, due to mental health issues and deprivation. They highlighted the challenges of



suddenly needing to provide three nutritious meals a day and implement home learning and entertainment to keep children occupied.

Impact on mental health

A number of the organisations raised concerns that social isolation would cause a **deterioration in their beneficiaries' mental health**. **Exacerbation of anxiety and depression** was mentioned specifically. An organisation that provides mental health services anticipated increased demand over the coming months as the impact of isolation manifests and people with mental health challenges are triggered or relapse. Another organisation reported being very concerned about the impact of loneliness on the vulnerable and isolated people in the area within which it works. They also cited worries about people being 'forgotten' and were especially concerned about those with dementia. Representatives of other organisations identified possible negative impacts on the mental health of young people. One of the respondents highlighted that people who have a visual impairment often find it difficult to access **online and technological solutions**, so these **may not help combat the effects of social isolation for some people**.

The representative of one organisation reported that the "level of concern" was worrying and identified "public perception of the virus" and "panic" as challenges within Gloucestershire/the area within which they work. Another organisation specifically highlighted the link between physical activity and mental health, citing concerns about the impact of no longer being able to take part in physical activities on beneficiaries' mental health.

Concerns for the wellbeing of volunteers were also expressed widely. The representative of one organisation, for example, reported being very worried that their volunteers' mental health would deteriorate rapidly when they were no longer able to participate in the charity's activities. Echoing others' comments about beneficiaries, they stated that many of the organisation's volunteers live alone and these activities constitute their only regular contact with other people.

Concern about ability to meet people's basic needs

Food

Concerns about the availability of food were expressed by many of the organisations that responded to the request for information. **Foodbanks reported** expecting an **increase in demand** and highlighted the challenge of being able to meet this. For example, the representative of one organisation believed that supermarket restrictions on purchasing would lead to a **reduction in donations** and this, coupled with increased demand, would result in **imminent shortages**. Another organisation reported concerns around a lack of milk/baby formula and the ability to replace free school meals with donations. In a response provided at the end of March, an organisation also reported that a number of its members who have particular dietary requirements had been unable to acquire specialist food.

In addition to concerns about availability, **logistical issues related to accessing food** were also highlighted. Examples given were:

- parents being unable to go to their child's school to collect free school meals as the school is a long taxi ride away;



- families that are self isolating being unable to collect food from foodbanks;
- older people not wanting to go to the post office to collect their pension and buy supplies;
- those who were shopping for others no longer being able to do so, because it was necessary for them to self-isolate too.

An organisation that supports older people reported that more than half of the 52 calls they logged in one day (on 23rd March) were related to shopping, and this was an increasing trend. A foodbank reported that so many of its clients were self-isolating, or were not able to get to the foodbank, that they urgently needed for the first time to be able to deliver food.

Although the government has offered families whose children are entitled to free school meals supermarket vouchers whilst schools are closed, there have been reports of delays in the distribution of these vouchers, meaning that some of the poorest families may not be receiving the support they need⁷.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and cleaning products

Concerns about a **shortage of items required to help reduce the spread of the virus**, such as cleaning products and face masks, were also raised by several organisations. One organisation reported that they had ordered PPE, but nothing was available to them currently and they had not been given a date when they could expect to receive any. Another organisation, that stated that it provides care for the most vulnerable people in the community, reported a **lack of essential PPE** for clinical staff.

Money

The **financial implications** of the pandemic **for beneficiaries and staff** was a key concern. One organisation reported being acutely aware of parents who will be facing significant financial difficulties if their children cannot go to school for an extended period of time. Another organisation reported concerns about members of staff not being able to cover their living costs if they cannot work because projects cease. The **impact for families already on a low income** was highlighted, and one of the organisations anticipated needing additional resources going forward to provide advice about money.

Examples of **problems associated with accessing money** were also cited by an organisation that supports older people. This organisation reported that collecting pensions and paying bills was starting to become a significant issue for the people it supports. The difficulties people who are self-isolating face if they do not use online banking facilities, or they rely on receiving cash on a weekly basis, were highlighted.

⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/apr/09/uks-poorest-families-suffering-as-free-school-meal-vouchers-delayed>



Care and support

Two organisations raised **concerns about the reduction in availability of personal care and support** if care staff become ill or stop working.

Risk to physical health

The **impact of contracting the virus on beneficiaries', volunteers' and staff members' physical health** was identified as a key concern. Many of the organisations that responded to the request for information reported that they had, or planned to, cease all/most of their activity that involved face-to-face contact in order to reduce the risks. A number of the organisations reported that their **beneficiaries/clients** were **in the high risk category**, and several highlighted that **some of the most vulnerable people** (such as those who are homeless, or students who have EHCPs⁸) **may not be able to self-isolate**. In a response received in mid March, the representative of one organisation expressed concern that many of the groups they had spoken with recently, especially groups for older people, were continuing to run as normal.

Case Study Three in Section Three of this report further illustrates some of the key concerns VCS organisations expressed.

2. Organisational adaptations and potential solutions

While the COVID-19 crisis has created unprecedented challenges for the VCS sector and the people they support, many organisations are responding with remarkable speed and ingenuity. Many of the organisations who took part in the information gathering exercise - and many more which we're aware of from other sources - have adapted their programmes of work, or in some cases created brand new services, to continue supporting their clients - sometimes in a matter of days. Vehicles which were once used to take clients on day trips are now being used to deliver food; armies of volunteers are being recruited and trained; new equipment is being acquired to enable video calling and online support; staff are retraining and adapting to working from home.

There were also some clear calls from the organisations we spoke to about what they would need to be able to continue their work, both through the immediate crisis and in the longer term. Financial support was a key element, but there was also a keen appetite for collaboration and pooling of resources, and a recognition of the importance of clear information provision.

2.1 What organisations are already doing or planning to do

Here we are looking at what is already happening amongst VCS organisations in the county. Most of this information has been derived from the intelligence gathering exercise, which involved emails or telephone exchanges with 58 VCS organisations. There is also included here some supplementary information based on the pooled knowledge of Barnwood Trust staff, which covers a further 36 services

⁸ Education, Health and Care Plans



and organisations who did not take part in the intelligence gathering exercise. (More details about the types of services which are covered here can be found in the two [Appendices](#) to this report.)

Providing support services online or via telephone

Of the 58 organisations which we spoke to, **over half (35) were looking at providing support online or over the telephone**, either by expanding an existing service, or, more commonly, by creating a brand new service.

Ideas included:

- Using **video calling** software like **Skype** or **Zoom** to offer individual support or counselling, or to replicate or establish support groups and social groups. One organisation, for example, spoke about hosting 'virtual coffee mornings' for its clients.
- Offering a **telephone support service**, including making **proactive phone calls** to known clients who may not make the call themselves
- **Online forums** for people to get connected and provide mutual virtual companionship and support
- **Facebook:**
 - Using Facebook Live to **stream wellbeing events**
 - Setting up **new groups** to replicate support programmes
 - Using **existing groups** - including neighbourhood groups and Mutual Aid groups - to spread information and coordinate support

There were some **challenges to using technological forms of support**, including:

- **Logistical challenges** and **additional costs** for organisations who aren't yet set up to provide this support - costs included purchasing new devices and paying for staff training
- Digital services are **not accessible to everyone**, particularly to people with visual impairments and learning disabilities
- **Lack of familiarity** with online or digital tools, notably amongst older people
- **Discomfort using online or telephone alternatives:** one organisation which offered a counselling service noted that 40% of its existing clients opted to end their counselling sessions rather than continue over telephone or video calls
- Lack of universal **access to digital devices** like tablets, phones and laptops
- **Lack of knowledge** about the existence of certain forums or Facebook groups
- People living in **unsafe home situations**, for example in situations of domestic or partner abuse, may not be able to use telephone support services safely



- One organisation working with people for whom **English was often not their first language** noted specific challenges for people trying to access e-learning, and also noted that providing interpretation services over the phone, including during healthcare appointments, was much more challenging than in-person interpretation.

Because of these problems, there is a clear **need for alternative support provision which doesn't rely on technology**. Some solutions proposed included:

- Redeployment or recruitment of staff and volunteers to provide on-the-ground neighbourhood support
- Making proactive phone calls to people who may be unlikely to reach out themselves
- Beyond providing support services, a number of organisations also had ideas around developing ways for people to have fun and stay active, many of which did not rely on technology (see [‘Developing ways for people to have fun, stay active, and stay social’](#), below)

Examples of transitioning to online or telephone services were also evident in the supplementary information about 36 other sources of support known to Barnwood staff. **Nearly a third of these organisations (31%) had established or expanded digital channels** through which their clients could continue to reach them or be supported. There were examples both of transitioning existing support services, such as counselling or support groups, to digital formats via video calls, telephone services, or chatrooms; and also of using social media to develop and coordinate new programmes of support. Notable examples of the latter included the newly formed Mutual Aid groups, which provide a forum for local residents to coordinate volunteers to provide practical support, share information, and seek donations for essential supplies.

Developing programmes for practical support

Many organisations recognised the need for **increased practical support** for individuals who may be **self-isolating**, or likely to experience **financial hardship** as a result of losing work.

Almost half (28) of the 58 organisations we spoke to were either already providing, or exploring ways to provide, practical support of some kind. Many spoke of emergency support measures such as gathering and delivering packs of **emergency food and supplies** to people on low incomes, or providing **hot meals**, while some talked about coordinating programmes of **practical neighbourhood support** such as doing shopping for those who couldn't leave their homes. One organisation was planning on supporting adults with learning disabilities to learn how to shop for groceries online.

Some were planning on redirecting their existing resources (including staff, food preparation equipment, and transportation) to meet new needs in the community; others were recruiting volunteers, collaborating with other organisations, or gathering donations of money and supplies.



New national projects were also noted, including ‘Mutual Aid’ groups and the development of cards which community members are using to offer help to neighbours.

There were more details about this type of mutual neighbourhood support amongst the 36 additional services known to Barnwood staff. Staff recorded practical support offers including:

- Delivering prescriptions
- Walking dogs
- Taking in bins
- Calling ahead to check that planned appointments are still running so as not to risk making an unnecessary journey

Other examples of practical support were also evident in the supplementary information gathered about these 36 services. Over two-thirds of these services (69%) were offering practical support to some extent. Nearly three-quarters of these (72%) were offering practical support with food security by either providing food in foodbanks or by shopping on others’ behalf, or by distributing meals to those who are shielding or cannot afford food because of financial insecurity.

Developing ways for people to have fun, stay active, and stay social

Some of the key concerns which the 58 VCS organisations we spoke to had about their clients was that they sometimes provided the only source of fun, activity, or socialising which their clients had access to, and there were concerns that having nothing to do during the crisis would negatively impact people’s mental health and wellbeing. In response to that concern, there were some really creative ideas around making sure that people were still able to have **fun** and stay **active**. Ideas included:

- Holding **competitions, quizzes** and **activities**, including online fitness challenges or virtual coffee mornings
- Creating and posting out ‘**parcels of activities**’ for vulnerable families
- Sending ‘**creative boxes**’ to people who are self-isolating, with the idea that they could display their creations in their windows. (A product called ‘Art in a box’ was noted.)
- A mooted idea for coordinating **pen pals**, allowing children to write to other children or to isolated people

Generating and circulating information, advice, and signposting

There was a **clearly identified need** for both beneficiaries and organisations to have more access to information and advice. This was something with which **many of the 58 organisations were seeking more support** with. (See [‘Information’](#) under ‘What organisations think would help’ below.)

A few organisations had already established plans to gather and distribute information and advice. One organisation with a high level of expertise had created **Easy Read information sheets about self-isolation**.



Others were offering **signposting services** to clients, either individually or through online forums; providing **guidance to organisations** about managing volunteers; and working with other organisations to try to **establish clarity** about potential government financial support for charities. A council-led scheme was noted, creating an **online portal** for information.

Supplementary information gathered by Barnwood staff about an additional 36 services indicated that **a quarter of them were providing local residents with guidance** ranging from what the government was saying, to where to find different areas of support, how to cope with isolation and which shops were open and delivering in the local community.

Collaboration with other local organisations

In the earliest responses we received, there was a clear appetite for, and a recognition of the importance of, collaborating with other organisations, to ensure best use of collective resources and skills to respond to the crisis (more on this under [‘What organisations think would help’](#), below).

In responses received more recently, we have begun to see examples of successful collaborations emerging already, including:

- Organisations working directly with people in food poverty partnering with food providers, including foodbanks, community cafes, and food-providing charities, to ensure that their clients have access to food
- Organisations serving similar populations collaborating to pool resources
- An organisation working with older people collaborating with GP surgeries to ensure delivery of prescriptions
- An organisation working with younger people collaborating with the police to ensure immediate support is available for the most vulnerable young people

Social distancing measures

Even in the earliest stages of the intelligence-gathering process, much of which took place in the days before the lockdown measures had become regulatory rather than advisory, most of the organisations we spoke to were making considerable **amendments to their normal programmes of work** in order to comply with social distancing advice, sometimes specifically to **protect the vulnerable people** they were working with (generally older people and people with particular types of impairment).

As well as transitioning many support services **away from face-to-face provision**, organisations were **closing clubs, activities, and in some cases entire programmes**. Some were asking **staff to work from home**, or, where activities were continuing, to take additional precautions around **hand hygiene** and maintaining **physical distance**.

One organisation which worked with a large number of young people, many of whom have complex health needs and some of whom were resident on-site, had taken extensive measures to protect those they worked with. All **external visitors had been barred** from the site, and residents are taking part in activities



in **small groups with particular assigned members of staff**. Plans were being made to find a new **separate site to enable continued activities with non-resident** clients.

Financial mitigation measures

As described in [‘Financial implications for organisations’](#) above, the financial impact of the crisis on many of the 58 organisations we spoke to has been considerable. As noted above, as of 8th April the government announced some limited funding for charitable activities, although it’s too early at this stage to know the extent of the impact that this will have. Speaking primarily before those announcements were made, several organisations spoke about the ways in which they were trying to mitigate the immediate impact on their financial situation.

One organisation spoke about having already had to **make redundancies** as they’d been forced to close existing services, and another spoke about staff **voluntarily reducing their hours**. Others were contemplating having to make redundancies, and seeking ways to avoid that wherever possible. A couple of those organisations who spoke to us after the government announced the **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme** told us that they were hoping to apply for grants to cover some staff costs, although one noted that this was unlikely to be suitable for them as they would need to retain all staff on active duty in order to be able to respond to clients’ needs.

A few were also **continuing to raise income**, primarily through **hiring out venues** to support the emergency response. More commonly, organisations were **appealing to the public and funders for donations**, either to keep their running costs going, or to fund new emergency support programmes.

Continuing existing services

Of the 39 organisations we’d spoken to as of 20th March, only five spoke about carrying on with their activities as normal, with **all but one expecting that these would soon either have to cease or face additional challenges**.

At that time, these services included:

- Coordinating volunteers and volunteer groups carrying on as normal (albeit with social distancing measures), but expecting that to have to end imminently
- Workshops for small groups, for as long as tutors are well
- A Men’s Shed continuing its activities (an important source of income)
- A specialist support service for deaf people continuing some normal services, neither of which involved face-to-face contact: a remote interpreting service and a postal service.
- A foodbank which was currently operating as normal but which anticipated high levels of demand and low levels of donations imminently (higher demand from individuals and other support agencies; lower level of donations due to supermarket restrictions on multiple purchases)

None of the organisations who we spoke to after 20th March were attempting to carry on as they had before, with the exception of foodbanks, who were continuing to provide services albeit under significant



stress. One foodbank we spoke to on 27th March was seeking urgent funding for transportation so that it might provide, for the first time, a delivery service to clients who were not able to travel to them.

Similarly, amongst the 36 additional services known to Barnwood Trust staff, a small number were attempting to some extent to continue business as usual. These included organisations for whom working with communities and community groups was their everyday work, but also those whose clients relied on the essential services they already provided, including, for example, maintenance of specialist smoke alarms for deaf people and people with hearing impairments.

2.2 What organisations think would help

Financial support / donations for organisations

As detailed in [‘Financial Implications for Organisations’](#) above, many of the organisations we spoke to were experiencing sometimes significant financial challenges. Some identified needs included:

- Funding to **replace lost income**, and support **core running costs**, both in the immediate term and in the longer term,
- Commissioning / funding to allow them to **set up new services**, including by purchasing new **technological equipment** such as laptops and phones, increased costs associated with new or extended **staff and volunteer hours**, and **transport costs** to enable services to be provided directly to clients in the community.
- Donations or financing of basic supplies, including **food** to provide hot meals or deliver emergency supplies to clients, **cleaning products**, **alcohol gel**, and **personal protective equipment** for staff

Financial support / donations for individuals

As described above in [‘Concerns about impact on individuals’](#), a number of organisations noted that many of their clients were likely to experience considerable financial hardship during the crisis. They identified some specific areas where direct financial support to individuals would be useful, including:

- **Grants or loans** to people on low incomes to buy **food and essential supplies**. Provision of **shop vouchers** or **cash grants** was suggested.
 - Direct provision of food, or the means to buy it, was considered especially important as those organisations which typically provide this type of support were likely to be unable to meet demand - as described above, foodbanks expected both a higher demand coupled with a reduction in donations and volunteer capacity, and were not in any case suitable for those who are self-isolating (although one foodbank did note that it was urgently seeking funding for vehicle hire in order to be able to deliver food for the first time). It was also noted that school closures and the loss of free school meals was creating problems for families who used to rely on them.

- **Vouchers for utility meters**, or cash grants to support basic household costs
- **Grants for laptops / tablets** for low-income families, to support e-learning (these would arguably be beneficial for other groups of individuals supported by VCS organisations, to enable access to e-support and facilitate social connection)

Collaboration with other CVS organisations: Mutual logistical support, collective pressure on funders, sharing skills & assets

As noted above in [‘What organisations are already doing’](#), we have already begun to see examples of organisations working together to maximise resources and expertise. This is encouraging, as there was a clear desire amongst organisations in the earlier stages of the intelligence-gathering process to undertake such collaboration. Anticipated benefits included:

1. General collaboration:

- **Infrastructure** for collaboration needed - one suggestion is to continue with regular **conference calls**; and the **Community Resilience Command Centre** that is being launched by local authorities was also noted, although with the need to consider how it might be jointly held by community organisations as well.
- Benefits: **avoiding duplication, sharing expertise, resources and infrastructure**
- As well as collaboration between VCS organisations, collaboration with **businesses and community** was also considered valuable

2. To generate **collective pressure on funders and commissioners**, seeking:

- **Emergency funding** available immediately
- **Flexible support**, particularly around targets & deliverables which may have been set before the crisis hit
- Guarantee **not to seek to recoup funds** already donated (a couple of organisations reported having already been asked for money back)

3. To **swap skills and assets**

i) On offer:

- **Personnel**
 - SEN trained frontline support staff on payroll who aren’t able to carry out normal activities
 - Diocese have a network of staff and volunteers who could provide help in a non-digital way (for those without digital access) i.e. redeploy in some way. They can potentially link people across the county, including linking people in distress to the right places.
- **Venues & space** (eg potentially Hawkwood; Overton House)



- **Specialist advice** / support according to organisation (Easy Read; physical activity etc)

ii) Seeking:

- **Administrative support:**
 - Higher than usual volume of emails / calls
 - Infrastructure
 - Management, in case management staff become unwell
- **IT support:** setting up software to allow volunteers to enter info into a database remotely via an app; also software to allow volunteers to collect money without handling cash
- **Venues & space**

Information

Again, as noted above, many organisations were already prioritising information gathering and circulation as part of their response to the crisis - although there was also a clearly expressed need for further information provision, both for individuals and for organisations.

1. Information wanted to provide to **individuals**

- Places to **signpost** people:
 - Other organisations providing support
 - Referral of adults in distress
- Information about available **financial support**, including access to emergency grants and changes to the benefits system
- Details of any contingency plans for the provision of Adult **Social Care**, including the Safeguarding Help Desk
- Information targeted particularly for the most vulnerable people, especially including isolated or older people who may not have access to other sources of information
- Easy Read information

A suggestion of a jointly held call-centre for individuals to call in to for advice & support (although challenge around accessibility)

2. Information needed for **organisations**

- Sources of **stop-gap funding for organisations**



- Clarity on relevant **government policies** (this was particularly of concern amongst those organisations who we spoke to in the earlier stages of the intelligence-gathering exercise; latterly, a little more clarity has emerged as further announcements have been made and the details of various policies worked out, although some uncertainty remains):
 - Do VCS organisations count as ‘small businesses’ who may be eligible for the then recently announced package of emergency loans?
 - If schools are being asked to stay open for vulnerable children, should organisations providing activities such as short breaks also be continuing to offer these?
 - Who counts as a ‘vulnerable child’?

3. Case Studies

The following case studies of VCS organisations in Gloucestershire illustrate some of the challenges the organisations that participated in the information gathering exercise reported facing, as well as the key concerns they expressed and their responses to the COVID-19 crisis.

Case Study One: Illustration of financial challenges

Organisation 1 is a hospice which provides practical and emotional support for **adults living with life-limiting illnesses**, as well as carers, families and the recently bereaved.

This support includes:

- Day services, such as counselling, complementary therapy, and benefits guidance
- Workshops and support groups at community venues, including on wellbeing and managing symptoms
- Hospice at home service for people who wish to die at home

Over 85% of the organisation’s funding is through donations and fundraising (including fundraising events and charity shops).

The **hospice centre itself has now closed** and the organisation are seeking to **adapt their day services** to provide support online. **Hospice at Home care is continuing.**

Concerns identified by the organisation include:



- **Severe short-term cash shortfalls** and **long-term financial insecurity** due to closure of charity shops and cancellation of fundraising events
- Self-isolation of staff (particularly clinical staff) will **require hiring additional staff** but **without resources** to fund this
- Lack of essential PPE to enable clinical staff to care for people in the community
- The impact of **extended social isolation** for vulnerable individuals supported by the hospice, many of whom already have fragile mental health

They identified that it would be helpful to have a directory of resources in the community to support patients and carers including, for example, home delivery services and telephone befriending.

The organisation has now begun an **emergency appeal** for donations.

Case Study Two: Illustration of logistical challenges

Organisation 2 is based in an urban area in one of the most deprived wards of Gloucestershire. The organisation provides a range of activities available to the whole local community, especially young people and families. For many individuals they support they are the only source of face-to-face contact for that individual.

Activities and facilities provided by the organisation include, but are not limited to:

- Arts and crafts groups/equipment
- BME carers group and various parents' groups
- Coffee shop and cookery classes
- English classes
- Sports groups/equipment
- Trips and events

Funding is derived from a range of sources including donations, income from venue hire and fundraisers, as well as grants.

The organisation is seeking to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic by adapting their services to support those who need them most (e.g. by delivering food parcels).

In the wake of the crisis, the organisation is facing financial and logistical challenges both in seeking to maintain current services and to adapt to provide new ways to support residents. These include:

- Inability to pay staff, many of whom are already on low incomes due to working part-time, being the sole earner in their household, or due to benefits entitlement
- Cost of adapting services (e.g. paying volunteers' mileage to deliver shopping and webcasting instead of meeting face-to-face)
- Some staff are at high-risk of contracting the virus
- Lack of additional capacity amongst existing volunteers
- Major long-term financial implications if the organisation continues for any length of time



- Need for ongoing daily maintenance of community spaces even if activities have ceased (including due to presence of livestock)

A key concern is further social isolation for the individuals they support.

Case Study Three: Illustration of concern about the impact of social isolation on individuals

Organisation 3 is based in a very **rural area** of Gloucestershire and provides support to **local people with sensory impairments**. The area is not otherwise well-served for local provision of this type of support.

The organisation provides a combination of emotional and practical support, including:

- Emotional support
- Social groups
- Advocacy
- Information and advice
- Assessments at home & work
- Equipment and training

They are a charitable organisation funded through a combination of grants from funders, donations, and income from their charity shop.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the organisation have **closed their offices and their group activities**. Their primary concern is that the people they see will **become isolated**, particularly those who live alone. They hope to adapt their face-to-face buddying scheme to provide telephone support instead.

They are also grappling with a number of **financial** and **logistical** challenges.

- **Financially**, there has been both a **reduction in income** and an **increase in costs**
 - Income usually derived from their **charity shop** and from **paying service users** has immediately ended
 - Additional costs are arising from attempting to **divert their phone line** (this was so expensive that they were unable to do so), and in **paying mileage to new volunteers**, which could be especially expensive in a rural area.



- As of 18th March, there was considerable concern about the lack of clarity from the government about whether charities were eligible for grants schemes made available to small businesses.
 - **Overhead costs** such as rent and staff wages continue.
 - They hold some financial reserves but anticipate needing to use those on important services once they are able to reopen, and are reluctant to use them on core running costs.
- **Logistically**, there are challenges associated with:
 - **Diverting their phone line**: Unable to afford diversion, they have left an answerphone message with a mobile number – but they are concerned that clients with visual impairments would be unable to write down the new number to call.
 - **Coordinating new volunteers** who have approached them to offer a shopping / support service.

Appendix 1: More about the 58 organisations who responded to the intelligence gathering process

Below is additional information about the 58 organisations involved in the situation analysis. This information was sourced either from the responses of the organisations themselves or through publicly available sources including the organisations' websites and the Charity Commission.

Beneficiary Groups

The 58 organisations deliver numerous services including:

- Counselling and mental health support
- Supporting suicide-bereaved families, carers and the families of disabled people
- Provide services and social care to older people, disabled people and vulnerable individuals
- Running accessible activities that everyone can enjoy
- Distributing food to vulnerable families and individuals
- Provide vital support for those who have experienced domestic abuse
- Providing support for those living with addictions
- Support those requiring palliative care and their families
- Encourage families and individuals to participate in the arts and the benefits it can bring to wellbeing and mental health.

Such services support (and are relied upon by) a wide range of vulnerable groups across Gloucestershire such as: disabled people and people with mental health challenges, older people, vulnerable children and families, those in food poverty and people experiencing (or at risk of) domestic abuse. Although ostensibly a health crisis, the Coronavirus pandemic is creating and (and exacerbating) crises which could disproportionately affect many of these groups⁹. Equally, there may be individuals increasingly finding themselves within these groups as a consequence of these impacts, finding themselves in food poverty or experiencing mental health challenges for example.

The table below shows the range of groups the 58 organisations support. Broad headings are broken down where appropriate (**NB**: some organisations support more than one beneficiary group):

	Frequency
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⁹ <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/human-rights-uk/coronavirus-effect-human-rights>

Disabled people and people with mental health challenges*	24
(Vulnerable) children, young people and families	22
No specific beneficiary group - community level (supporting people within local communities)	11
No specific beneficiary group - countywide (supporting people across the county)	9
Older people	6
People experiencing (or at risk of) domestic abuse	3
People in food poverty	2
Local organisations (organisations which support other organisations rather than specific groups of people).	2
Asylum seekers and refugees	1

**Of the organisations supporting disabled people and people with mental health challenges:*

- *Nine support people with mental health challenges*
- *Eight support disabled people generally*
- *Two support people with learning difficulties specifically*
- *Two support people with sensory impairments specifically*
- *Two provide palliative care for people with life-limiting illnesses*
- *One supports people with a particular health condition.*

Operating Areas

The majority of the organisations who responded to the email from Barnwood Trust operated across the county (59%). The following table shows the operating areas of the organisations where this was known.

	Frequency
Countywide	34
District	14
Hyperlocal (within a specific community or place)	11
Unclear	4

Of those who operated at a district level, nine are in rural areas and five in urban. All six districts are represented to some extent, in particular the Forest of Dean and Gloucester City. However, of those who operated at a hyperlocal level, seven are in urban areas and four in rural. Again, many of these are in Gloucester City. Further information may be required from areas of the Cotswold district and Tewkesbury Borough to better represent the situation in these more rural parts of the county.

Organisational Funding

Two-thirds of the organisations we spoke to appeared to be funded through multiple sources of income. The majority (60%) received at least part of their funding through fundraising, public donations or legacy contributions. Activity-related income and grants, funding and commissions from external organisations also contributed to around half of the 58 organisations involved in this work. The following table shows how the 58 organisations were funded based on responses, as well as additional research to gather publicly available information about the organisations' funding from their websites by the Barnwood Trust Research Team:

	Frequency
Fundraising, public donations and legacy contributions	35

Income from activities	28
External grants, funding and commissions	28
Income from shops and social enterprises	10
Income from investments	3
Income from corporate sources and sponsorship	2
Unclear	8

This information is particularly crucial when looking at the financial challenges organisations are facing as a consequence of the Coronavirus pandemic. Many of the organisations rely upon income from activities, public donations and shops and social enterprises which may not be able to operate with the restrictions that are in place, and the economic impacts being felt by individuals across the county, and indeed nationally.

Appendix 2: More about the 36 additional services known to Barnwood staff

In addition to the 58 organisations who participated in the research intelligence gathering exercise, the wider Barnwood Trust staff have separately compiled information about 63 service providers and organisations, 44 of which were operating locally, and 36 of which had not already participated in the intelligence-gathering exercise. The information gathered about these 36 local services has been used to supplement the information compiled above about [‘What organisations are already doing’](#).

The 36 additional services compiled by Barnwood staff include both those provided by VCS organisations in response to the crisis, as well as newly-formed ‘Mutual Aid’ groups, schools and statutory providers (such as Gloucestershire County Council’s Help Hub).

Below is a breakdown of the types of services offered:

	Frequency
Food security (including foodbanks and food distribution services)	16
General community groups and support	12
Financial support	3
Mental health support	3
Carers support	2

Some of these services operated countywide, a few operated nationwide, but most were focussed on local areas. We have more information about services operating in some areas than others - notably, there are 15 services listed in Gloucester, but only five in Cirencester - so it is unlikely that this represents the full picture of VCS service provision across the county.