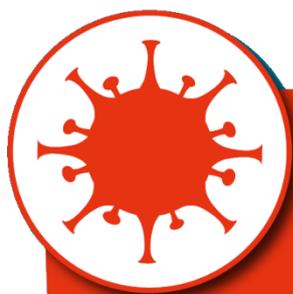




Report on the Impact of Covid-19 on the Voluntary and Community Sector

June 2020



Coronavirus

COVID-19

Communities 1st CVS update

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Introduction

The aim of this survey is to report on the state of the sector into the fourth month of the Covid-19 pandemic, as organisations and their members are feeling the impact of lockdown and its effects, and as they begin to consider recovery.

This survey of voluntary and community sector organisations was carried out over three weeks in May and June 2020. It follows our first survey which was carried out in March and April 2020.

The results of the survey will be fed back to key stakeholders and used to inform the work of Communities 1st and Welwyn Hatfield CVS so that we can target our support where it is needed most.

The response to the survey was very positive; with the support of volunteers we received 113 responses from organisations working in Hertsmere, St Albans, Welwyn Hatfield and the surrounding districts.

Please note, occasionally the responses add up to less than 113 because the respondent didn't answer a question.

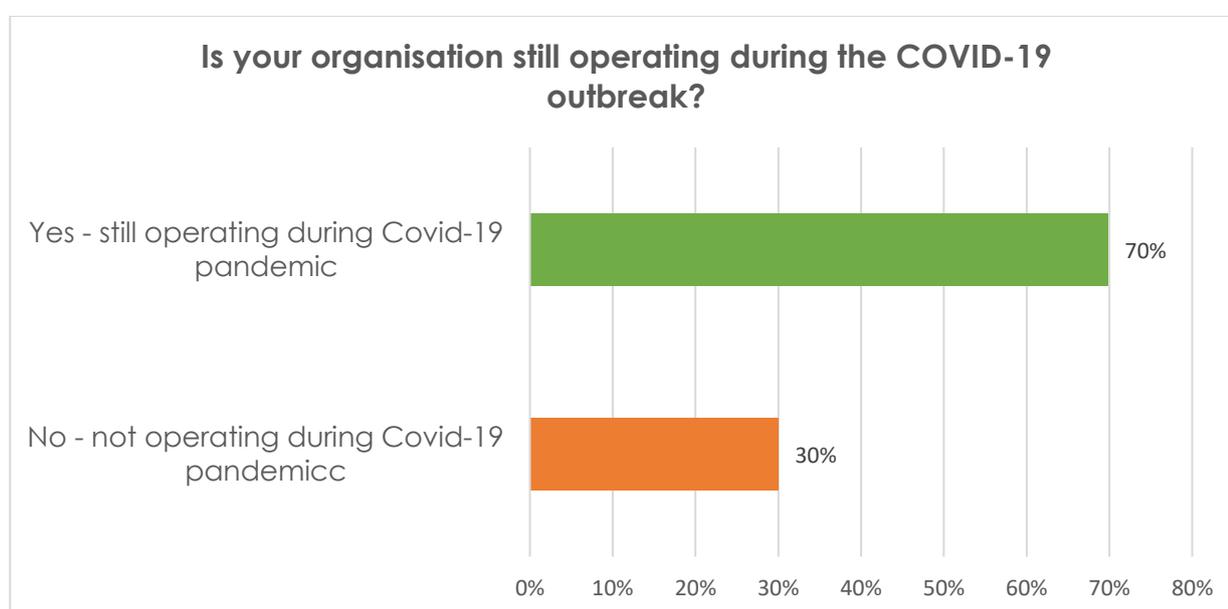
The responses to this survey illustrate the scale of the impact of Covid-19 on the voluntary and community sector. As expected, the most pressing need is funding, but it is clear that for many organisations the pandemic has impacted on all areas of their work, including staffing, volunteers and their ability to offer services.

ORGANISATIONAL IMPACT

The responses to this survey illustrate the scale of the impact of Covid-19 on the voluntary and community sector. We received 113 responses to this survey.

Many of the closed organisations work with members who do not have the IT skills or equipment to engage remotely with an adapted service.

Most of the closed organisations reported that they are contacting their members regularly to check on their wellbeing.

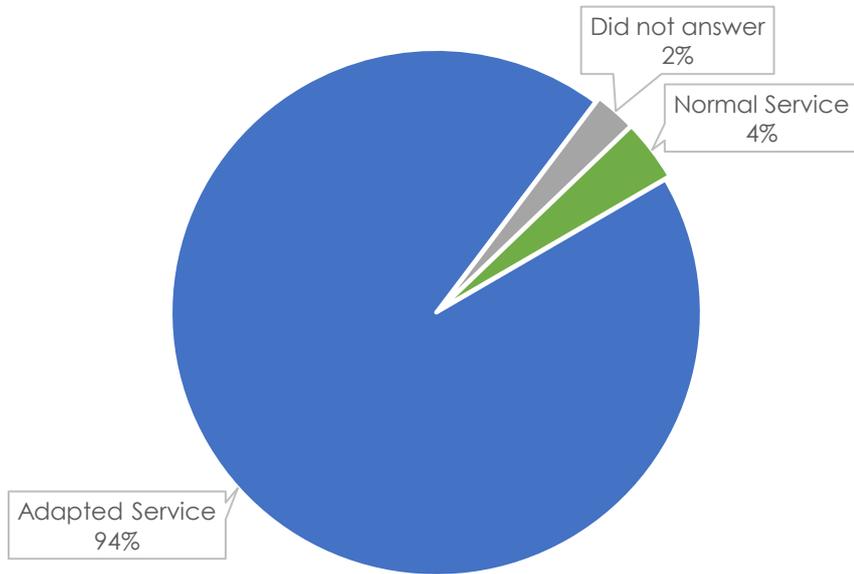


Of the organisations that are closed, the reasons listed include

- Inability of clients to socially distance
- Centre we work in is closed
- Volunteers are classed as vulnerable, so cannot operate
- Members are vulnerable, so cannot operate
- The core activity, e.g. sport, cannot take place

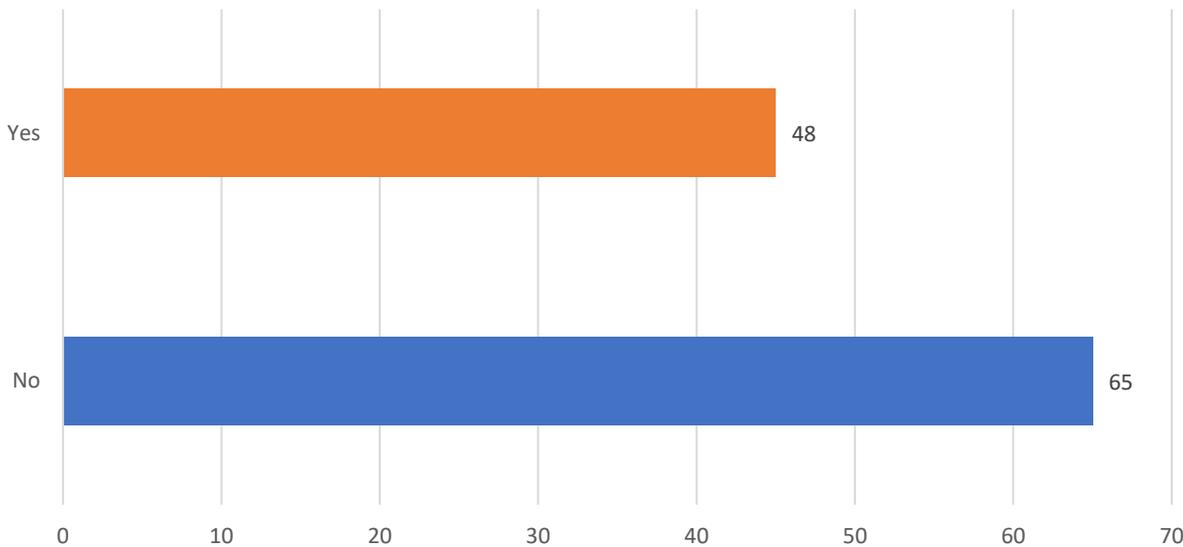
Of those organisations (79) still operating, 74 (94%), have adapted their services to take into account social distancing guidelines and other limitations imposed by lockdown. Examples reported include offering telephone befriending, offering a service by Zoom and providing online information or activities.

If yes, is your organisation operating a normal service or have you adapted to meet the current needs of your user group or community?



43% of organisations are experiencing an increased demand for their services.

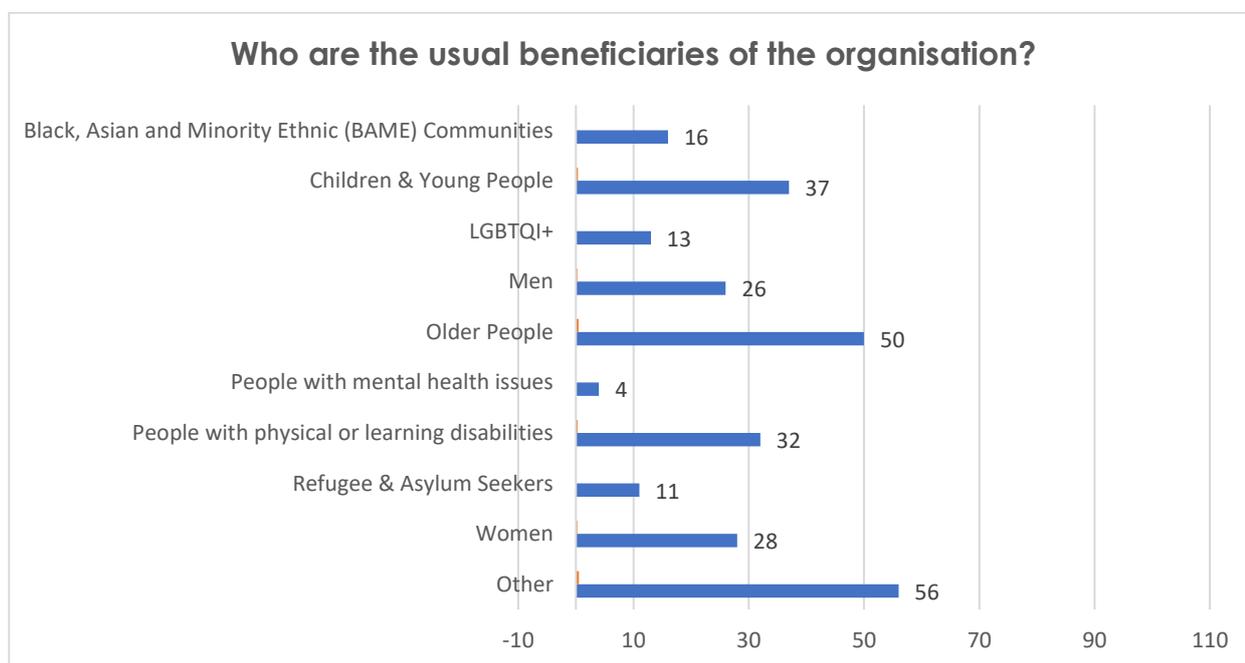
Is there increased demand for your organisation's service as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic?



IMPACT ON BENEFICIARIES

This section looks at the impact of the pandemic on organisation's beneficiaries and considers if and how organisations have adapted to meet their new needs.

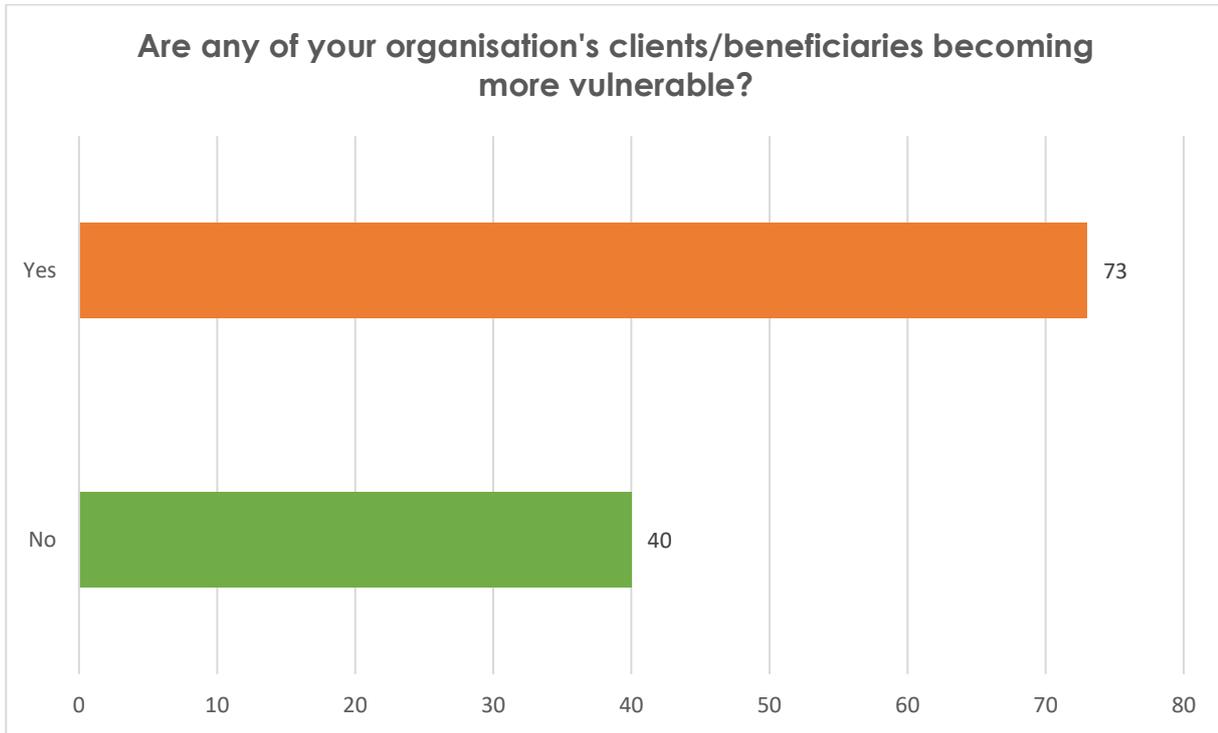
Organisations surveyed support a range of different beneficiaries, the most common single group is older people.



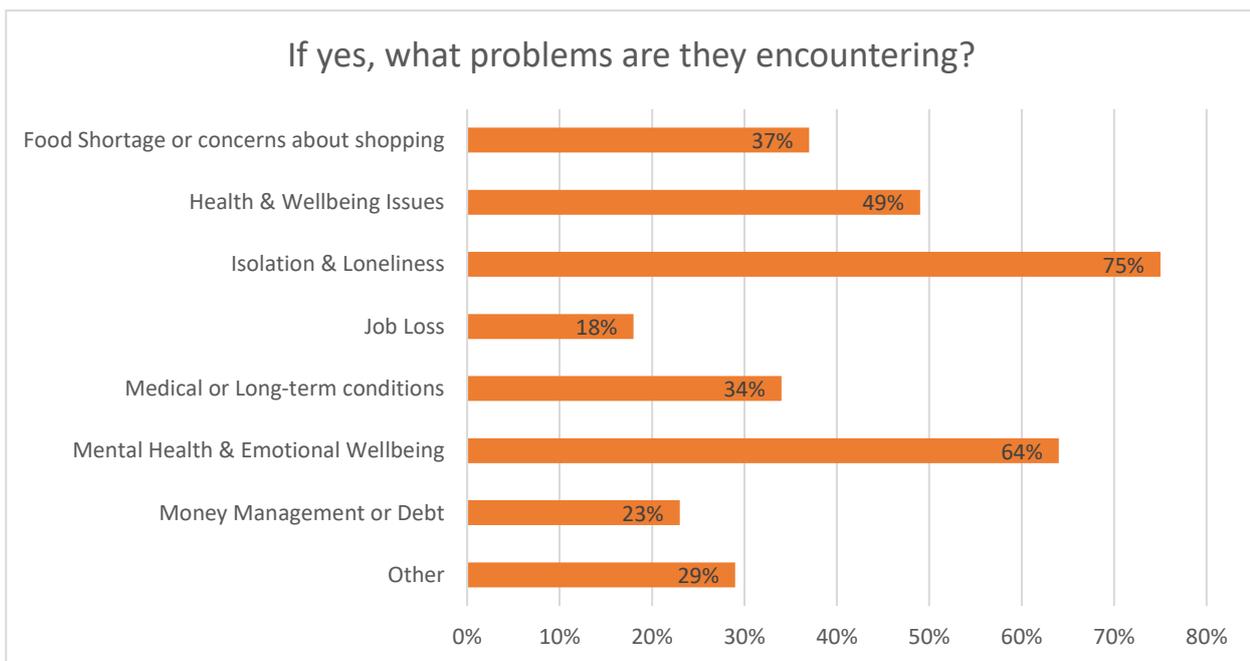
'Other' beneficiaries listed include

- Vulnerable people
- Disadvantaged people

65% reported that their beneficiaries/ members are becoming more vulnerable and most of these are experiencing several of the vulnerabilities listed below.

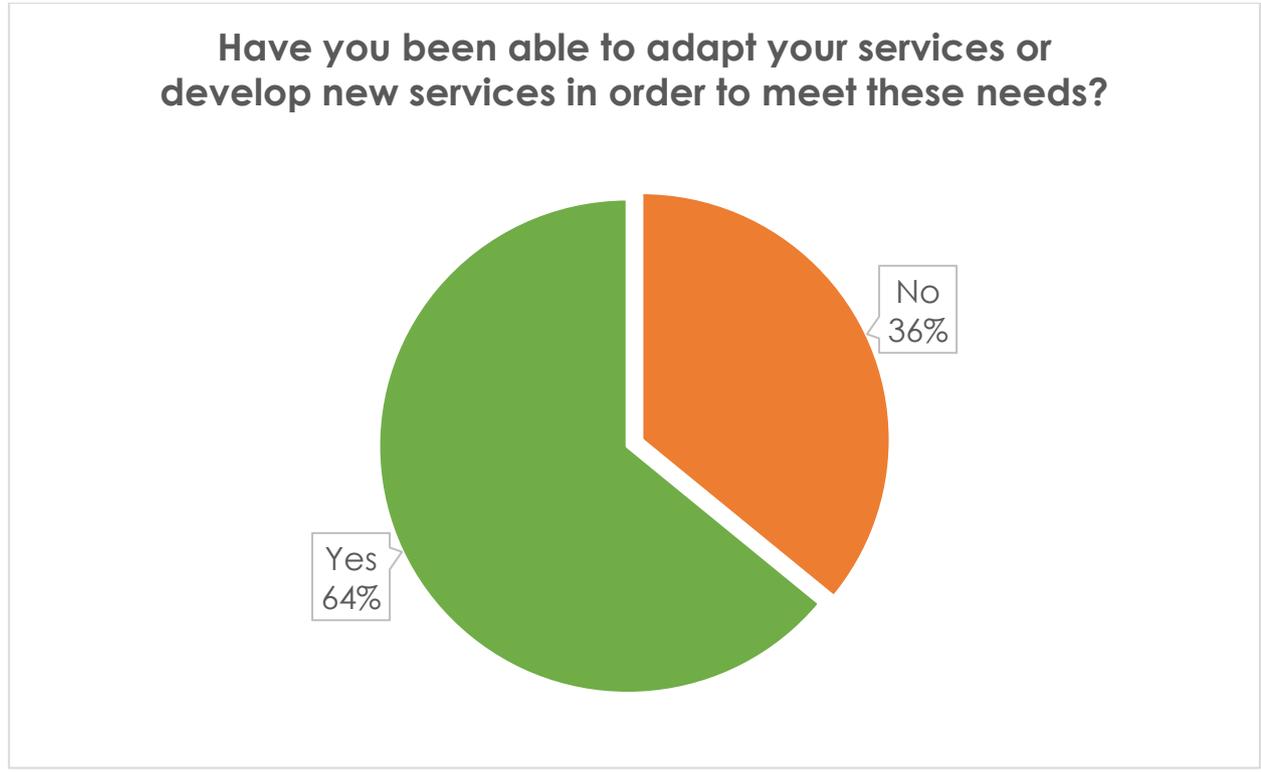


The most common issues reported are increased isolation and loneliness and deteriorating mental health and emotional wellbeing as a result of the pandemic.



72 organisations are offering new or adapted services to meet these needs. Examples cited included telephone befriending, Zoom meet ups and keeping in regular telephone contact.

34 organisations that have not been able to adapt their services are closed currently.



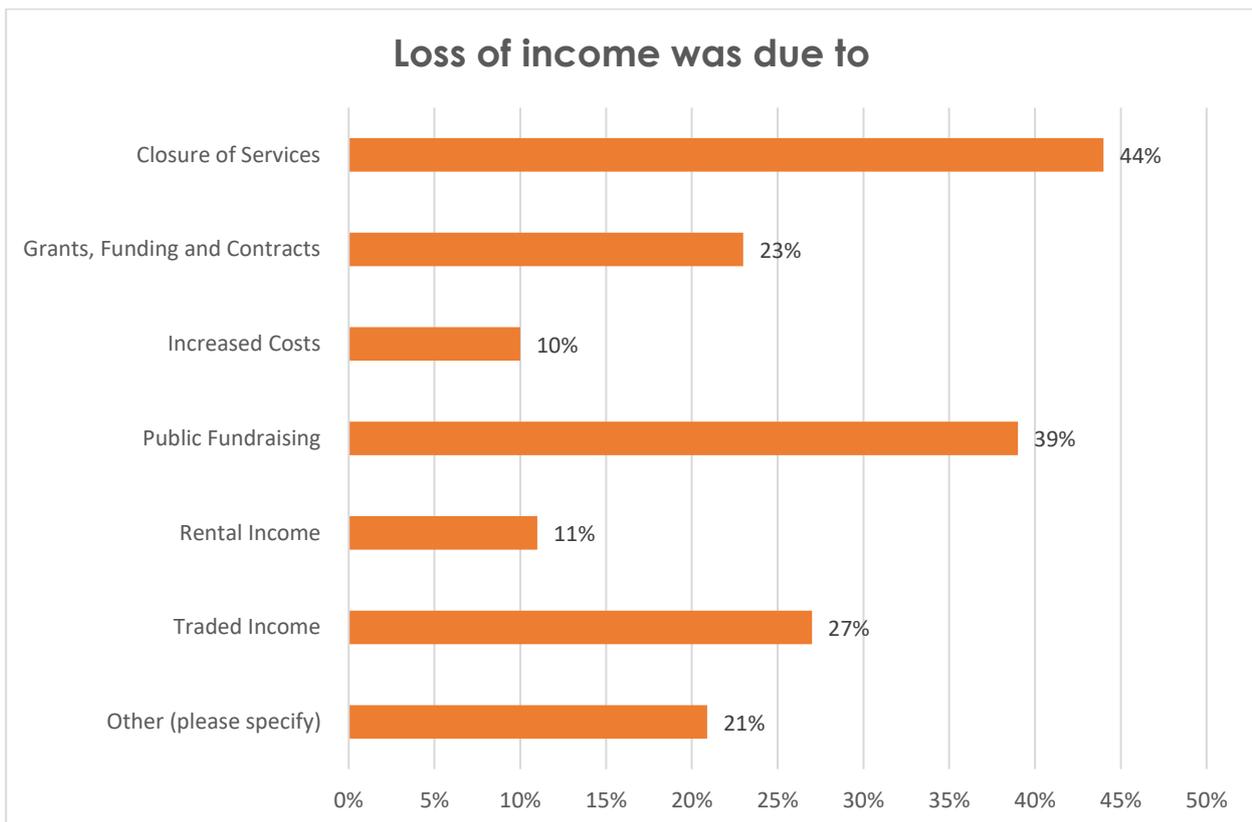
ORGANISATIONAL RESILIENCE

In this section organisations report on the financial impact of Covid-19, support they have received and their ability to recover from the crisis.

The majority of respondents, 70 (62%), have lost income as a result of Covid-19.

The most frequently reported loss of income was due to closure of services and loss of associated income, followed closely by loss of public fundraising.

'Other' reasons listed for loss of income include lost membership fees and investments decreasing in value.

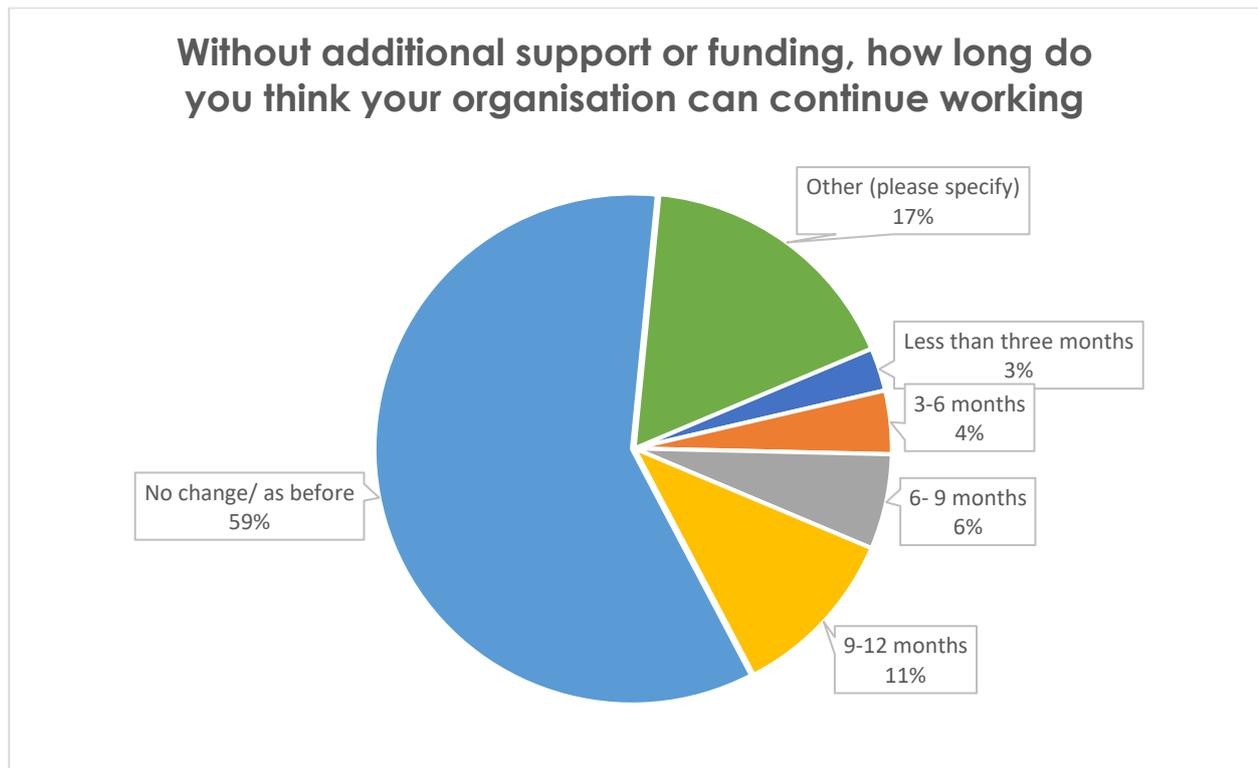


It is positive that 67 (59%) of organisations report that they will carry on as before, post Covid-19. However, it is startling to read that almost a quarter of organisations surveyed believe that they will survive one year or less, without significant additional support, with 8 (7%) organisations reporting that they will survive for 6 months or less.

In addition, of the organisations who have lost income, only 43% believe they will carry on as before, the remaining 57% believe their ability to continue operating in the short to medium term is reduced.

'Other' responses here included:

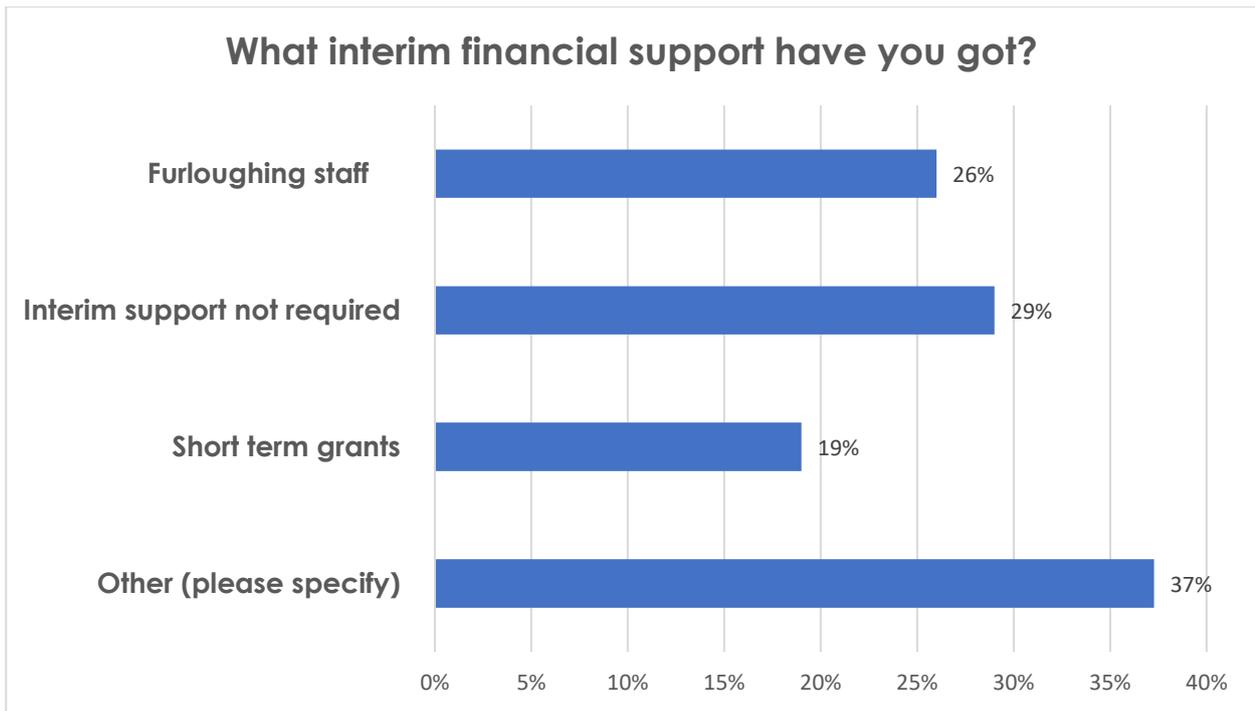
- We will continue but with a much reduced service
- Not sure/ can't answer this yet



33 organisations reported that interim financial support is not required, of these 8 are currently closed. Based on the responses received to the other questions, it is likely that these organisations may need support as they begin to reopen.

16 organisations replied that they have not received any interim financial support.

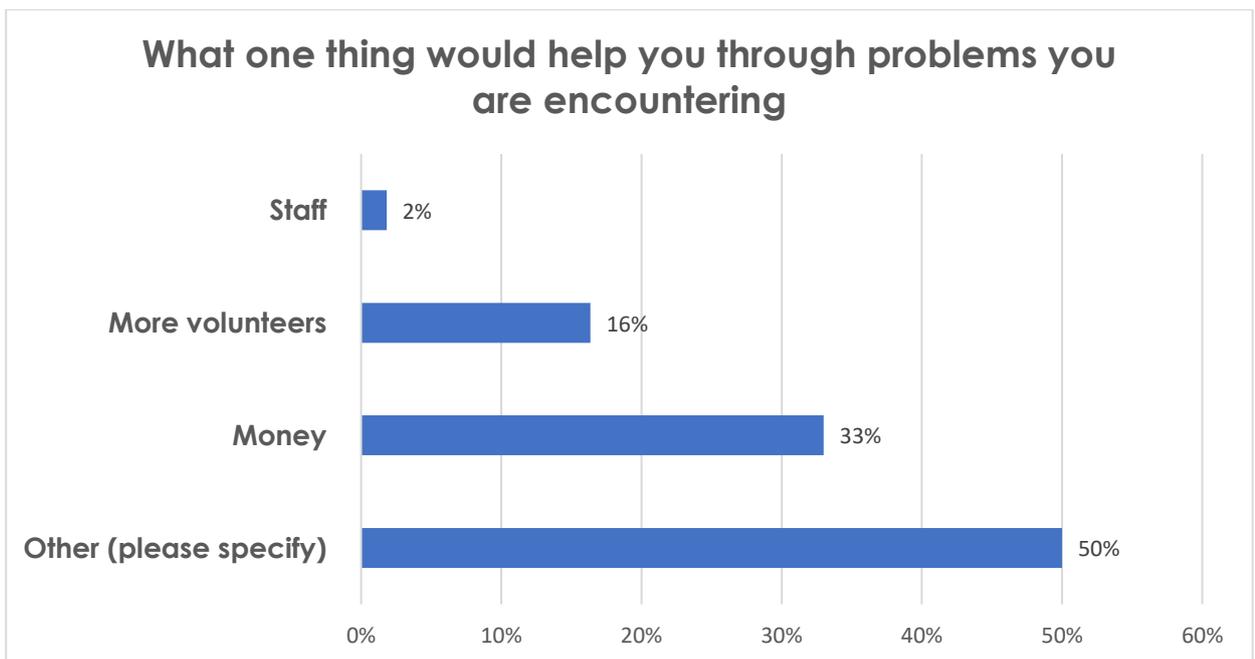
Some organisations have more than one source of interim support.



'Other' interim financial support cited includes

- Using personal savings
- Landlord rent holiday
- Support from local business

Unsurprisingly, the most commonly cited 'one thing' that would assist organisations is money, with 33% reporting that this would help them through the problems they are encountering.



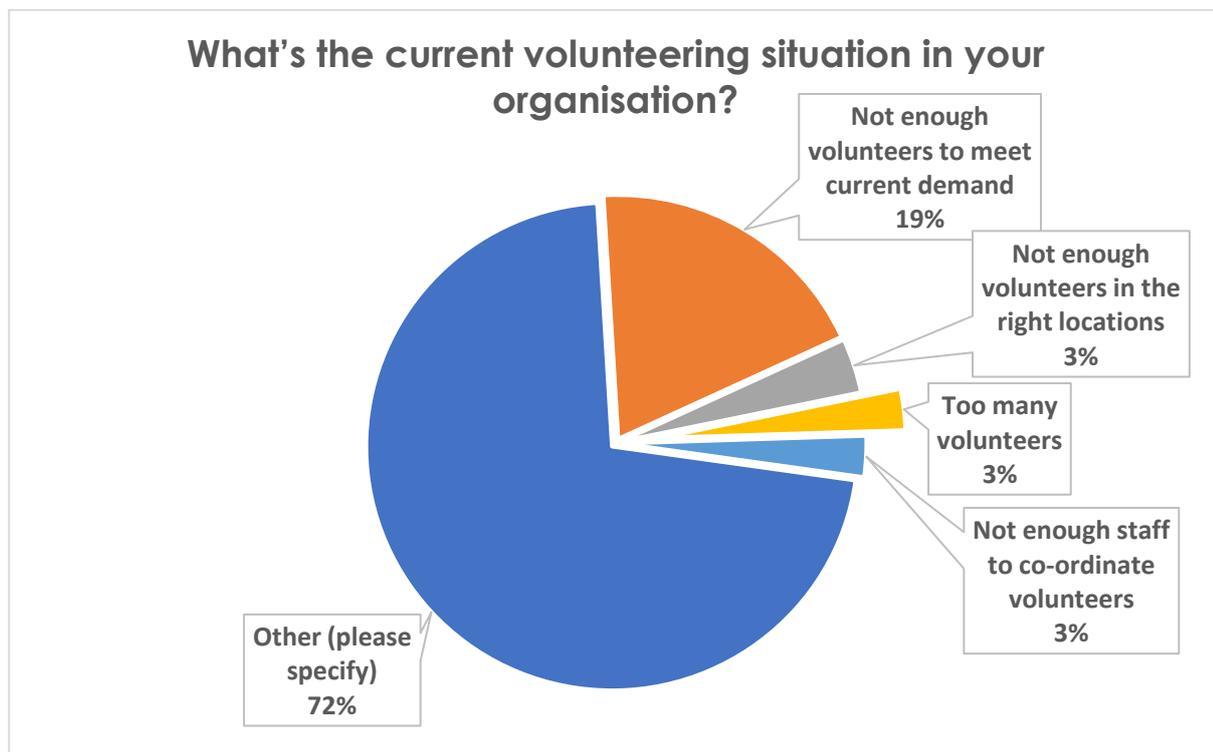
Of the 'other' responses, It was positive to see that 24 organisations said that they do not require one specific thing to help them through. However, 6 of these are currently closed and may require support as they begin to plan for reopening.

8 organisations reported that a change in social distancing rules is the one thing that would help them through the problems they are encountering.

42 organisations reported that they have enough volunteers currently and 10 reported that they will need more in the future.

21 said that they do not have enough volunteers to meet current demand, which reflects the fact that many volunteers are vulnerable to due age or underlying health condition and can't currently volunteer outside of their home.

It also reflects that 48 organisations reported an increase in demand for their services, as many organisations are volunteer led this would require an increase in volunteer support.



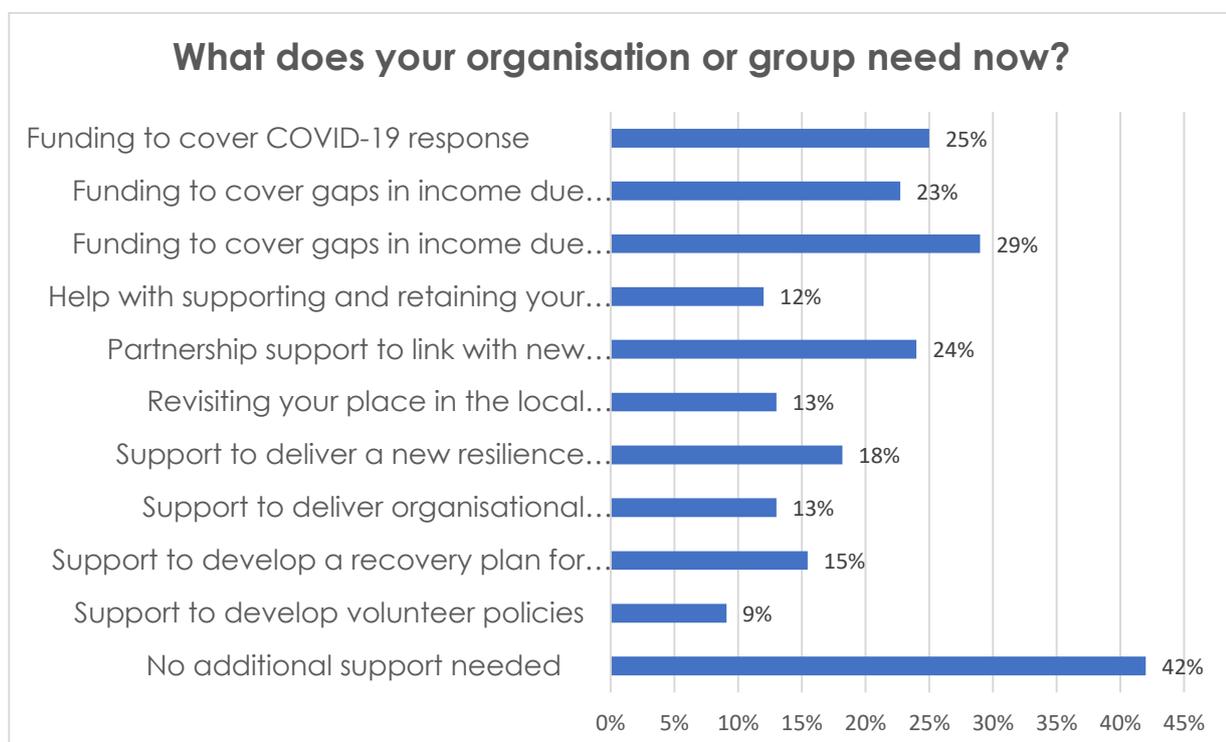
SUSTAINABLE PLANNING

In this section, we report on planning for a sustainable future, what organisations need now and what they will need as we move into recovery.

47 organisations reported that they don't need any support currently. However, 18 of these organisations are currently closed.

Responses to this question reflect the scale and breadth of the challenge facing the voluntary and community sector, with most organisations reporting that they need more than one kind of support.

Funding is the support most frequently required, most commonly because of the gap caused by planned fundraising activity which will not now take place. Funding is also needed to cover the Covid-19 response and to cover a drop in income caused by a drop in activity.



'Other' support requested includes

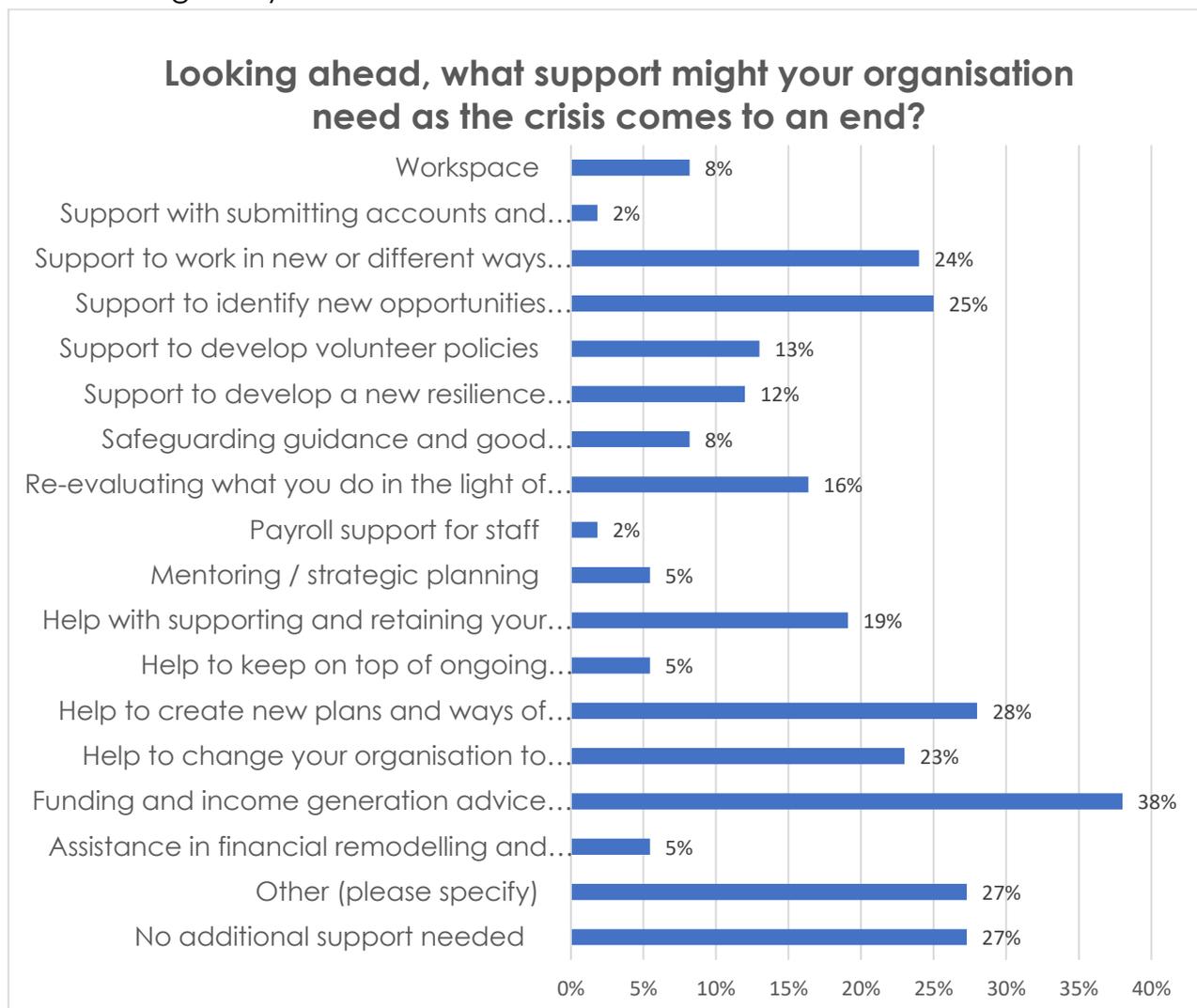
- Storage space
- Resilience planning
- IT support
- Carrying out risk assessments

A larger proportion of organisations believe they will need support as we move into recovery, and most organisations reported that they will need support in several areas, again reflecting how widely organisations have been impacted.

Again, funding is the most requested support, with 38% of respondents identifying it as support that they need as we move into recovery.

Respondents are also beginning to anticipate and plan for a new and altered future landscape, with 28% recognising that they will need support to create new ways of working.

30 respondents listed 'other' support required. The most requested 'other' support was volunteers- with 7% reporting they would need new or additional volunteers as we move into recovery. This reflects an understanding that social distancing measures may be in place for some time to come and as many organisations volunteers are in the 'vulnerable' category due to age or underlying health condition, these volunteers are unlikely to return to volunteering away from the home for some time.



Additional 'other' support required includes

- Transport for vulnerable members (1)
- Guidelines for opening a shop to the public (1)
- Promotion (1)
- Carrying out risk assessments (1)

Does your volunteer offer need to change now?

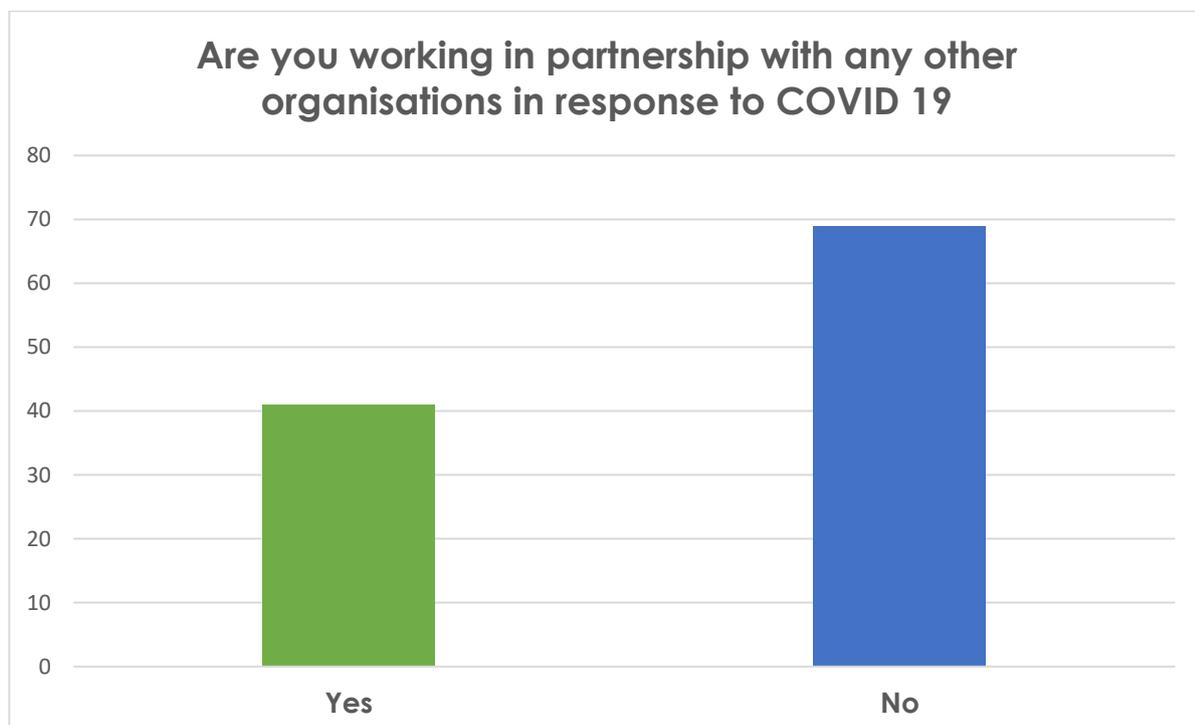
Responses to this question varied, but the main concerns were centred on whether volunteers would be able to return in the near future, as they are in the shielding or vulnerable category.

Others, as reflected at other points in the survey, are certain they will need new volunteers as they know some will definitely not return.

Another concern is that due to lack of space to enable social distancing, it will be a long time before volunteers can be office/ centre based.

Working in partnership

42 (37%) of respondents are working in partnerships with others in response to Covid-19. Examples include reaching out to other organisations to share donations of food and other goods received, offering premises that aren't currently being used and promoting the services of other organisations.



What did you achieve during Covid?

It is remarkable to read the responses to this question and to see how much and how quickly organisations have adapted, often in the most challenging of circumstances.

Many respondents reflected on how quickly they managed to adapt to offering services online, most of whom hadn't done this before.

Other responses include

- Keeping in regular telephone contact
- Provided 1127 cooked meals and 150 food packs
- Adapted service from working internationally to locally
- Changed service to offering telephone counselling within days
- Our volunteers are sending out cards and holding virtual sing songs for members
- Opened an additional centre to meet additional need
- Managing to retain staff so far
- Supporting over 1000 vulnerable individuals with their practical needs
- Created hundreds of food packs

Mutual Aid and Neighbourhood Groups.

Communities 1st identified and made contact with 25 neighbourhood support groups at the start of the lockdown. The groups vary widely in terms of their composition, from pre-existing organisations to newly formed WhatsApp groups created to support a single street.

Each group offers a different range of support, with shopping support and prescription collection being the most common activities.

Numbers of Volunteers

The number of volunteers in each group varied widely, depending on the type of group and its activities. The smallest group was a residents association supporting local neighbours with shopping which had 8 volunteers. The largest was a newly formed Mutual Aid group using Facebook as a platform to communicate. This group had over 2,000 volunteers, however most groups had between 25-50 active volunteers.

Challenges to groups.

The main challenges identified at the outset were

- safeguarding (for residents and volunteers)
- standardisation of processes and best practice
- data protection
- cash handling and banking
- vetting of volunteers and fraud prevention
- health and social distancing when carrying out face-to-face activities

Support from Communities 1st

Communities 1st supported the groups to identify and mitigate the challenges faced. We also provided links to our wide range of Covid-19 online resources for neighbourhood groups and volunteers and encouraged these to be shared with each group's volunteer base.

Groups also had the option of entering into a formal temporary partnership agreement, giving them access to direct and ongoing support including insurance coverage and access to banking facilities if required.

We remain in contact with the groups and are supporting them in either continuing with their current activities, winding down or transitioning to become a more long-term or permanent group based on identified ongoing needs in the local community.

At least seven of the groups remain active, the others have become more of a social platform for their members as support needs have decreased. These groups have said they will maintain their links with volunteers in the community and will be in a position to deliver support to neighbours again if it is required in the future.