

Build Back Better

How organisations can improve practice in light of learning during the Covid-19 pandemic

YOUNG
EALING
FOUNDATION 

Ealing Community Network
A United Voice for the Community & Voluntary Sector



September 2020

Table of Contents

Foreword from the CEO of The Young Ealing Foundation.....	3
Authorship and acknowledgements.....	4
Executive Summary.....	5
Part One: Introduction.....	13
1. About The Young Ealing Foundation and Ealing Community Network.....	13
2. The Covid-19 Coronavirus Pandemic.....	13
3. The Build Back Better Study.....	15
4. Methodology.....	15
5. This report.....	16
Part Two: Literature Review.....	16
6. Approach.....	16
7. The agreed approach.....	16
Part Three: Key Findings.....	18
8. Responding to the pandemic.....	19
9. Vulnerable groups in Ealing.....	25
10. Impact of the Coronavirus on the sector’s workforce.....	30
11. Impact of the Coronavirus on funding.....	35
12. A sector in recovery.....	39
Part Four: Conclusions.....	43
13. Conclusion.....	43
14. Recommendations.....	48
Appendices.....	49
Appendix A: With thanks to all participating organisations.....	49
Appendix B: Literature review sources.....	50
Appendix C: Literature Review – key issues.....	51
Appendix D: Online survey questions.....	54
Appendix E: Members’ topic guide.....	61
Appendix F: Strategic partner topic guide.....	64

Foreword from the CEO of The Young Ealing Foundation

The national lockdown, announced by the Prime Minister on 16th March 2020, signalled a somewhat inevitable end to everyday life as we knew it. However, none of us could have quite foreseen the level of disruption, fear and uncertainty that would follow.

As I rolled up my sleeves alongside the rest of the voluntary sector to pull together a lightning-fast emergency response, it became clearer than ever that our strength lies in our unity. We commissioned this research to find out what more we could learn from the pandemic to ensure that we rebuild a sector that is stronger together, whilst prioritising the needs of the most vulnerable groups in Ealing.

We decided to work in partnership with Ealing Community Network in order to create a blueprint for the entire sector to 'Build Back Better', because we need to recognise the complexity of community development and approach it holistically. I'm glad we did this, as it has shined a light on the complex challenges that the sector faces and how we can collectively move towards sustainability. I'm really grateful to all of the 82 organisations and 104 individuals who contributed to this research and to Clear Thinking Consultancy for producing such a comprehensive insight into their experiences.

The research has highlighted the immense contribution of the sector but, in particular, grass-roots organisations in our borough, most of whom are doing more under considerable pressure, showing responsiveness and urgency to meet whatever needs are presented by their increasing number of service users. They are also key to enabling the most vulnerable residents to access services, consulting underrepresented groups and disseminating crucial information. It is vital they have the resources, support and infrastructure they need to serve the local community and that they are used more by public agencies to meet borough-wide priorities.

It has also heightened my understanding of existing issues that have been exacerbated by the crisis: digital exclusion is something we should no longer tolerate: it is preventing vulnerable families from accessing services, increasing a sense of isolation amongst those living alone and those vulnerable at home; it is also stopping children from continuing their education remotely. This is compounded for families where English is not spoken at home which is leaving them vulnerable to inaccurate community messaging and worsening the educational attainment gap.

What this means for me and my team at the Young Ealing Foundation and our partners at Ealing Community Network is that we will be moving forward by working collaboratively and across sectors to build infrastructure support, enhance service coordination and fundraise focusing in on key thematic issues such as digital exclusion and food poverty. Partnership is the pathway to sustainability; it's great that this has been recognised by those in and out of the sector. It's also the most effective way of amplifying the voice of the smaller voluntary sector organisations in Ealing.

We also know we need to be creative in how we do this as funds to achieve these objectives simply will not be available in the same way. However, this research has provided an evidence base for the sector's return on investment, which I hope will speak loudly to those who commission services in the borough.

Building back the voluntary sector is going to be a massive challenge in light of the changing way in which services are funded and delivered, but we also have an opportunity to address some of the deep-seated systemic inequalities that have been laid bare by the global pandemic, and we remain committed to working together towards a more equal and fairer Ealing.

Elly Heaton-Virgo CEO,
Young Ealing Foundation

Authorship and acknowledgements

This report has been written by Kita Ikoku of Clear Thinking Consultancy (CTC), a small BME-led organisation that supports micro, small and start-up charitable organisations towards financial sustainability and to maximise their impact in their communities.

The Build Back Better study is carried out on behalf of The Young Ealing Foundation (YEF) and Ealing Community Network (ECN). It is based on work carried out by the author together with a team of staff and trustees of YEF and ECN: Hana Ali, Angela Dodwell, Layla Hall, Elly Heaton-Virgo, Elinor Parry-Jones, Rachel Phelan and Tanya Taylor.

We are grateful to the members, partners and other key stakeholders who were so generous with their time, despite the challenging period, in feeding in their insights and views about the effect of the pandemic on the landscape for the voluntary sector, their organisation, them and their peers.

Executive Summary

The voluntary sector in Ealing is stretching beyond its capacity. For many voluntary and community organisations, they are already operating in an unsustainable way, working unsociable hours yet struggling to meet both the needs of their increasing service users whilst giving their organisations the attention they need to ensure their sustainability.

The challenges that have been caused by the national lockdown have been exacerbated by the continued uncertainty that has followed it, and this has made it particularly difficult for VCO leaders to plan in the medium and longer term. The majority of VCOs have seen their funding significantly and adversely affected as a result of the pandemic, and many VCO leaders are concerned that they lack the capacity and capability to navigate the treacherous landscape, which they know is likely to deteriorate further with sector cuts on the horizon alongside expected spikes in need.

Despite these challenges, the sector has shown incredible resilience, can-do attitude, capacity for generosity, commitment and creativity. VCOs are also confident, ready and, in many cases, have already started to resume services - of course, some never stopped. Investment, leadership and clarity are needed now to capitalise on the urgency for the sector to recover in order to make it more robust in advance of the difficult times ahead.

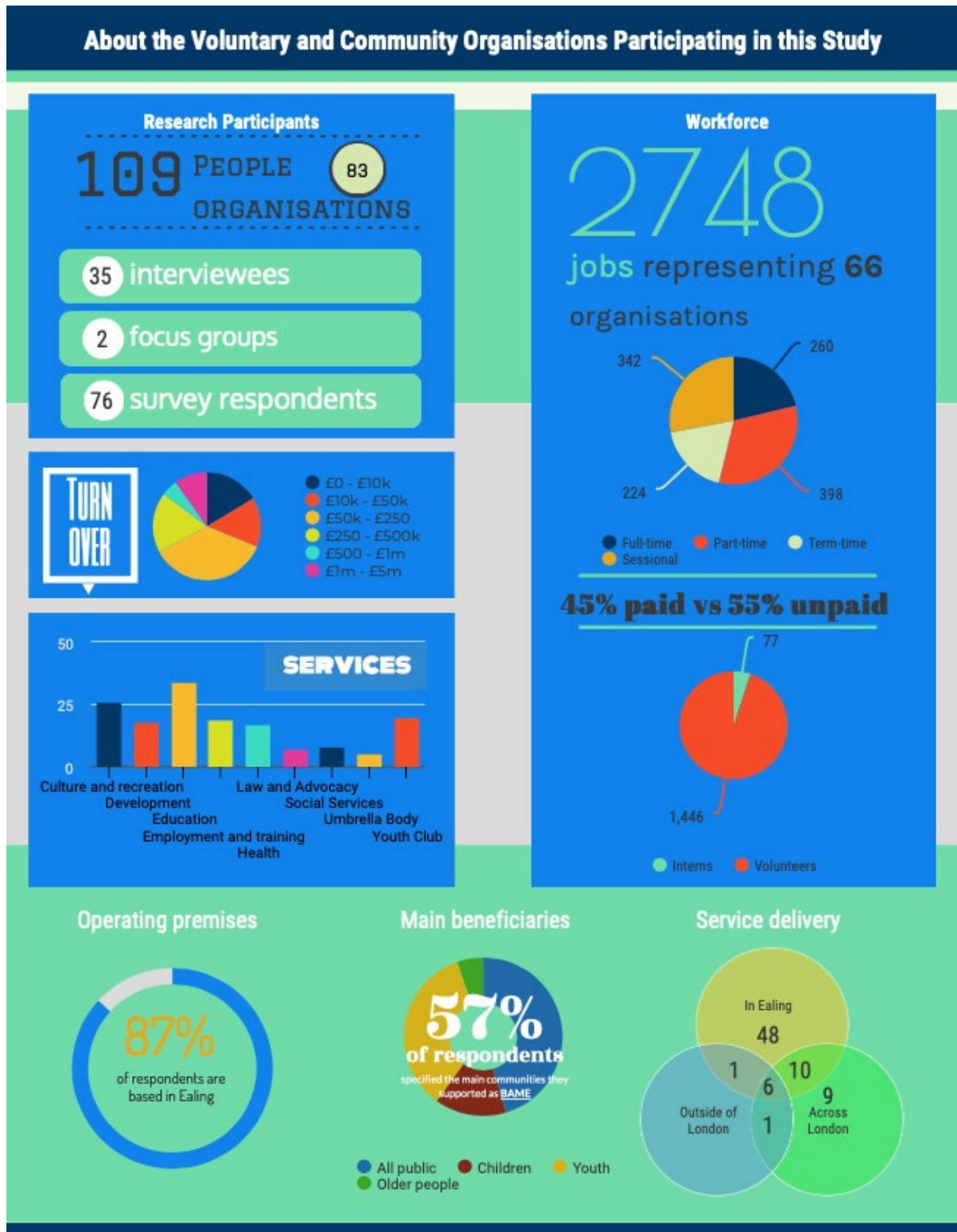
About the Build Back Better Study

The devastating impact of a novel strain of coronavirus – SARS-CoV-2 – which was first detected in Wuhan, China at the end of 2019, has since spread to over 200 countries and territories across the globe, leading to being characterised, In March 2020, as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO). Once the virus entered the United Kingdom, cases started to rise rapidly and, despite a number of measures taken aimed at stemming the transmission of the virus, by 10th May 2020, when a relaxation of a strict lockdown was announced, 31,815 people had already lost their life.

Shortly after, concerned by the pandemic and its effects on residents in Ealing, The Young Ealing Foundation (YEF) initiated a call for proposals, later partnering with Ealing Community Network (ECN), to derive some learning from the lockdown and its aftermath in order to inform support for and ways of working with the voluntary sector so that it can be well equipped to meet the challenges ahead. It wanted to target funders and commissioners of services in the borough as well as public sector agencies with an interest in Ealing's residents to provide an understanding of how the sector has responded to the challenges faced, how it has been impacted and offer practical, cost effective ways in which they can invest in the sector's sustainability and, in so doing, enable longer term savings to the public purse.

The research activity took place during July 2020, almost four months after lockdown commenced, two months after restrictions started to ease, and just before schools ended their summer term. A mixed method approach was adopted, and activity commenced with a literature review of research already carried out into the local and national impact of Covid-19. This was carried out to identify the key risk factors for communities so that we could use the study to focus in and draw out quantitative data on the extent to which these issues were at play in Ealing. The areas agreed were (i) service users, (ii) services, (iii) leadership, (iv) staff, (v) finance, and (vi) funding. This recognises the focus of YEF and ECN on the voluntary sector as opposed to providing direct service delivery into the community.

This was followed by focus groups, semi-structured interviews and an online survey carried out with Ealing’s voluntary and community sector. This study also considered the findings of another piece of research conducted at a similar time with BAME residents in Ealing. In total, the study engaged a total of 109 people from 83 organisations.



Key findings

Responding to the pandemic

1. *Lockdown caused an immediate suspension or significant reduction to VCOs ability to deliver services.*

51.5% of survey respondents reported a suspension or dramatically reduced service offering as a direct and immediate result of the lockdown. Almost half were able to adapt at least some of their services to an online offer and, some feel that through digital engagement, they have been able to enhance their provision. However, most VCOs feel strongly that digital engagement is not an adequate replacement for face to face delivery citing issues around safeguarding, privacy and quality of engagement as barriers.

2. *Digital exclusion was found to be prevalent amongst younger, more vulnerable people, non-English speaking households and particularly amongst those in larger households.*

There are areas in Ealing where digital access is low and, even in households with internet access, many families with multiple children and adults working from home have found that they do not have adequate levels of IT equipment to carry out work and school homework. Those in overcrowded housing were found to lack the space and privacy to hold sensitive conversations.

3. *Information about the Coronavirus was felt to be problematic.*

In the main, information was considered to be overwhelming and too broad without enough specific information about how the information related to the sector. Some VCOs expressed frustration that attempts had not been made to translate key information into community languages.



Vulnerable groups in Ealing

4. *Residents in Ealing who were already vulnerable prior to the start of the pandemic have seen their situations worsened. These include:*

- Those who are digitally excluded and therefore unable to access crucial services and information;
- Single parents, parents of multiple children and those who display challenging behaviour and carers have all seen their commitments suddenly increase without the respite that was previously available to them;
- People living alone experiencing social isolation especially older people who had been asked to stay at home;
- Families living in overcrowded conditions increasing family tensions;
- People experiencing hostile conditions at home, leading to unreported cases of abuse;
- Those who do not speak English at home only having access to sometimes inaccurate community messaging about the virus;
- Children without support at home falling behind in their educational attainment.

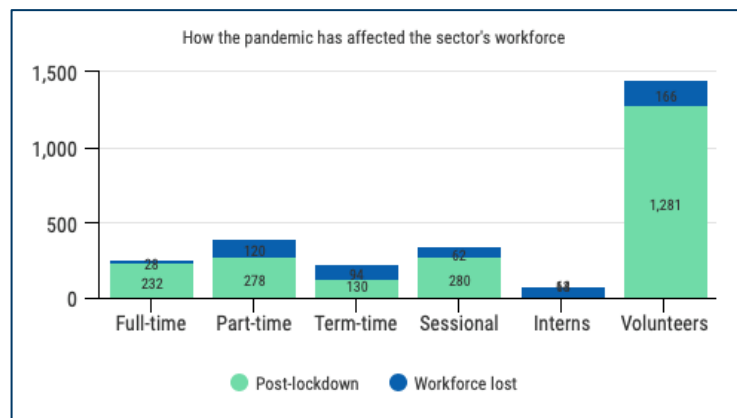
5. *Other groups of people have been made newly vulnerable as a direct result of the Coronavirus.*

- Those who are unemployed as a result of lockdown needing support to access welfare and immediate support for living;
- People with recently developed mental or physical health needs who have no existing network of support;
- Those who will suffer once temporary measures in place to assist households to retain their homes are lifted;
- Service users who have disappeared - “the most chaotic who would turn up with carrier bags of unopened mail”;
- Service users who started to take more risks having found it difficult to adhere to a prolonged period of restrictions.

Impact of the Coronavirus on the sector’s workforce

6. *Over half of the sector is supported by volunteers, and it has lost 20% of its workforce.*

According to our online survey, completed by representatives of 66 organisations, 2,214 workers still have a job, falling from 2,748 at the start of the pandemic. Over a third of organisations have furloughed staff, with over half of these expecting to make redundancies within the next three to six months. Volunteers make up almost 60% of the workforce.



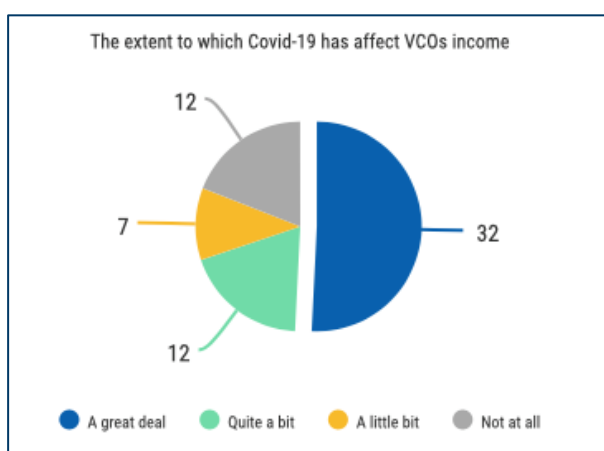
7. *Some VCOs spoke of staff, all of whom know someone who has either died or has been seriously ill from Covid-19.*

Many VCOs spoke of crippling fear, anxiety and panic amongst their workers. For some this was because many of them had family members or close friends who had been directly affected by Covid-19. By contrast, many of those who had continued to work, key workers, at the height of the pandemic were less afraid of operating.

Impact of the Coronavirus on funding

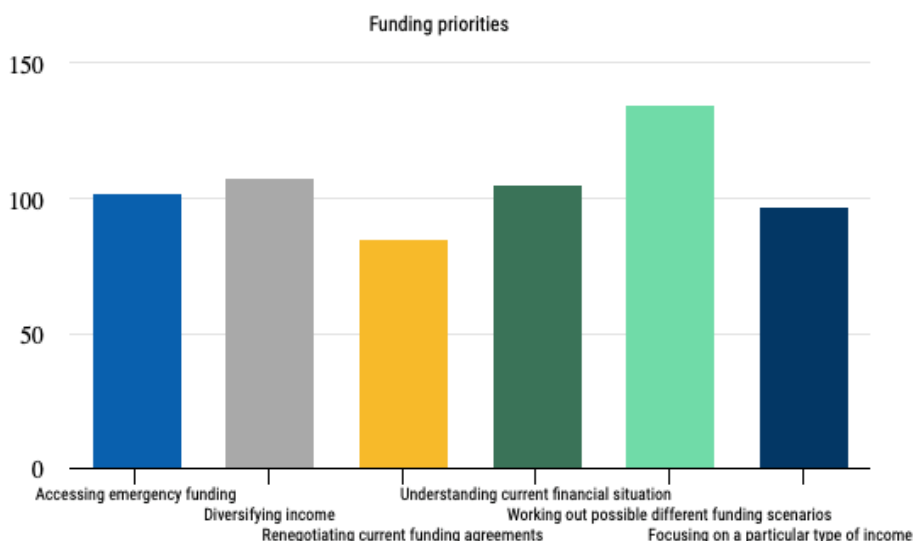
8. *51% of VCOs describe their funding as having been greatly affected by the pandemic.*

Prior to the funding, 78% of VCOs received funds from grants with around half receiving funding from donations and contracts and a third receiving income from trade. Over half of all the VCOs surveyed and most of the smaller VCOs receive most of their income from grants and contracts.



9. *One in ten VCOs had no reserves at all prior to the start of the pandemic*

Whilst this study did not assess the impact of the pandemic on VCOs reserves, in addition to those who had no reserves, many referred to “having to dip into their reserves” during the lockdown period, “dwindling reserves”, “losing reserves” or in one case, lockdown rendering the organisation “skint”. Building reserves back up is a priority for many VCOs as well as financial scenario planning. “Participants were asked to score how important they thought



each priority was, and a weighted score of 3 was issued for high priority; 2 for medium and 1 for low”

10. Over half of VCOs surveyed applied for emergency funding.

Of those who applied, 60% said that they had no issues. Most of those who did have issues either felt that they lacked the skills or capacity to complete the process effectively. They singled out access to expertise for fundraising and diversifying income as key to being able to bridge the gap in funding and attract new income. Some found they were not eligible to apply for emergency funding, and others were rejected as their projects were not considered essential.

A sector in recovery

11. VCOs are confident of their ability to resume services in a socially distant way.

When asked, over 70% said they felt “quite” confident or confident to a “great” extent. Only 5% felt “not at all” confident in their ability to resume services in a socially distant way. VCOs have already started to take steps to train staff in a range of areas including in maximising technology as well as to meet social distancing regulations, as they understand them, that will govern how they resume services.

12. Space is the biggest barrier to resuming service delivery

Many VCOs have highlighted restrictions as a result of operating and delivering out of small spaces. The implications for the delivery of services is that there will be smaller group sizes in order to meet social distancing regulations making it costlier and time resource intensive to meet existing output commitments and, if unable to reconcile this with funders, will lead to reduced reach.

13. VCOs need support to access suppliers and experts

Some VCOs felt that they lacked contacts and relationships with experts and key suppliers and, in particular, want to see support from the Council to access their preferred suppliers and specialists to help them to do things like redesign their premises or to access cheaper hygiene consumables such as personal protective equipment, sneeze screens and supplies for deep cleans.

14. The majority of grant funded VCOs want to see unrestricted or “core” funding and sector investment

Many grant funded VCOs have raised how difficult it is operating “hand to mouth all the time” and are concerned at their diminishing reserves. However, just as many VCOs spoke about their wish to see more investment in the skills of the sector to mitigate the risks of inevitable cuts from the council and to meet the aim of building the sector up to be more resilient than it was before the crisis struck.

Themes	Recommendations
<p>Open up Ealing's centres</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Galvanise the voluntary sector and the wider community to get behind a commitment to open up community centres and workspaces in Ealing. 2. Ensure that communications are specific and tailored to its audiences, translated into community languages 3. Support the voluntary sector to understand the implications of guidance changes and provide templates to support their implementation with clear safety protocols for centre opening including for multi-usage spaces and training for risk assessing, risk mitigation and managing controls. 4. Enable access to supply chain and scales of economy purchasing to make it easier and more cost effective for the sector to access experts, personal protective and other safety equipment.
<p>Invest in the sector so it can withstand the inevitable cuts that will follow</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support the development of fundraising and digital skills in the sector 2. Provide resource and expertise for medium and long term financial and strategic planning 3. Support reflections into the effects of the pandemic on ways of working and facilitate shared practice: peer to peer workshops focusing on digital service delivery and remote working 4. Equip those who want to volunteer with the skills and qualifications to be more competitive to regain employment
<p>Invest in a more coordinated and collaborative, cross sector approach to maximise resource</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop the Ealing Together and Do Something Good structures with one point of access for prospective volunteers matched to VCOs based on skillset, geography, language skills and availability 2. Resource a central helpline, free at point of service, targeting those who are newly vulnerable supported with a campaign to encourage them to ask for help 3. Encourage cross sector thematic task groups to focus on existing and emerging needs such as food poverty, mental wellbeing, trauma, abuse and rising gaps in educational attainment. 4. Support a consortium approach to securing income from outside of Ealing into the borough to address key identified needs arising from the task groups
<p>Use the sector to reach and support the most vulnerable in the community</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Target specific VCOs and empower them to consult, research and support increased engagement of underrepresented groups into services 2. Enable outreach and floating support to reengage service users who have dropped off the radar 3. Commission support for the digitally excluded to have "the access, skills and motivation to confidently go online to access the opportunities of the internet"

“

Some of the young people struggled to communicate through online methods and just didn't like it

“

I've got to know some service users much better

“

The majority of them can't get any help from... people at home so before lockdown they were [already] behind. Now they will be even more behind. We worry for their attainment and the negative impact the pandemic will have on their education

“

Not everyone can benefit from it... because they might not be connected online. On some occasions... we are working with huge families with multiple siblings, so the older children always get it first

“

Every single member of staff knows someone who has been seriously ill or who has died... it has caused panic in the community and with staff

“

I worry about those who live on their own. That food delivery and five minute chat was their lifeline

“

Digital exclusion is a massive thing amongst our clients. They come to us because they can't access online, but what surprised me was that three of our best...workers didn't have wifi at home, and I didn't know that

“

If a child wants to...say something to you, you're on a screen with potentially 10-15 other people - how do they then get over to you that they've actually got something confidential that they want to speak to you about?

“

I think we need more engagement from the Council especially working with smaller groups like us

“

We were key workers so we continued working throughout at its most scariest... we worked really hard on our comms, Health and Safety...so people felt that it was in control. The work...delivering food parcels is very worthwhile. [This meant] the impact on our workers on their mental health ... has been extremely positive

“

Numbers of people per session will be limited which will either provide us with smaller participant numbers per session or less income per session. Both of these factors will be detrimental to our services and the sustainability of some programmes

Part One: Introduction

1. About The Young Ealing Foundation and Ealing Community Network

- 1.1. The Young Ealing Foundation was established in 2017 in response to the ongoing challenges facing the Children and Young People's sector. Part of a wider network of Young People's Foundations, it brings together the public, private and voluntary sectors and helps create and champion a more impactful, coordinated and sustainable sector to ensure all children and young people have access to quality support and opportunities.
- 1.2. Ealing Community Network was established in 2001 as a free membership organisation open to all not-for-profit organisations delivering services in the borough. It is funded and supported by Ealing Council and offers an independent and collective voice from Ealing's voluntary sector on key issues, which it communicates effectively and constructively to key strategic bodies and partnerships.
- 1.3. Between The Young Ealing Foundation and Ealing Community Network, they have a collective membership of over 400 community and voluntary organisations, which deliver services in the London Borough of Ealing.

2. The Covid-19 Coronavirus Pandemic

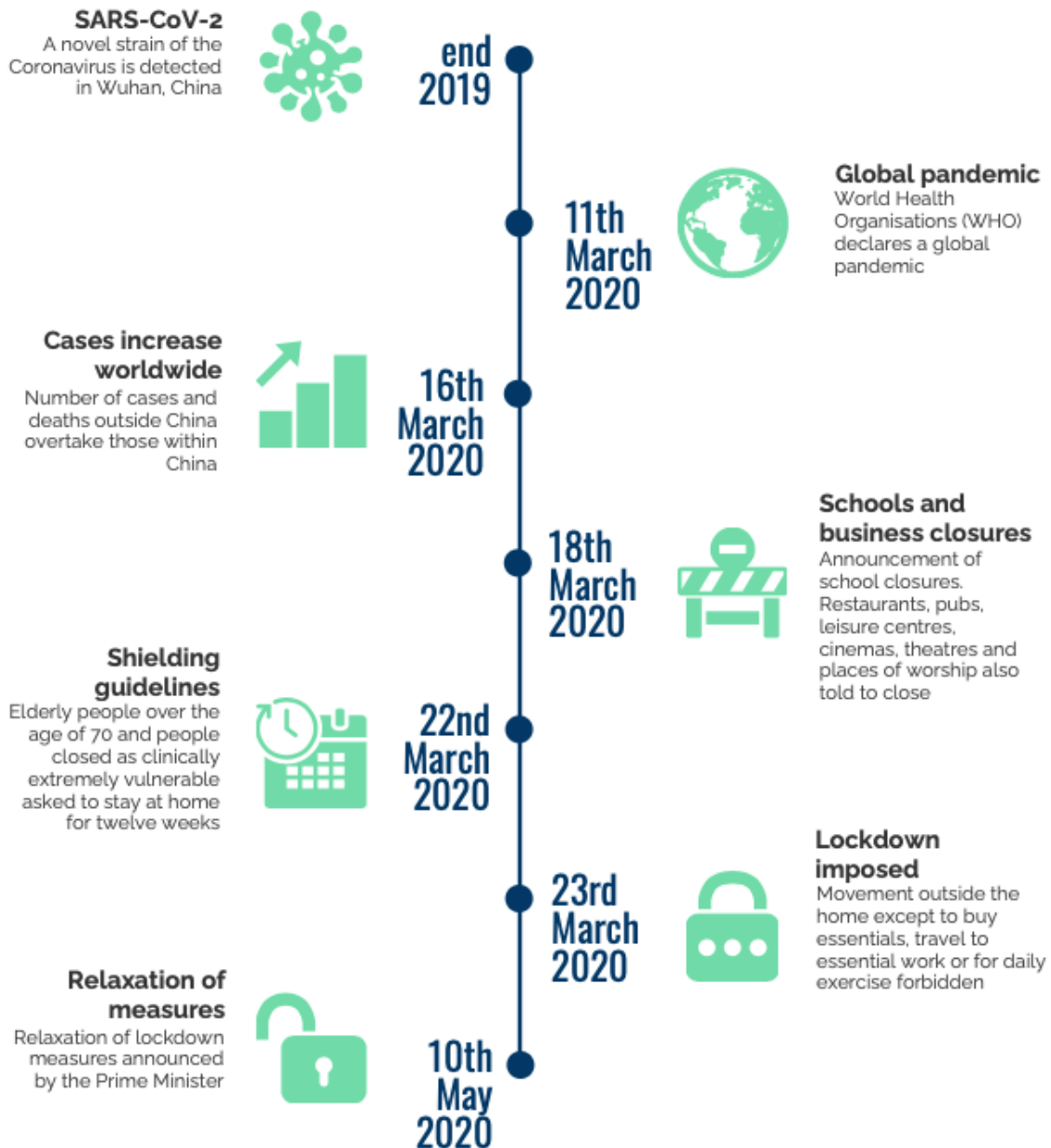
- 2.1. The devastating impact of a novel strain of coronavirus – SARS-CoV-2 – which was first detected in Wuhan, China, at the end of 2019, has since spread to over 200 countries and territories across the globe, leading to being characterised as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11th March 2020. Five days later, the number of cases and deaths outside of China overtook those within the country prompting the introduction of social distancing measures by the government aimed at stemming transmission of the virus in the United Kingdom, which was “approaching the fast growth part of the upward curve”¹ of increased cases.
- 2.2. Further measures were announced on 18th March 2020 including closing all schools in the UK except for vulnerable children and those of key workers, such as health and social care staff, teachers and delivery drivers. Restaurants, cafes, pubs, leisure centres, nightclubs, cinemas, theatres, museums, playgrounds and places of worship were told to close.
- 2.3. On 22nd March, elderly people over the age of 70 and people classed as “clinically extremely vulnerable” were asked to stay in their homes for twelve weeks and, the following day, on 23rd March 2020, a strict lockdown was imposed across the whole of the United Kingdom. This limited movement outside the home except to buy essential food and medicines, for one form of exercise a day, for any medical need, and to travel to and from essential work, which continued until a relaxation was announced by the Prime Minister on 10th May 2020. Although further relaxation of lockdown measures, advice for those

¹ Quoted Boris Johnson, 16th March 2020 reported by K.Stewart, D.Connelly, J.Robinson, Everything You Should Know About The Coronavirus Outbreak, The Pharmaceutical Journal, 24th August 2020)

shielding and reopening of certain businesses followed with restrictions only re-imposed in response to localised outbreaks, much of the damage was already done – there was global panic and, in the United Kingdom, 31,855 people had already lost their life. As at 31st August 2020, 41,514 people in the UK had died within 28 days of a positive test of the virus.

TIMELINE

The Coronavirus and the United Kingdom



3. The Build Back Better Study

- 3.1. Concerned by the pandemic and its effects on residents in Ealing, The Young Ealing Foundation initiated a call for proposals, later partnering with Ealing Community Network, to derive some learning from the lockdown and its aftermath in order to inform support for and ways of working with the voluntary sector so that it can be well equipped to meet the challenges ahead. The questions to be addressed by the study are as follows:
- Which social issues have been brought to the forefront by Covid-19?
 - How is the voluntary sector adapting?
 - What have we learned so far?
 - How do we ensure young people's experiences are accurately reflected in this process?
 - What is next for the sector in the short, medium and long term?
 - How should funders support this?
 - How should local and national government support this?
- 3.2. A mixed method approach was requested, combining a literature review of the needs analyses carried out by local and national charities on the effect of Covid-19 on the voluntary sector with a survey and other methods to collect significant quantitative and qualitative data from Ealing groups.
- 3.3. It is aimed at funders and commissioners of services in the borough as well as public sector agencies with an interest in Ealing's residents. It aims to provide an understanding of how the sector has responded to the challenges faced, how it has been impacted and practical, cost effective ways in which they can invest in the sector's sustainability and, in so doing, enable longer term savings to the public purse.

4. Methodology

- 4.1. The research activity took place during July 2020, almost four months after lockdown commenced, two months after restrictions started to ease, and just before schools ended summer term. The activity consisted of:
- A literature review of research already carried out into the local and national impact of Covid-19;
 - Consideration of The Impact of Covid-19 on Ealing's BAME Communities led by Golden Opportunity Skills and Development (GOS&D) into the experiences of 342 BAME residents engaged by a further five BAME-led groups completed in September 2020. Residents surveyed were predominantly from Sri-Lankan, Afro-Caribbean, Eritrean, Punjabi, Nepalese, Somali, South Sudanese and Syrian and other Arab speaking communities.
 - Two focus groups: one at the inception stage to help shape the project's objectives and one, post data gathering, of those engaged in the interview phase;

- 35 semi-structured face-to-face, video conference and telephone interviews, some of which were carried out with two or more people; and
- An online survey completed by 76 unique respondents, totalling 116 interventions, engaging a total of 109 people from 83 organisations. The study also considered local research led by GOS&

We use the term “interviewees” to refer to those who participated in an informal or semi structured interview, “respondents” to refer to those who completed the online survey, “Voluntary and Community Organisations” or “VCOs” to refer to the charitable organisations represented by interviewees and respondents. A full list of participating organisations is provided in Appendix A.

The Impact of Covid-19 on Ealing’s BAME Communities will be referred to in this report as the GOS&D Report.

- 4.2. Progress meetings throughout the study with YEF staff and partners also provided a contextual understanding of the landscape for the voluntary sector in Ealing and how it has evolved over recent years.

5. This report

- 5.1. Part Two of this report provides an overview of the literature review that was carried out at the start of this exercise to inform the parameters of the research, Part Three sets out our key findings about the impact of the pandemic, the priorities for the sector and how it can be supported to build back better. In Part Four we summarise our conclusions and recommendations.

Part Two: Literature Review

In this part, we describe how the analysis carried out on the extensive research already undertaken local and nationally to understand the impact of the pandemic on the voluntary sector and on people informed the approach adopted in this study.

6. Approach

- 6.1. Research into the impact of the pandemic in the weeks that followed the strict lockdown uncovered a range of local and national, formative and summative analyses of its effects. YEF, ECN and CTC were already active in this space and participating in many existing networks which enabled them to engage with needs analyses as they emerged. In addition to this, internet searches and reflections from the wider network of Young People’s Foundations provided a solid evidence base for the key issues unfolding. A list of the sources reviewed is provided in Appendix B and a summary of the key issues that were considered is provided in Appendix C.

7. The agreed approach

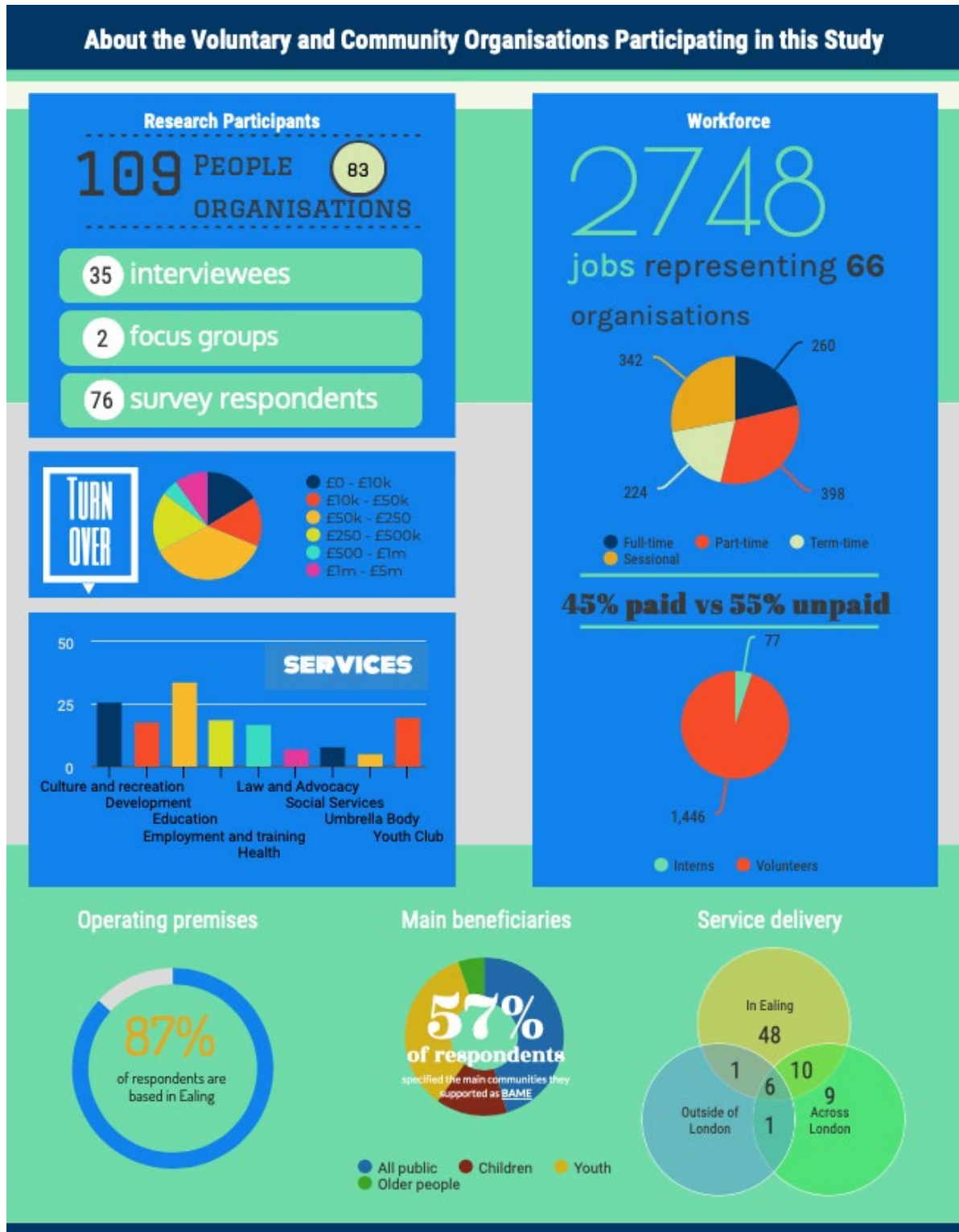
- 7.1. As mainly qualitative research had already been conducted, this provided an opportunity to define the key trends and risk factors for communities and the sector’s experiences of the pandemic and use this study to elicit quantitative data to understand the extent to which these key issues were at play in Ealing. This would provide a strong evidence base for support from key stakeholders

and without running the risk of the study spreading itself too thin: trying to find out too much about too many issues and, in doing so, not achieving depth with the results. A list of questions asked in the survey is provided in Appendix D.

- 7.2. It was also clear from the extensive amount of research already carried out and from initial consultation with YEF and some key stakeholders at the project inception stage, that many VCOs would already be “surveyed out”, so it would be important to make their participation easy, as well as to make clear how it would benefit them. Getting the ear of the Council early on and agreeing a route for this research to inform their Recovery Plan was therefore a priority so that the study could offer confidence of an avenue for the findings to have impact.
- 7.3. It was therefore agreed that the areas to interrogate would focus on asking specific questions in key areas, such as, “which service users are you most concerned are not being reached or having their needs met?” to build up a picture of priority groups for the sector, as well as more open-ended questions to invite an exploration of wider issues.
- 7.4. The areas agreed were (i) service users, (ii) services, (iii) leadership, (iv) staff, (v) finance, and (vi) funding. This recognises the focus of YEF and ECN on the voluntary sector as opposed to providing direct service delivery into the community.
- 7.5. It was also agreed that semi-structured interviews with member organisations and strategic partners would enable a more detailed look at the journey of the sector through the crisis as opposed to taking a sense-check at one point in time. Taking into account the financial crisis faced by most, if not all, public sector agencies, it was felt to be important to highlight the value of the sector and its effectiveness in its response to the crisis to create a strong case for its support. The topic guides used for interviews with YEF’s members and strategic partners are provided in Appendices E and F.

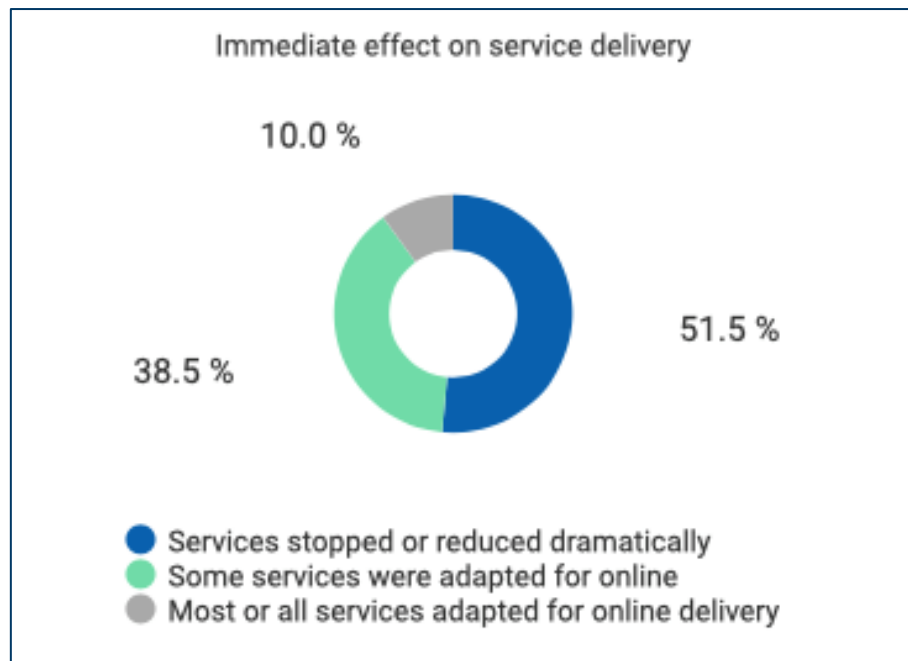
Part Three: Key Findings

We begin this Part with an analysis of those who participated in the study. In Section 8, we present how the sector has adapted to the pandemic; in Section 9, we look at the social issues that it has brought to the forefront, who has become vulnerable and the issues that are expected to arise. Section 10 focuses on the impact of the pandemic on the sector's workforce, with Section 11 focusing on the impact of the pandemic on funding and Section 12 describing how the sector is starting to recover, the support it needs and a call to action for funders.



8. Responding to the pandemic

- 8.1. In the immediate aftermath of lockdown, most VCOs described services as either grinding to a halt almost overnight or reducing significantly as centres closed. Many were able to adapt some of their services to an online offer, and a minority reported shifting all of their services towards a digital offer within two or three days.



- 8.2. VCO leaders had to work out quickly how to transition staff towards remote working. For some VCOs, the notion of working from home was not new, but for others this was a particular struggle. Some VCOs reported not being set up for remote working, including not having online banking and, therefore, struggling to carry out some of the basics of running their charity.
- 8.3. In parallel with the need to work remotely, came the closures of schools and therefore the removal of childcare and education services for children, severely compromising capacity for a number of workers in the sector. This, and other impacts on the sector workforce is explored more in Section 10.

Digital Engagement

- 8.4. VCOs used a variety of means to keep in touch with service users during lockdown including social media, video conferencing such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Skype as well as direct communications, including text messaging, telephone calls and WhatsApp messaging.
- 8.5. There were a number of issues raised in maintaining engagement with their service users: those that used email updates and social media have been concerned that they have not been able to work out how many people are engaging with the material as the method is one-way. Others have been concerned that they have lacked the skills to be able to use the range of technology competently. Some have highlighted that, despite the progress made with technology, some services they have do not translate well online.

- 8.6. Many feel that liaising and building relationships online is problematic for mainly disadvantaged service users who lack the space and privacy to engage openly in especially sensitive discussion. There was concern about what practice to adopt to meet safeguarding expectations when engaging with children and young people online; one organisation that felt confident they understood how to do this felt that it was very resource intensive to host a group video conferencing call: they used a waiting room facility so they could approve participants before they were entered onto a call, had to monitor the chat dialogue to check that there was no inappropriate discussion taking place, and needed to get consent from adults to engage. Some VCOs who engage with all ages noted a drop off of engagement amongst their young people. There



Some of the young people struggled to communicate through online methods and just didn't like it

VCO interviewee

was also significant concern that many services users lacked the means to engage with a digital service which is explored further in Section 9.

- 8.7. Moving from an open provision to scheduling calls either online or by telephone made the interaction more intense, according to some research participants. For some, that loss of spontaneity made engagement slightly artificial which hindered communications. There was consensus amongst those interviewed that moving from a Centre based provision to a 1-2-1 online setting was completely different. VCOs aiming to engage new service users to elicit insight and feedback about services as part of an existing contract found it particularly challenging, expressing that it felt like “cold calling” and difficult due to GDPR requirements.

- 8.8. However, it also seemed that some VCOs felt that the enforced switch to an online offer challenged assumptions that they had held about the method with which they could engage with their service users, many of whom in one case were particularly vulnerable with complex and enduring mental health needs. One unforeseen benefit of a 1-2-1 scheduled call was that service users who may not have come forward in a group-based activity were getting dedicated time and attention that they might not otherwise have got, leading some participants to reflect on having got to know several of their service users better and seeing increased engagement with some of them.



I've got to know some service users much better

VCO interviewee

- 8.9. Many VCOs also found that not having to travel between meetings increased their ability to engage online with other stakeholders, on forums and on a 1-2-1 basis. This has led, for many, to improved relationships with partner organisations and more time for work.
- 8.10. VCOs demonstrated creativity in the ways in which they moved services online. They described setting online challenges for their services users, and fitness was a key trend amongst those VCOs who felt more able to deliver their services remotely, with football training and activity videos, and Joe Wicks' style

fitness sessions being particularly well received. In some cases, VCOs experienced engagement with a different demographic to which they were used to: engaging particularly older services users and disabled services users who had found external sessions inaccessible or unappealing. Other examples of sessions that the sector had moved online included celebrations of religious festivals, hosting of an online art exhibition, holding a wacky art session and piloting remote digital and intergenerational volunteering.

- 8.11. However, many were keen to point out that, in the main, this did not replace the value of face to face interaction. Some also felt that many service users and staff were experiencing digital fatigue from having suddenly and so extensively had to engage digitally. Some VCOs had seen a more recent drop off in engagement which they attributed to this.

Repurposing contracts / roles

- 8.12. Many interviewees reported that the nature of their services had lost relevance and, as a result, they had adapted to meet the sudden changed needs of their service users. Stepping in to be part of the solution for existing beneficiaries was mentioned in particular by many of the smaller VCOs who recognised themselves as trusted providers on which their service users relied. Supporting them to navigate an uncertain period became their focus.

- 8.13. For many interviewees, this has meant supporting disadvantaged members of their community to access food, with a partnership formed less than four weeks from the start of lockdown with private and voluntary sector partners building up capacity to support to provide over 7,500 parcels to 360 families and 1,500 individuals with staples and essential fruits and vegetables. The numbers needing this support have increased significantly since the start of lockdown with many families being plunged into crises as a result of having suddenly lost their jobs or having had to temporarily close their business.



...sports clubs or community organisations have gone from delivering swimming lessons or being a cricket club to instead doing food drops... or they're checking in with vulnerable residents

VCO interviewee

- 8.14. For others this has meant befriending activities and reaching out to those who are unable for reasons of age or being classed as severely clinically vulnerable to be outside of the home as well as those socially isolated who live alone. Providing this and more general responsive support is prevalent in the data in this study, and some VCOs have highlighted a need to revisit their strategy in light of these development or consider an exit strategy from these interim service arrangements.

Case study: Southall Food Distribution Service

The Young Ealing Foundation and the Southall Community Alliance partnered together to create a fresh food distribution service in Southall in response to the COVID -19 pandemic. The parcels are providing a mixture of staples, essential fruits and vegetables. So far, 7,500 parcels have left our hub in Southall, providing vital support for 360 families and 1,500 individuals.



We have fund-raised so we can buy wholesale and have also been receiving donations from two surplus food charities called City Harvest and the Felix Project. The project has also received significant logistical support from Ealing Community Transport and St. John's Church Southall Green.

We have been blown away by the support from volunteers, with 72 amazing individuals helping with the packing and distribution of each food parcel. We have also had a number of the volunteers help us to translate information about the service into several languages, this has ensured we are giving food appropriate to each families' cultural and religious needs and that language is not a barrier for them receiving vital support.

"Wonderful, you guys are doing a wonderful thing as many people are falling through the cracks. Well done."

The food distribution service has also supported families in the local area with toys and learning resources including to this parent.

"I'm a single mum with 2 boys and was very stressed and worried with this sudden pandemic. I was worried if I have enough money to feed my boys, pay my bills, as I need to get more food for them because they would be at home all day, and didn't know how long that will be. One day I got a knock on my door, a person with a basket saying that "I'm from Food Distribution Service and I'm here to give you a food parcel for you and your family". I was so surprised and shocked; I couldn't believe it!

I was so overwhelmed, I picked up the basket and brought it to my kitchen, and my kids came running inside too. We looked - there were fruits, vegetables, juices, meals, cheese, milk, pasta, soups, eggs, sauces. My kids were so excited. I quickly made my kids cheese and eggs grilled sandwiches with juice. They were happy, I was so happy seeing them enjoying their food. As a mother that was absolutely overwhelming...a big, big thank you from me and my boys."



Support for the sector

- 8.15. Most VCOs said that they had accessed mainly local and central government information sources for information about the Coronavirus and what it meant for this work. However, there were a number of issues identified by respondents and interviewees alike: firstly, people found the amount of information overwhelming and too broad without enough specific information about how the information related to the sector. Many acknowledged that the guidance necessarily changed quite rapidly, but this made it difficult to keep up with. Several VCOs commented on the lack of information translated into community language, and some frustration was shown that especially for a borough as diverse as Ealing, which has the third most ethnically diverse local population in the United Kingdom with BME communities making up 53% of residents², that translation of key information was not more readily adopted as an approach. How survey respondents described the information available to them on the Coronavirus is provided below.



- 8.16. Many VCOs drew support from other organisations in an existing network, usually themed by a type, e.g. Advice, Youth, Sport or by Ethnicity, although some also reported engaging with local and national infrastructure organisations mostly for training provision.
- 8.17. On the whole, VCOs felt that flexibility had been shown by existing funders, especially by those who provided grants. However, taking into account the timing of the data gathering phase much of which was mid – late July, almost four months since the start of lockdown, there was concern at the lack of certainty from funders and commissioners about future funding, whether existing contracts would be honoured in full and what many described as a

² Ealing Council, Equalities in Ealing – Summary Needs Assessment, 2017

“short-term” approach by funders to the current situation. For many, this made it difficult to plan, which is explored further in Section 11.

- 8.18. From the evidence gathered, and in contrast to the data from the literature review, the voluntary sector in Ealing is generally well supported by its trustees. Specific support from trustees has included supporting operations including practical support to, for example, set up for online service delivery and volunteers, providing advice and guidance around decisions including furloughing and service delivery and general increases in communications and support. Some trustees have been more hands-on with strategic scenario and business planning in light of the challenges thrown up by the pandemic and provided support for fundraising, financial decision making and financial planning.
- 8.19. Respondents to the survey have drawn most on support from their internal staff, with approximately 1 in 3 expressing support from peers, colleagues and trustees. Approximately 10% have accessed external training and supervision during lockdown whilst approximately 1 in 5 respondents feel that they have not received any support.
- 8.20. When asked about observations about practices that they had observed across the sector, many interviewees spoke in particular about the food distribution project that has received a lot of profile during lockdown. However, more interviewees had decidedly not singled out any particular instance of best practice but have spoken proudly of the collective effort that they have witnessed of togetherness, collaboration and community demonstrated across the sector. Ealing Together was singled out for particular praise at how it has brought together the sector including partners who have been identified by a significant minority of not having worked together or having been in conflict prior to the start of the pandemic. The GOS&D Report echoed the praise towards the Ealing Together network.

Learning

1. The enforced shift towards a digital offer for many has highlighted the essential need for the whole sector to have the skills and access to digital, both to enable remote working as well as to support delivery.
2. It is not an automatic replacement for face to face service delivery, but for some groups of service users, it is more a more accessible proposition, and VCOs could benefit from some time and space to reflect on the role that digital can play to enhance their ways of working.
3. The instinctive reaction of many organisations across Ealing to work together and form partnerships in order to carve out solutions, in part, helped by the formation of Ealing Together, is seen to be a positive that should be retained post crisis.
4. This may help consider how to respond to the challenges that the sector faces in continuing to stay abreast of the information, understand its implications and adapt accordingly. There is a valuable role to relieve this burden from the sector and prevent numerous VCOs from doing this

individually, ensuring that information is specific and accessible to the sector and supporting VCOs to implement any arising obligations.

9. Vulnerable groups in Ealing

- 9.1. VCOs have demonstrated extreme levels of concern that residents in Ealing who were already vulnerable prior to the start of the pandemic have seen their situations worsened. They have also identified groups of people who have been made newly vulnerable as a result of the pandemic. For the VCOs who have continued to operate, many have noted increased demand on their services with reduced capacity to meet this demand.
- 9.2. In this section we look at some of the factors that have rendered particular groups more vulnerable. However, it is important to note that these issues are not mutually exclusive. Many residents are experiencing a number of these barriers and are, as a result, placed in a much more precarious position.

Digital exclusion

- 9.3. There is grave concern that there are parts of Ealing, most notably in Southall, where digital inclusion is low. Although digital inclusion is defined differently in different places, the definition that we use in this study refers to that provided by the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) as “having the access, skills and motivation to confidently go online to access the opportunities of the internet”.
- 9.4. Participating BAME-led groups of the GOS&D Report estimate that 65% of their beneficiaries are digitally excluded.
- 9.5. With lockdown prompting a move to digital information and service provision, those without online access have been hindered from accessing GP services, online shopping in particular opting for delivery of food shopping, government and council guidance and interacting with friends and family using face to face video conferencing platforms such as Zoom or Skype or mobile based apps such as House Party or WhatsApp.
- 9.6. Even in households with internet access, with school, nursery and college closures, many families with multiple children and adults working from home have found that they do not have adequate levels of IT equipment such as computers, laptops, tablets and smart phones to be able to carry out work and school homework, risking their ability to maintain expected education attainment standards. As debilitating has been the lack of skills to use the internet and the lack of information translated into community language rendering families isolated without the means to communicate with the outside world.



Not everyone can benefit from it... because they might not be connected online. On some occasions... we are working with huge families with multiple siblings, so the older children always get it first

VCO interviewee

- 9.7. VCOs have described having experienced a drop off of service users who they consider particularly vulnerable, and they are concerned as to how they are and what, if any, support networks they are drawing upon. Some VCOs have described using telephone and, in rare cases, letters to maintain some form of contact with service users.
- 9.8. However online support is working well for some service users; several VCOs have reignited contact with previous service users who had moved away, and they are also finding digital engagement useful for some disabled service users who had found face to face engagement inaccessible. Those shielding have also been able to use digital as one of a limited number of ways of engaging with services.

Family structure

- 9.9. Single parents, parents of multiple children especially younger children and those who display challenging behaviour and carers have all seen their commitments suddenly increase. Although schools remained open for children of key workers and those considered vulnerable, it was reported by some VCOs that some parents did not avail themselves of this if they had multiple children. Respite care was suspended for many children, and VCOs who had run



Biggest issue I realised... was that a lot of the stuff we were delivering [for the children] was giving parents respite, and because it wasn't doing that anymore it wasn't relevant for their family structure and schedules

VCO interviewee

services for children noted that parents who would usually send their children for activities were

indirectly benefiting by being able to have a break, which, during lockdown, they could no longer do. For some, they felt, that activity was no longer a priority as a result.

- 9.10. By contrast, many people living alone are experiencing social isolation with particular concern shown for elder people who had been asked to stay at home and who might not be adept at using the internet to maintain relationships with others. An interviewee emphasised the importance of getting people out of the home including those with dementia who “need to be outside” and would stand to experience health deterioration as a result. In this case, it was felt that not enough priority was being given to those people who were forced to stay at home who had, hitherto, relied on day centres.



I worry about those who live on their own. That food delivery and five minute chat was their lifeline

VCO interviewee

- 9.11. Single parents were also acknowledged as experiencing social isolation by nature of not having other adult interaction; concern was also show towards those with invisible disabilities such as those shielding.

Living conditions

- 9.12. VCOs are concerned that many families are living in conditions that pose harm to their mental health. Of particular concern are families living in overcrowded conditions with no access to outdoor space. The GOS&D Report described an extreme instance of a family of eight found living in a one-bedroom flat with one functioning window as well as a more common situation of a family of three housed in a one-room dwelling with shared facilities for other residents. This lack of space and privacy would make it near impossible for anyone to self-isolate if they developed symptoms of the coronavirus, for children to engage with their education during lockdown and may increase family tensions and heighten stress.
- 9.13. Some VCOs are acutely worried that there are many unreported cases of domestic violence and abuse in the home, asking if people are unsafe in the home and unable to leave, what that might mean for their wellbeing and the risk that they are being exposed to.
- 9.14. In addition to increased family tensions, some interviewees have reported issues of anti-social abuse and noise nuisances resulting in stress at home and conflict with neighbours or people in the wider neighbourhood.



If a child wants to...say something to you, you're on a screen with potentially 10-15 other people - how do they then get over to you that they've actually got something confidential that they want to speak to you about?

VCO interviewee

Non-English-speaking families

- 9.15. Those who do not speak English at home were already considered to be vulnerable. They have been singled out as a group that is particularly at risk firstly because of a disproportionate effect of the virus on mainly BAME groups but also because of the lack of translation of key information into community languages. This study uncovered a number of worrying incidents that families were subject to including:
- Inaccurate community messaging about the coronavirus leading to inadvertent risk taking in the community
 - Residents being taken advantage of, for example, losing their jobs when employers have furloughed them and are fraudulently receiving government payments on their behalf
 - Wrongly believing that suspended activities such as debt collection has meant that their debt has been cancelled, plunging them into insurmountable debt.
- The GOS&D Report also highlighted the risks of inaccurate community messaging highlighting that many in BAME communities had believed that their children would be detained for 14 days if found to have the coronavirus.
- 9.16. The VCOs who spoke about the risks posed questioned why in a borough as diverse as Ealing, structures were not already in place to ensure that communications from local and national governments were translated into

community languages, which they felt, may have prevented some of these issues from occurring.

Educational attainment

- 9.17. Although not exclusive to non-English speaking families, there is concern that for many children in families who do not speak English at home, in September



The majority of them can't get any help from... people at home so before lockdown they were [already] behind. Now they will be even more behind. We worry for their attainment and the negative impact the pandemic will have on their education

VCO interviewee

after the summer period there is a noticeable gap between them in their peers in their literacy and communication

skills as a result. After a five-month hiatus from school, the gap between those who have been supported to engage with education compared to those who have not been is expected to have grown.

Emerging issues and unmet needs

- 9.18. In addition to those who were already disadvantaged prior to the start of the pandemic, there is concern that the lockdown has plunged high numbers of people, very suddenly, into crisis. This is supported by Advice agencies who have noted that the types of clients have changed and that they are now seeing “business owners, single parents, people like you and me” needing support to navigate their next steps. Reluctance to ask for help has been flagged as a barrier to their engagement.
- 9.19. Unsurprisingly, therefore, many employees in the voluntary sector have also found themselves on the receiving end of services as a direct result of the pandemic, some as a result of the pressures that it has placed on their mental health, others as a result of losing their job and needing support to access welfare support and some as a result of trauma and grief as a result of losing family members to Covid-19.
- 9.20. Despite the focus on the Coronavirus, VCOs have pointed to people with newly developed mental or physical health needs for whom they are concerned as, potentially, they may not be engaged in the network of support of the voluntary sector. The minority of interviewees who expressed this as a view felt that you had to be in the structure of the sector to really know it, and that GP’s would not necessarily have knowledge of the wealth of support that exists. VCOs submit that there is no way of knowing these people exist until they are in the system.
- 9.21. Many VCOs are bracing themselves for a spike in demand in a number of areas. A number of measures have been taken by the Government to assist households to retain their homes and enable local authorities to tackle the specific challenges faced by rough sleepers. This has included extending the notice periods that landlords have to give to tenants to evict them, suspending repossessions of houses of owners with mortgage arrears, increasing Housing Benefit and Universal Credit to help families with rent and living costs and

providing emergency funding for local authorities to support rough sleepers and other vulnerable homeless people into appropriate accommodation. Guidance to lenders from the Financial Conduct Authority request operating payment holidays for owner-occupiers and buy-to-let landlords. VCOs are worried what will happen once these temporary measures are lifted and whether the resource will be there to support the demand.

- 9.22. A number of VCOs have carried out their own research into the experience of their service users and are concerned for the mental wellbeing of their service users, many of whom are experiencing trauma, isolation from friends, increased stress as a result of worsening financial position, worry about family and friends and uncertainty and fear about the future.
- 9.23. The GOS&D Report suggests that discrimination towards and a lack of engagement of BME residents underpin the experiences of BME residents, and that these present barriers to how services are accessed.
- 9.24. There is also concern about the condition of those service users who have disappeared during the lockdown period, as one interviewee described “the most chaotic who would turn up with carrier bags of unopened mail”, people at home possibly experiencing domestic abuse, and vulnerable children who cannot speak up for themselves and who are not seeing anyone else who might otherwise pick up on something being wrong at home.
- 9.25. A minority of VCOs described some service users starting to take more risks as they have found it difficult to adhere to a prolonged period of restrictions. Holding birthday parties with multiple guests from different households in divergence with government guidance, meeting up with friends at night and ignoring guidance altogether were examples provided by interviewees.

Learning

1. The pandemic has seen the scope of what is considered to be social isolation increase to include, not just those living alone, but also those who are elderly or shielding and therefore either unable to socialise with members of their household. Where other members of their household had or continue to shield alongside them to protect their safety, they in addition to households who are digitally excluded and / or speakers of other language have experienced isolation in their units as a result of being unable to access accurate information, online services or socialise online with others.
2. This places digital inclusion as a high priority with digital inclusion construed in its broader sense to include the equipment, know-how, confidence and affordable access to internet in order to engage digitally. As many organisations consider maintaining an online presence and ongoing fears of increased Covid-19 cases and renewed restrictions on movement, tackling the issue of digital exclusion would help to mitigate the effects of a second wave of the virus.
3. As with the experiences of VCOs in delivering services online, it is clear that for most people, face to face engagement is preferable and, in some cases, crucial for the mental wellbeing and physical health of those who used to rely on day centres. The call to prioritise opening up centres in Ealing is also

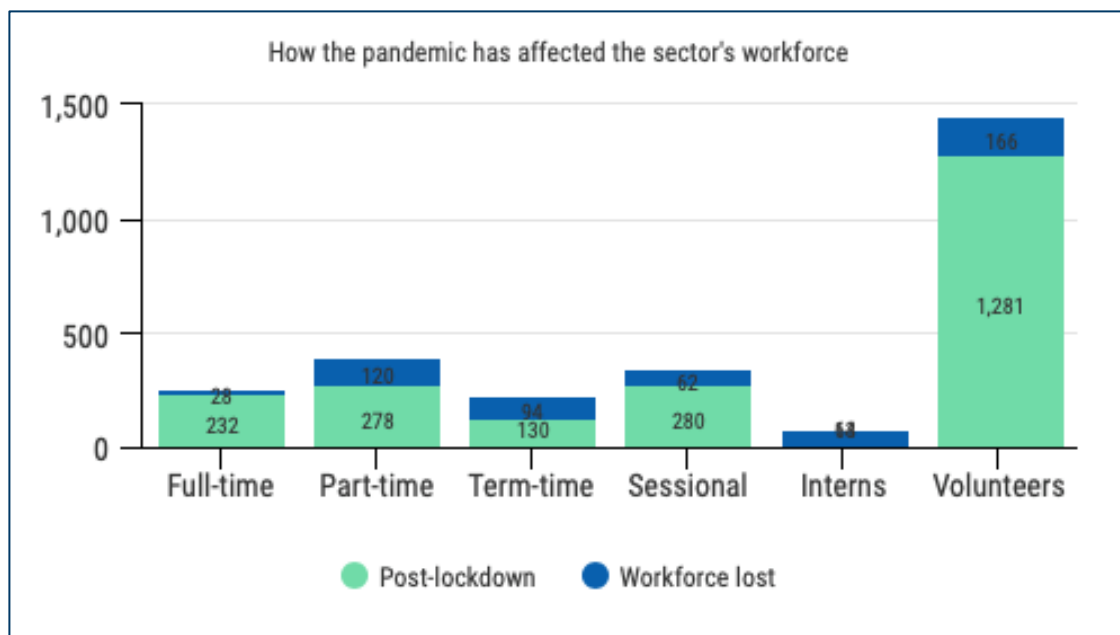
crucial for people who are not safe at home or who need respite from others in their household.

4. The concern shown by the sector towards service users with whom they have lost contact or those newly vulnerable who do not know from where they can get support is reflective of an uncertainty of the nature and volume of need that is going unaddressed. This suggests a need for a proactive resource to identify and engage (or re-engage) those who are vulnerable and without support. However, the suggestion that BME groups face additional barriers to how they experience services implies that the real volume of need could be higher still.

10. Impact of the Coronavirus on the sector's workforce

In this section, we look at the impact of the pandemic on the sector's workforce before exploring how well VCOs were able to transition to remote working and the impact of the pandemic on workers' own well-being.

- 10.1. According to the results of our online survey, completed by representatives of 66 organisations, the sector has lost 20% of its workforce, reducing from 2,748 to 2,214 workers. Hardest hit has been paid employees, with part time staff reducing by 30% and sessional workers (mainly zero hours contracts) of which almost 1 in 5 workers have been released by their contractor. Anecdotally, we know that many freelance sports workers are included in this figure. There are also 166 fewer volunteers which constitutes 10% of the voluntary workforce. However, this figure is attributed to losses amongst 40% of organisations and 10% who have increased in their numbers of volunteers. One organisation whose volunteer numbers had not changed as a result of the pandemic accounted for over 20% of the workforce with an estimated 500 volunteers supporting its operations. Including this figure brings the contribution of volunteers to the sector's workforce to 58%.



- 10.2. The loss in staff represents just over half of organisations (55%) which have lost staff. 35% of organisations have lost at least a quarter of their workforce, almost one in five have lost over half of their workforce and almost one in ten have lost nearly all (at least 75%) of their workers.

Number of VCOs	Size of workforce lost
7	Above 75%
7	50% - 75%
16	25% - 50%
11	0 – 25%
13	Unchanged
8	Increased staff

- 10.3. In addition to losing their jobs, the sector has reduced capacity through furloughing staff, with over a third of organisations pursuing this option. Data show that the situation is likely to get worse before it gets better as, of the 24 organisations who made this decision, over half of them expect to make members of staff redundant thereafter. In addition, one in six staff who have not made any redundancies yet, expect to do so within the next three to six months.
- 10.4. One in five organisations have already had staff directly affected by illness from Covid-19 resulting in reduced capacity. Reduced capacity was also a result of staff working whilst managing childcare. One interview described operating at around 20% when looking after their young child and supporting them through school issued home-based study. Some volunteers had reduced their hours as a result of having to find new work (if having been made unemployed from their paid work) and some experienced having had their unpaid staff removed by partnership organisations through which their placements had been arranged.
- 10.5. Not all furloughing decisions were decided by employers as some staff had requested furlough to meet new home-based commitments. Funding was the main cause of organisations furloughing staff, but this did not mean that the demand for their services has reduced. Many staff who continued to work were therefore having to carry out the roles of those who had been furloughed or had their capacity compromised, in addition to meeting the increased demands by existing and new service users. For these people who were interviewed, stress levels were unsustainably high. In some cases, volunteers were able to step up in responsibility levels to help bridge the gap.
- 10.6. The lack of certainty about the future was a common issue cited by survey respondents who felt that this made it particularly difficult to make management and staffing decisions such as who to furlough and why.

Remote working

10.7. In line with the experiences of many service users, many VCOs struggled to adapt to remote working. Some VCOs expressed surprise that some of their employees were as digitally excluded as their service users, and they had to get them set up so they could work from home. From the data, many supplementary schools in particular struggled to move to remote working. Some VCOs have embraced it and, much like their experience of delivering services online, are considering a blended approach as part of their new normal.



Digital exclusion is a massive thing amongst our clients. They come to us because they can't access online, but what surprised me was that three of our best...workers didn't have wifi at home, and I didn't know that

VCO interviewee

10.8. VCOs have tested different ways to recreate a work environment from home, by holding more frequent staff meetings using video conferencing platforms such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom. Google hangouts was noted as a tool that enabled people to see when colleagues had logged in or out, that could be used to greet each other or post questions to others in an unintrusive way, maintaining a sense of working together whilst also drawing a helpful distinction for them to switch off mentally once they had logged out.

Fear amongst workers

10.9. Many VCOs spoke of crippling fear, anxiety and panic amongst their workers. For some this was because many of them had family members or close friends who had been directly affected by Covid-19. We found that 80% of interviewees who spoke about staff being either directly affected by Covid-19, themselves or someone close to them are BME-led. There were consistent reflections by



Every single member of staff knows someone who has been seriously ill or who has died... it has caused panic in the community and with staff

Somali VCO interviewee

those interviewed from the Somali community that its community had been severely affected. By contrast some

VCO workers had had no contact with anyone who had knowingly had the virus.

10.10. Many workers who had stayed at home during lockdown or who



We were key workers so we continued working throughout at its most scariest... we worked really hard on our comms, Health and Safety...so people felt that it was in control. The work...delivering food parcels is very worthwhile. [This meant] the impact on our workers on their mental health ... has been extremely positive

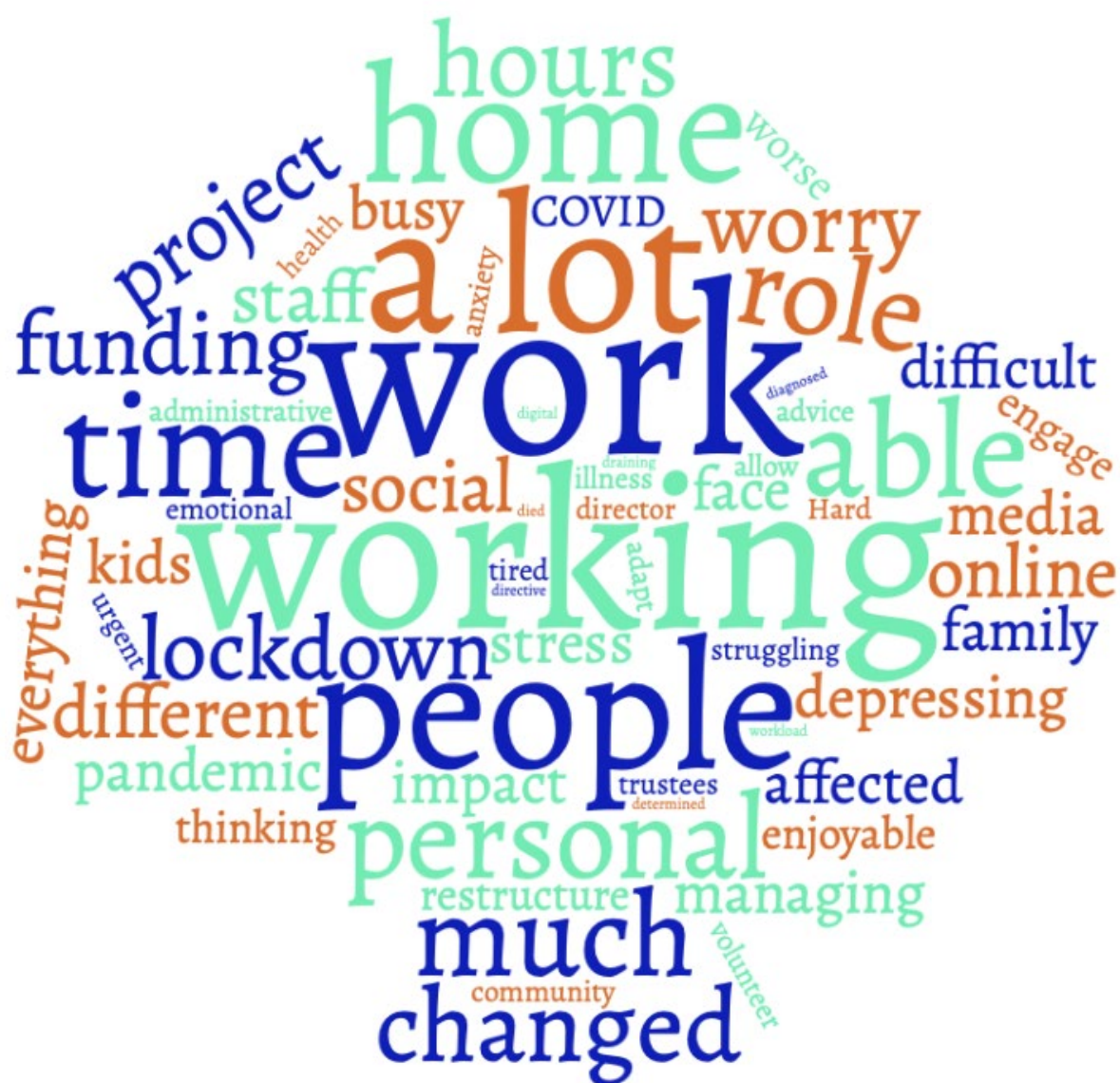
VCO interviewee

had isolated themselves for the sake of vulnerable members of their household feel scared to return to work particularly if it means using public transport. By

contrast, many of those who had continued to work, key workers, at the height of the pandemic were less afraid of operating and, as one interviewee said had found that “The new normal was normal for us very early on.”

Leadership

- 10.11. This section is based on those who participated in the study, most of whom were either heads of their organisation, trustees or senior leaders (at least 68% based on role titles and descriptions provided).
- 10.12. It is often accepted that leaders of VCOs, particularly those that are smaller, often carry the burden of multiple roles with few people within the organisation to turn to. Although we have said that trustees have generally been supportive of VCOs during this challenging time, there are many leaders who were interviewed as part of this study who described unsustainable, overwhelming circumstances.
- 10.13. Most commonly described was high levels of stress, anxiety and worry, particularly at the start of the pandemic as a result of worry about other staff's mental health, exposure to negativity in the media and stress about funding. For some leaders this exasperated existing mental health conditions that they had been managing; for others this brought about levels of stress that they had not experienced before.
- 10.14. Many VCOs also spoke of having an extensive workload, in several cases we heard of a leader being the only paid member of staff left to take on the organisation's workload or being on call for 24 hours a day for people in their community and, for some, this workload felt frantic. Notably, the nature of the role has changed for many VCO leaders many of whom are focused on funding, and some of whom specifically mentioned missing the face to face interaction with service users.
- 10.15. The pressure of trying to respond to the needs of service users and respond to urgent financial needs were also mentioned as key sources of worry. The ways in which respondents referred to changes to their role as a result of the pandemic are provided below.



The medium and longer term

- 10.16. Those VCOs who are already starting to bring back staff are doing so tentatively, either by bringing back some staff or bringing back all but on reduced hours. Most found it difficult to plan their steps because of the uncertainty surrounding future funding and whether there would be a second wave of the virus. Those VCOs who work closely with schools are waiting to see what happens when schools are expected to re-open in September.
- 10.17. Those who are looking at appointing new roles are hoping to recruit for specific functions such as fundraisers and for operational staff funded through emergency funding, and a third of leaders interviewed are keen to increase their number of volunteers.

Learning

1. The fear and uncertainty surrounding the pandemic and how long it will be before it is no longer a threat is a crippling factor for many. However, we have also seen that some VCOs, particularly those who kept working during

lockdown, were able to achieve an improved sense of teamwork within safe operations, signalling the possibility of working with the virus as opposed to waiting until or if it goes away. However, this cannot be achieved without strong leadership in the sector or without strong council support backed up by comprehensive health and safety protocols and communications that instil confidence to resume centre-based services and face to face services more generally.

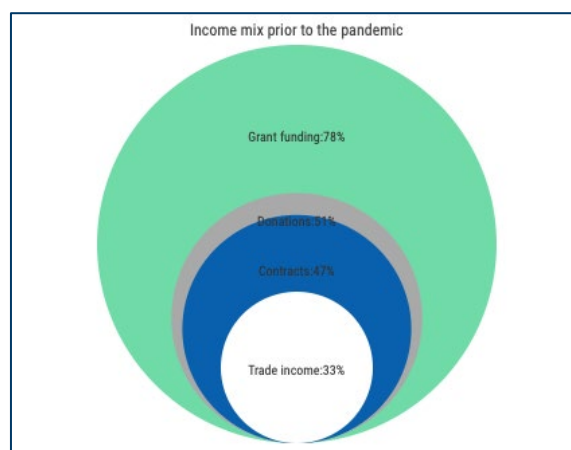
2. The financial situation for many VCOs is causing great worry and anxiety and, although it will be difficult for many funders and commissioners to offer certainty, more insight into the possible scenarios will start to offer VCOs a basis from which they can start planning, particularly as they start to consider what avenues to pursue to diversify funding and secure the provision of their services.
3. The announcement that the UK was officially in recession on 12th August signalled more difficult times to come including job losses across various sectors. With the increase demand in services and the need for unemployed people to be supported back into paid work, there presents an opportunity to explore how there might be a service that fulfils the demand in service and equips volunteers with skills and accreditations to be more competitive in the economy thereafter.

11. Impact of the Coronavirus on funding

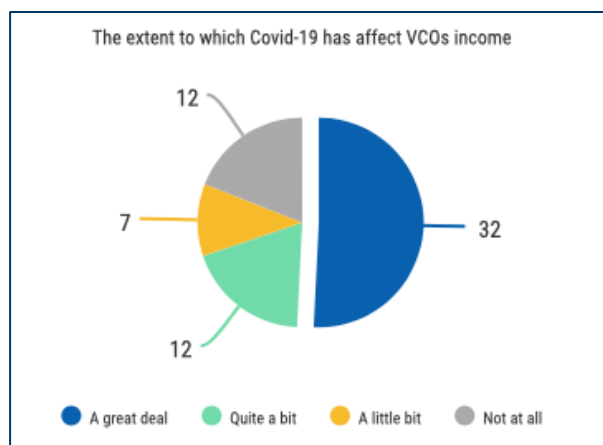
In this section we discuss the income mix of the sector prior to the pandemic provided by data from over 60 VCOs, the impact of the lockdown on funding and the reserves held by the sector to weather that storm. Finally, we discuss how VCOs have navigated the landscape for emergency funding.

Income mix

- 11.1. Prior to the funding, most of the sector, 78%, received funds from grants (mainly trusts and foundations as well as from some corporate partnerships); with around half receiving funding from donations and contracts and a third receiving income from trade. Over half of all the VCOs surveyed and most of the smallest VCOs receive most of their income from grants and contracts. Only seven of the VCOs surveyed have diverse income sources with the main source of income accounting for less than 50% of turnover. Again, this is mainly income from grants.



- 11.2. The majority of VCOs have described their income being affected by the pandemic to “a great extent” and, whilst there are no noticeable trends amongst those VCOs, those not at all affected were mostly reliant on grants or contracts. This reflects the flexibility, leniency and understanding described by many VCOs about the way in which funders have responded to their grant awards and by some about their contracts, with some funders from Trusts and Foundations accommodating VCOs repurposing of funds towards providing responsive urgent support. However, this does not seem to be generally felt



across the VCOs surveyed. VCOs are worried about the suspension of contracts, not receiving clarity from commissioners on what their intentions are regarding future funding, worry about the state of existing service level agreements with schools and worry about many funders suspending their normal grants rounds in favour of emergency funding, which most of the VCOs surveyed are not accessing.

- 11.3. VCOs who received trade income ranged from annual subscriptions and membership, income from shops / cafes, income for art commissions and rent of space. Most of these income streams dried up overnight, and VCOs are worried that, even once they start to resume services, the effect of the recession might make it more difficult for people to make even the smallest contribution towards project costs. Some VCOs classed the subsidies they received from service users towards project costs as donations as they were nominal amounts and, in some cases, voluntary. Other types of donations received from individuals included through Crowdfunding, charity walks and personal donations.
- 11.4. In total, seven in ten organisations reported a decrease in income as a result of Covid-19; of these three quarters of organisations reported a severe reduction. However, over 10% of organisations (8 in 62) reported an increase in income as a result of Covid-19 representing over 1 in 4 medium sized organisations all with a turnover of between £50k - £500k. With the exception of one organisation who was providing food drops, all commonly described shifting successfully to digital provision either “quite a bit” or “to a great extent” and were all successful in navigating emergency funding, describing it as “straightforward” and “easy”.

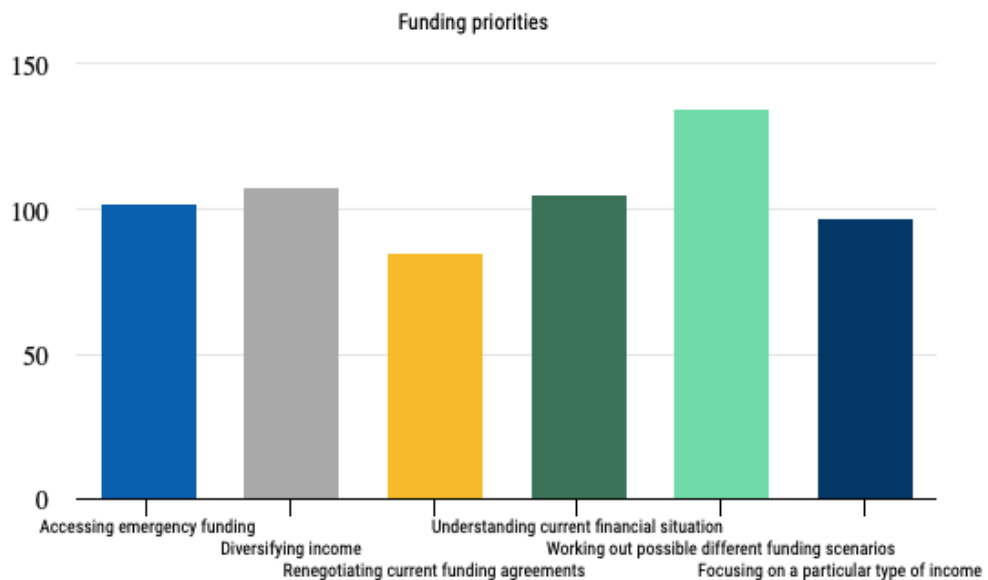
Reserves

11.5. One in ten VCOs had no reserves at all prior to the start of the pandemic with one VCOs stating that as a result of the crisis, that they now knew to put reserves away. Whilst this study did not assess the impact of the pandemic on their reserves, many referred to “having to dip into the reserves” during the lockdown period, “dwindling reserves”, “losing reserves” or in one case, lockdown rendering the organisation “skint”. One interviewee described using their own personal income to keep their charity afloat.

Funding priorities

11.6. Unsurprisingly, building their reserves back up is a priority for many VCOs. Of the fundraising priorities presented to survey respondents, financial scenario planning was provided as the most important for the sector based on a weighted scoring of priorities with 3 issued for high priority; 2 for medium priority and 1 for low priority.

11.7. However, the priority which most organisations rated as the highest was accessing emergency funds which was a high priority for 40% of organisations, diversifying income which was a high priority for 38% of organisations and renegotiating current agreements with funders, a high priority for 28% of organisations.



Emergency funding

11.8. 56% of VCOs applied for emergency funding. Of those who applied, most (21 / 35) said that they had no issues with applying. Those who did have issues mainly felt that they lacked the skills and or capacity to complete the process effectively. They singled out access to expertise for fundraising and diversifying income as key to their being able to bridge the gap in funding and attract new income. Another key concern amongst the VCOs surveyed were eligibility restrictions due to not being permitted to



apply by nature of their incorporation status or restrictions in what they could apply for, for example, not being able to apply for equipment and not being able to apply for long term funding. Decisions taking too long was a concern by a minority of VCOs and only a few felt that they did not know what funding was available.

Fundraising priorities

- 11.9. However, most VCOs are not relying on emergency funding alone for this period. In describing their financial priorities, many spoke about plans they had to diversify and explore other funding avenues with many describing how they would generate income through subsidies, subscriptions and memberships. However, much of this was against a backdrop for most VCOs of uncertainty about the current funding situation, the future and its impact on their ability to plan. Although respondents selected as their key tactics to achieve these priorities as revisiting or developing their strategic plan, financial management and support for funding applications, a significant majority expressed difficulties and uncertainty in knowing what to do.
- 11.10. The largest support ask was for long term and unrestricted funding, which one in four expressed was key to enabling them to rebuild their organisation and of crucial importance for the wider sector. Some felt that it was important to acknowledge the value of the sector particularly in light of the response during the pandemic, as agile and responsive organisations, and that demonstration of this value would be through core support so that VCOs did not have to worry about their own sustainability but could focus on their service users.

Learning

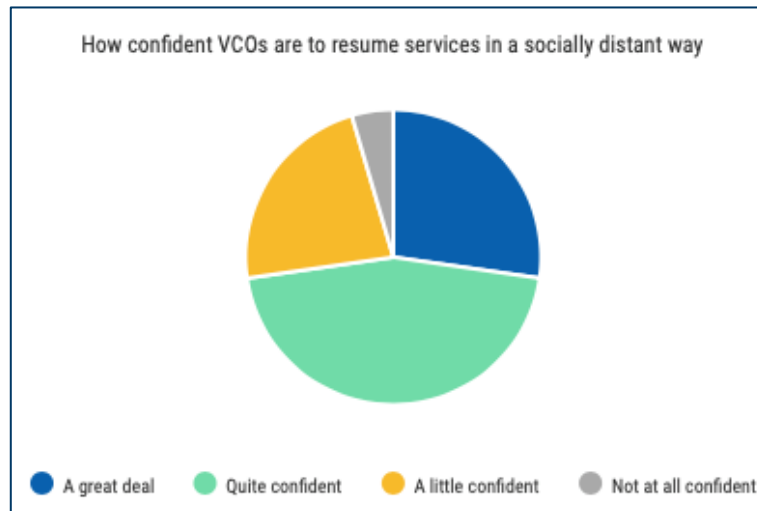
1. The common trends amongst the vast majority of those VCOs who have increased income during the pandemic are effective skills for bid writing and shifting to an online platform to deliver services – this underlines its importance for the wider sector.
2. The lack of certainty about the financial situation as a result of funders and commissioners not clarifying their medium- and longer-term funding position is compounded, for some VCOs, by uncertainty of the impact of the recession on service users' ability to contribute to service costs.
3. The call for core and unrestricted funding would be challenging for any funder in a significant, prolonged way, given the likelihood of less finances available and increased competition for what's left. It would undoubtedly release pressure to the sector. However, it is clear from the data that money alone will not resolve the current situation.
4. The complexity of the situation taking into account the need to understand the financial implications of social distancing on service delivery costs, alongside the priority to incorporate building up reserves into costings as well as working out the way forward from a strategic funding perspective, requires specialist skills for financial and scenario planning and fundraising strategy that the majority of VCOs in the sector do not have.

12. A sector in recovery

In this section, we look at how the sector is already taking steps to recover. We look at how VCOs are preparing to resume services, the priorities that they have identified, the key issues that they are facing and what they feel is needed to build back better.

How the sector is preparing to resume services

- 12.1. VCOs are confident of their ability to resume services in a socially distant way. When asked, over 70% said they felt “quite” confident or confident to a “great” extent. Only 5% felt “not at all” confident in their ability to resume services in a socially distant way.



- 12.2. When asked what steps VCOs were taking to resume services, VCOs reported already having started to take steps to train staff in a range of areas including in maximising technology as well as to meet social distancing regulations, as they understand them, that will govern how they resume services. VCOs are thinking about the health and safety practicalities of resuming services, pre delivery temperature checks, considering the purchase of PPE, keeping changing rooms closed at sports facilities and operating one-way systems around buildings

- 12.3. Many VCOs have highlighted restrictions as a result of operating and delivering out of small spaces. Many have said that they will continue to enforce remote working and distance service delivery, through phone or online. Some are only bringing back a skeleton staff into the office. This blended approach is being adopted for many and, for those who had a centre based provision, many envisage moving towards a closed, appointment-based system.

- 12.4. The implications for the delivery of services is that there will be smaller group sizes in order to meet social distancing regulations making it costlier and time resource



Numbers of people per session will be limited which will either provide us with smaller participant numbers per session or less income per session. Both of these factors will be detrimental to our services and the sustainability of some programmes

Survey respondent

intensive to meet existing output commitments and, if unable to reconcile this with funders will lead to reduced reach.

- 12.5. VCOs are worried that moving from open provision to an appointment-based system and having online sessions will run the risk of excluding certain types of people. From the evidence so far, this is likely to be excluding those most vulnerable, chaotic and financially disadvantaged.

Priorities for the sector

- 12.6. VCOs are adopting creative and a solution-focused approaches, exploring how during the summer, they can make use of the outdoors and identifying new premises to operate out of. Space was highlighted as the biggest barrier for the VCOs to deliver, and those already using shared facilities were keen to understand how they can ensure appropriate safeguards such as cleaning and how people move around the building to ensure that usage of a space after another group can happen safely.
- 12.7. Getting their heads around the practicalities and how to comply with the regulations is an enduring priority for the sector. VCOs need to consider processes and record keeping in line with Track and Trace guidelines, understanding social distancing guidelines and good practice as well as guidelines around delivery with groups taking into account bubbles and ratios for staffing and group management.
- 12.8. In addition to the practicalities, many VCOs are still reeling from a period of crises management, rapid change and, for many, firefighting. Understanding the current state of affairs, in terms of strategy, finance and contract statuses to inform scenario planning have come up as key priorities for the sector.
- 12.9. Many VCOs want to increase the number of volunteers that they have, as they predict continued cuts to their income and potential increases in demand. Some VCOs feel that inducting volunteers into an organisation is onerous, and akin to recruiting a new member of staff. An ideal scenario presented by one VCO was to have a ready bank of volunteers from which they would draw to support their work.

Support for the sector

- 12.10. Many VCOs spoke about the way in which the sector galvanised itself towards providing a strong response. There was value shown towards the Ealing Together framework and a strong feeling that collaboration of this nature was important for the sustainability of the sector. Those who spoke about the collaborative effect felt that it challenged how VCOs had worked together in the past, fostered a sense of collective agency as opposed to what some described as unhealthy competition before, and felt that it should continue. One interviewee



Single points of access to reduce fragmentation, duplication and confusion among the borough's residents about where to go for advice and support...Ealing Together worked well because of this approach

Survey respondent

felt that continuance of a collaborative structure could help mitigate the risks caused by funding reductions in the longer term.

- 12.11. After the uncertainty and fear caused by the lockdown, there is unsurprising tentativeness on the part of some VCOs, particularly those who have been more gravely affected by the Virus. However, many VCOs want to see a collective effort to prioritise opening up Ealing, noting the grave realities awaiting beneficiaries if the sector was to wait for Covid-19 to go away.
- 12.12. Ranging from older people with dementia whose health stands to suffer if they are not supported to socialise and get back into centres, those for whom online services are not a sufficient or adequate replacement for face to face engagement, and taking into account those who are necessarily excluded from online services as a result of language barriers or digital exclusion. Strong leadership, for some, in the form of galvanising the borough towards operating within the current constraints and challenges, and demonstrating a can-do



More like minded organisations working together, learning and sharing best practice...to ensure the safety of staff, volunteers and members alike to build confidence in the services offered

Survey respondent

approach supported by comprehensive health and safety procedures is the best way forward.

- 12.13. Some VCOs felt that they lacked contacts and relationships with experts and key suppliers and, in particular, want to see support from the Council to access specialists to help them to do things like support the redesign of their premises or to help implement other regulations such as by measuring air circulation.
- 12.14. Some wanted to see sector scales of economies for the purchase of hygiene consumables such as personal protection equipment, sneeze screens and supplies for deep cleans or recommendations and guidance for what one might expect to pay, as they had found pricing to be very variable.

Understanding guidance

- 12.15. VCOs acknowledged that there is a wealth of information provided by government, the Council and local infrastructure, but would like to see more support to tailor what the changes mean for the sector. In addition to getting more specific data, they are keen to see information translated into community languages as a matter of course.
- 12.16. Following on from this, thinking about the implications on how these changes influence policy and procedures has been burdensome, with some pointing to the difficulties of thinking through how to adapt policies around health and safety, safeguarding and risk assessment particularly when the guidance seems to change rapidly. More time has been spent by leaders on governance issues as a result of the pandemic and, in this respect, updates that highlight the changes in guidance ce relevant to the sector and specifically what they means for its ways of working would be valued.

Valuing and empowering the sector

- 12.17. There are a number of ways in which VCOs described its value as a sector to responding to the needs of the community during the pandemic. Many felt that the sector had demonstrated how agile, responsive and effective it was, but questioned whether its true value was acknowledged in the public sector. The GOS&D report supports this and shared a view of the six contributing BAME-led organisations that they, not only, undertake their work “in an environment that does not appreciate their value” but that the environment “continues to be hostile to their development.”



I think we need more engagement from the Council especially working with smaller groups like us

Survey respondent

- 12.18. In addition, the speed and urgency of the developments around the pandemic, for many, prompted a more collaborative effort alongside the Council, and the sector is keen to see this continue. Key to this is a commitment to keep trying to understand the complex, changing and nuanced issues in the community by valuing and listening to the sector.
- 12.19. An example given by an interviewee recognised that there were areas, such as in healthcare where the people in their community struggle to access services. This was supported by a healthcare professional interviewed who also wanted to see more diverse representation in feedback on health services. A suggestion to equip the sector with the tools to engage and consult the community to increase their understanding of those most affected by Covid-19 as well as to understand barriers to engaging with healthcare services in general was argued as more cost effective than attempting to do it without sector involvement.

A call to action for funders

- 12.20. Many funders have shown flexibility in how, especially grants, would be used during the pandemic. VCOs were particularly appreciative where this had been the case and gave examples of being able to repurpose their grants towards essential community support where needed. This was not the experience across the sector, however, and some VCOs are concerned by what that negotiation will look like. Under these unprecedented times, they would like to see existing grants (as some funders have done) shifted towards core costs in order to support their sustainability with trust that it will go towards important services in the immediate or longer term, should the threat of an organisation be at risk and therefore its services in the community.
- 12.21. Whilst social distancing measures continue to be in place, almost all affected VCOs spoke of their concern of the implications for services. They are keen to see delivery schedules renegotiated to take account of this, ideally with top up funding so they can bring in the resources necessary to meet service user demand but if not, at least, reducing targets to ensure they are not having to spend more to meet existing commitment. As part of the literature review, we

came across one funder who was providing top up funding to all existing grantees to help during this challenging period.

- 12.22. Unsurprisingly, the majority of grant funded VCOs want to see unrestricted or “core” funding and longer-term funding citing how difficult it was to operate “hand to mouth” all the time and recognising the adverse impact on reserves of lockdown. However, as many VCOs spoke about their wish to see more investment in the skills of the sector to mitigate the risks of inevitable cuts from the council and to meet the aim of building the sector up to be more resilient than it was before the crisis hit.
- 12.23. In order of frequency, skills development requested included:
- Specific skills for fundraising and writing bid applications
 - Skills to diversify income to secure new income types
 - Strategic planning skills
 - Skills for financial planning
 - Developing capacity to use technology, and
 - In anticipation of a spike in needs from the community, specific training to develop the capacity of their organisation to respond in areas such as mental health, post-traumatic stress, and abuse.
- 12.24. Certainty from funders about when they are going to resume their normal grant programmes for those who have suspended them is seen as another critical element to support planning efforts to achieve more longer-term sustainability.

Part Four: Conclusions

In this final part, in Section 13, we present our detailed conclusions to address the research’s overarching objective outlining how the sector can be supported to build back better and, finally, in Section 14 we propose practical ways that Ealing Council and other public sector agencies can help support the voluntary sector towards this goal.

13. Conclusions

- 13.1. Whilst we can see that people’s experience of the virus has varied significantly, what is clear is that the voluntary sector in Ealing as a whole is stretching beyond its capacity. For many VCOs, they are already operating in an unsustainable way, struggling to meet both the needs of their increasing service users whilst giving their organisations the attention it needs to ensure its sustainability.
- 13.2. The challenges that have been caused by the national lockdown have been exacerbated by the continued uncertainty that has followed it, on a number of issues. In the main, uncertainty about the Coronavirus and how quickly, if at all, it will be dealt with has left a number of VCOs in limbo wondering whether to plan for a second wave, unsure about grant funders’ plans to resume normal funding rounds, worried about how the recession will affect their ability to sustain their organisation, whether schools will engage with the sector once they reopen... the list goes on.

- 13.3. The varying experiences that people are having, with some communities having been devastated by the Coronavirus and others not knowing anyone who has been affected or knowingly contracted it, is reflected to some degree in how voluntary sector workers feel about returning to work. Some are expressing crippling fear at the prospect of returning to their place of work whilst others are displaying a degree of impatience at what they perceive to be a lack of urgency in prioritising the opening up of centres. However, most VCOs have reported that they are confident and ready and, in many cases, have already started to resume services - of course, some VCOs never stopped.
- 13.4. The majority of VCOs have seen their funding adversely affected as a result of the pandemic, and many VCO leaders are facing the stress of remaining solution focused, providing reassurance to staff, taking quick and brave decisions about working conditions and staffing contracts, all whilst trying to reconcile the need to provide increased support to their service users at a time they are most needed. In some BAME-led groups, leaders are experiencing additional challenges in their roles as they attempt to navigate the sector.
- 13.5. Interviewees have highlighted the incredible resilience, can-do attitude, capacity for generosity, commitment and creativity that the sector has shown and, despite the brutal way in which the lockdown placed severe restrictions on how VCOs could operate, there is much to learn and take from this experience.

Reflection and learning

- 13.6. There is an urgency for the sector to recover, and it has already started to do that: we heard of many ways in which VCOs are equipping their staff with the skills and training they need to meet the challenges ahead. However, VCOs also need time and space to reflect on their learning from this period and consider how they should position their organisation in this rapidly changed environment to meet the evolving needs of their previous, existing and potential services users. In the cases where an organisation repurposed their efforts for a temporary period, how do they manage expectations around that offer and exit that service in a responsible manner?
- 13.7. There should also be collective reflection across the sector on what has been learned from the enforced shift to a distanced service / digital offer and remote working conditions. For whom and under what circumstances did it or could it enhance ways of working? And in which cases is face to face engagement absolutely the best or only effective way to provide that service? In the event of another lockdown, what needs to be put in place now to mitigate some of the risks that we encountered? The sector already has many of these answers, and it was clear from those interviewed and participating in the survey that the collaborative approach that many instinctively adopted during lockdown is one that must continue.
- 13.8. Ealing Together and the food distribution project were both held up as examples of exceptional practice. In both cases, a cross sector approach was adopted to achieve solutions quickly, drawing on the expertise and resources of its respective partners. In referring to how the voluntary sector was viewed by others, many VCOs reflected on the need for a more equitable relationship

between those in the voluntary sector and Ealing Council. In particular, some felt strongly that the voluntary sector had demonstrably added value to the public sector and had stepped up in an agile and responsive way that the size and processes of the Council could not achieve, thereby relieving the pressure on public services. There was a hope that this would be recognised in a more genuine partnership between the sectors in the form of co-shaping services, core funding and consultation at an earlier stage than some VCOs are used to.

Skills development

- 13.9. Fundraising and digital skills were common amongst the VCOs that had increased their income during the pandemic. Of those that had not been successful in securing emergency funding, a lack of fundraising skills and capacity were flagged as key barriers. In addition, we learned that some service providers were as digitally excluded as the beneficiaries they were supporting highlighting the need to develop these skills in the sector, not least in light of the funding challenges ahead and the prospect of continued increased need for digital engagement.
- 13.10. There are skills that are also needed to plan how to rebuild reserves, recalculate service delivery taking into account social distancing and carry out financial scenario planning that even the larger charities participating in this study would struggle with the skills and capacity to do effectively. This level of financial support is crucial as the study and wider literature research has shown that the sector, particularly smaller organisations, are running on dangerously low reserves and do not necessarily know how to build that back up. Fundraising skills to secure income will not necessarily contribute to a more sustainable organisation long-term and therefore, supporting the development of financial management skills is an essential development need, not just a nice-to-have.

Fear and uncertainty

- 13.11. Fear of the Coronavirus and uncertainty over the future is making it harder for VCOs to plan and move forward. Creating certainty during this time is essential and understanding how to operate with the virus is one way to do this. Asking what would be needed for the sector to function and support its service users in a safe way in terms of communications, policies, processes, protocols, supplies and equipment if the virus were NOT to disappear would start to open up clarity on what is needed within a worse-case scenario. Operating within the known, however challenging, starts to produce options and possibilities.
- 13.12. Capitalising on the resilience and motivation of the sector to move forward requires strong leadership to galvanise all sectors of the community towards the challenge of opening up Ealing: its community centres and workspaces, supported by strong, specific communications provided and translated into community languages and robust safety protocols. Involving the whole community will help to retain the spirit that has been fostered during this time.
- 13.13. There is a specific role to keep abreast of guidance as it evolves and make sense of the information for the benefit of the sector with clear and specific information about how these changes affect the sector and various tools and

resources to support the implementation of these changes. Clear protocols for multi-use of space and ensuring comprehensive risk assessments in line with up to date guidance is also needed.

- 13.14. The costs of opening up Ealing will be burdensome for many; from buying personal protective and other safety equipment to, in some cases, considering a redesign of premises, the sector is limited in how much it can do in the immediate term without funding. Support to access a large public sector's supply chain such as the council and benefit from its purchasing power and scales of economy will improve the cost effectiveness of this transition and enable engagement with trusted providers. Putting these measures in place will both alleviate the fear that exists within the workforce and place the sector on surer footing.

Addressing known and emerging issues

- 13.15. Confidence in their ways of working will make it easier for VCOs to focus their efforts on their beneficiaries and support those who have become newly vulnerable as a result of the crisis. There are groups that continue to be underrepresented in accessing and providing feedback on public services, and the voluntary sector can help with this. Empowering the sector to consult, carry out research and support the increased engagement of these groups is where many small, BAME organisation are well placed to deliver; commissioning groups to provide translation services to ensure that the borough is accessible to all those who live in it should not be onerous.
- 13.16. There is concern for those service users who have dropped off the radar, those most chaotic and vulnerable who have enduring mental health issues and may not have had a network of support during these past months. Support to engage them proactively will be needed for some and, for these people, acting quickly may prevent their circumstances from spiralling irretrievably.
- 13.17. Equally, there is a worry that many people made newly vulnerable as a direct or indirect result of the pandemic may be reluctant to ask for help or may not know where to find support. Moving towards a single, free at point of contact service will, again, ensure the earliest intervention, which will need to be supported by effective and prompt referral to an appropriate service. Active promotion and careful communication of this service will be needed to ensure that those who need the support know where to find it and are inclined to ask for it.
- 13.18. We already know a lot about the types of issues that may present as a spike in demand. Preparing for this would be helped by forming cross sector thematic groups to consult and inform responses to these issues. Doing this in partnership will ensure that different perspectives are considered, leading to an improved result.
- 13.19. A key issue that is already being explored is how to support volunteers into the sector through the Do Something Good website. Developing this framework into a more comprehensive matching service for the sector would help offset the estimated 20% loss across the sector's workforce. We know that unemployment is likely to increase, creating more potential resource for the

sector. This presents an interesting opportunity to build the capacity of volunteers and support their contribution into the sector whilst enabling them to be more competitive in the workforce thereafter. It has been suggested that there could be a core baseline of training, for example in Health and Safety and Safeguarding as well as providing reference and DBS checks that would make them sector ready. Critically, such an arrangement, must not encroach on any welfare benefits that they were receiving; otherwise participation would be restricted.

- 13.20. This notion of moving towards greater coordination and consortium-based funding would enable more smaller VCOs to engage as part of the solutions to the myriad of challenges we face. Enabling this engagement to support issues such as tackling underrepresentation in accessing health services, communicating information into the community and engaging volunteers to support vulnerable service users would enable impact to extend to many of the places that need it the most and are most difficult to reach.
- 13.21. Every borough in the country is grappling with its challenges, and the literature review and desk-based research uncovered many examples of good practice both inside and outside Ealing, that would help achieve some of the challenges outlined in this report. By way of example, Help Harrow, a partnership between Harrow Council and the voluntary sector set up a triage system to coordinate emergency food parcel preparation and delivery, which has since been extended to other areas; in Hammersmith and Fulham a peer research programme has seen young people undertake training to become peer researchers who now lead on the consultation of young people for a number of strategic priorities for the borough; the matching service for people needing advice led by the Ealing Advice Service consortium is a framework that can be applied in a number of areas.
- 13.22. Whilst this study does not intend to present an exhaustive list of the key issues, putting in place and coordinating a collaborative effort will improve efficiency, reduce duplication and make the sector better able to withstand tougher times. Testing out and refining these systems will allow for further expansion. This is made easier by exploring what is already working and capitalising on others' experiences for the benefit of Ealing's residents.

Themes	14. Recommendations
Open up Ealing!	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Galvanise the voluntary sector and the wider community to get behind a commitment to open up community centres and workspaces in Ealing. 2. Ensure that communications are specific and tailored to its audiences, translated into community languages 3. Support the voluntary sector to understand the implications of guidance changes and provide templates to support their implementation with clear safety protocols for centre opening including for multi-usage spaces and training for risk assessing, risk mitigation and managing controls. 4. Enable access to supply chain and scales of economy purchasing to make it easier and more cost effective for the sector to access experts, personal protective and other safety equipment.
Invest in the sector so it can withstand the inevitable cuts that will follow	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Support the development of fundraising and digital skills in the sector 6. Provide resource and expertise for medium and long term financial and strategic planning 7. Support reflections into the effects of the pandemic on ways of working and facilitate shared practice: peer to peer workshops focusing on digital service delivery and remote working 8. Equip those who want to volunteer with the skills and qualifications to be more competitive to regain employment
Invest in a more coordinated and collaborative, cross sector approach to maximise resource	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Develop the Ealing Together and Do Something Good structures with one point of access for prospective volunteers matched to VCOs based on skillset, geography, language skills and availability 10. Resource a central helpline, free at point of service, targeting those who are newly vulnerable supported with a campaign to encourage them to ask for help 11. Encourage cross sector thematic task groups to focus on existing and emerging needs such as food poverty, mental wellbeing, trauma, abuse and rising gaps in educational attainment. 12. Support a consortium approach to securing income from outside of Ealing into the borough to address key identified needs arising from the task groups
Use the sector to reach and support the most vulnerable in the community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Target specific VCOs and empower them to consult, research and support increased engagement of underrepresented groups into services 14. Enable outreach and floating support to reengage service users who have dropped off the radar 15. Commission support for the digitally excluded to have “the access, skills and motivation to confidently go online to access the opportunities of the internet”

Appendices

Appendix A: With thanks to all participating organisations

Action West London
Actonians LFC
Amici Dance Theatre Company
Arts for Ealing
Aspire Academy & Tuition Ltd
Befriend
Bless Community Church
Bollo Brook Youth Centre
Brentford FC Community Sports Trust
CAME Women and Girls' Development Organisation
CAPE Project
Carers Trust Thames
Centre for Armenian Information & Advice
Community First Foundation
Contact Ealing
Department of Culture, Media & Sports
Descendants
Ealing Advice Service consortium
Ealing BMX Club
Ealing Community Network
Ealing Community Transport
Ealing Council
Ealing Foodbank
Ealing Hockey Club
Ealing Law centre
Ealing Mediation Service
Ealing Mencap
Ealing Music Service
Ealing Swimming Club
EASE (Empowering Action and Social Esteem) Ltd
Education & Skills Development Group)
Elite Catering West London ltd
ESDEG
Fizzikal Futures
Focus Forth UK
Football Chance Foundation
Golden Opportunity Skills and Development
Gunnersbury Estate CIC
Gunnersbury Park & Museum
Healthwatch Ealing
Heathrow Community Trust
Homestart Ealing
Jamal Edwards Delve
Lancaster Estate Residents Association (LERA)
Little Tigers
London Sport
London Tigers
Metropolitan Police
MindFood
Monster Cat Theatre CIO
Neighbourly Care
NW London CCG
OPEN Ealing
Outside Chance
Parents of Ealing Self Help Training Scheme
Pitshanger FC
Polish YMCA
Potential Mentoring CIC
Princes Trust
QPR in the Community Trust
RollaDome All Skate
SKLPC (UK)
Somali Advice and Development Centre
Southall Community Alliance
Southall Food Project
St John's Church
Sunshine of Hounslow
The Kids' Cookery School
The Living Room
The Log Cabin Charity
Three Bridges Primary School
Victim Support
Vishwa Hindu temple
Voice of Dalit International
West London Arts Scene (Ealing Autumn Festival)
West London Trades Union Club
Willow Tree SSP
Y2 Education
YMCA St Pauls Group

Appendix B: Literature review sources

Child Poverty Action Group Consortium	Various press releases	April - June, 2020
Ealing Council	Presentation on the needs of communities Equalities in Ealing - Summary Needs Assessment	June, 2020 April, 2017
Good Things Foundation	Digital Divide: Devicesdotnow	June, 2020
GOS&D	The Impact of Covid-19 on Ealing's BAME Communities	September 2020*
Greater London Authority	Dataset of weekly results from a survey on patterns of need amongst beneficiary groups	April - June, 2020
Inclusion London	Presentation on the needs of communities	June, 2020
Institute of Voluntary Action Research	Briefings on the challenges faced by VCSE leaders and the help needed during the Covid-19 crisis	June, 2020
Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Hetherington, G)	Blog: a third of furloughed private renters worried about paying their rent when lockdown ends	June, 2020
Lloyds Bank Foundation	Charities responding to Covid-19	June, 2020
London Funders	Insight and intelligence to inform the London Community Response	May, 2020
London Youth	Running on Reserves: The impact of Covid-19 on London's youth sector	June, 2020
The Trussell Trust	Blog: Food banks busiest month	June, 2020
The Ubele Initiative	Impact of Covid-19 on BAME VCSOs presentation	April, 2020
The Ubele Initiative	Presentation on the needs of communities	June, 2020
Women's Resource Centre	Presentation on the needs of communities	June, 2020
Young Brent Foundation	YBF Needs Survey Outcomes Report	April, 2020
Young Camden Foundation	Covid-19 Impact and Response Report for the Children and Young People Sector in Camden	May, 2020
Young Manchester	State of the Youth and Play sector in Manchester	April, 2020
Young Westminster Foundation	Coronavirus: how is the YWF community responding?	April, 2020

*Note, GOS&D research considered as part of the research findings.

Appendix C: Literature Review – key issues

Disadvantaged families

1. It was clear from initial research that those in the sector who were already disadvantaged stood to suffer more. With a shift to online services there was clear and immediate concern towards the 1.9 million households³ estimated to not have any access to the internet and therefore no access to critical information, online services, purchases and face-to-face social interaction.
2. An 89% increase in the need for emergency food parcels⁴ compared to the previous year was attributed to increases in need, sudden plunges into poverty by people experiencing job losses or business closures and the rising costs of food.
3. Needs amongst households changed over time: social isolation, unemployment and delays in accessing welfare resulting in increased family tensions and mental ill health, exacerbated by inadequate housing situations with overcrowding leading to lack of space and privacy, and no access to outdoor space all play a role to some extent amongst those most affected.
4. Research shows that violence in the home and domestic abuse were increasing and that there remain fears that those most vulnerable were not engaging with outside agencies, and therefore that the real figures could be much higher due to unreported cases.
5. Community-led messaging was highlighted as being a higher risk factor for households who are more isolated by nature of digital exclusion or not speaking English in the home as there was a lack of information about the pandemic and its implications translated into community languages

Protected characteristics

6. Research into specific groups highlighted poorer outcomes for disabled people and called for the need to guard against the long-term physical and mental health effects of some 8 million people shielding;
7. Women were found to be more likely to be furloughed by nature of being more likely to be the primary carer of children, and therefore unable to continue in employment; in low paid employment and in caring roles;
8. BME groups were found to be more likely to be exposed to the coronavirus through ongoing work as key workers as well as having poorer health outcomes that would influence how they were able to deal with the virus if contracted; and
9. LGBT+ people were more likely to experience more at-home crime and homophobia, biphobia and transphobia (HBT) as a result of being forced into lockdown with people who may not be accepting of their sexuality and gender identity.

Service users slipping through the net

10. Additionally, the literature review uncovered concerns for the 1.4 million migrants with no recourse to public funds (NRPF), invisible service users not engaging with

³ Good Things Foundation needs analysis from website:
<https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/devicesdotnow> on 31st August 2020

⁴ The Trussell Trust blog: UK food banks report busines month ever... 3rd June 2020:
<https://www.trusselltrust.org/2020/06/03/food-banks-busiest-month/>

education, those with other health issues experiencing delays with their treatment, a lack culturally appropriate support, for example, in hospitals and in funeral arrangements, and workers such as freelancers, short term unemployed and those on zero hour contracts who would not have qualified for government financial support once their work dried up.

Services

11. Many VCOs were able to transform at least some of their services to a digital offer overnight. However, some needed digital skills development and confidence to deliver, some needed equipment and, research showed that some felt that for some services, particularly confidential, a digital offer was not adequate. There were also concerns around safeguarding and consent requirements.
12. Many organisations were found to have expanded their services to provide wrap around support, adopting a solution focused approach to their service users whatever their need. For many organisations, this was being carried out with less capacity, so keeping the workload manageable was challenging.
13. A surge in demand for services was expected with particular fears around domestic abuse and the pressure on mental health services. As short-term measures of support end, for example, suspending evictions, expanding the scope for Universal Credit and accommodating homeless people in vacant hotels, there was a fear that this would also lead to a rise in demand for support.
14. At this time, the prospect of a recession was looming, and it was expected that those disadvantaged in the labour market before the crisis, which has disproportionately affected their communities, would be likely to suffer the worst effects of the recession.

Leaders of VCOs

15. It was acknowledged that leaders of VCOs, especially in small organisations, often lacked support in their work with the burden of responsibility to do everything heightened during the pandemic. Research shows that the pressure of providing solutions and answers whilst dealing with uncertainty was difficult for many, especially BME leaders, whilst dealing with their own grief and anxiety associated with the loss or serious illness of loved ones to the coronavirus. Experiences of trustee support was found to be very variable, with many VCO leaders suggesting that they had become even more detached.

Staff

16. Many VCOs have staff who are significantly disadvantaged as a result of the pandemic, especially amongst smaller VCOs, with many in high risk groups for Covid-19. Some have sudden caring commitments as a result of school closures or living with elderly family members or someone classed as clinically vulnerable who were not able to leave the home.
17. The nature of many of their contracts preclude them from government support, if they have lost their jobs. Those who continue to work are at risk of burnout and stress as a result of compensating for a reduced workforce and increased need.
18. Some have struggled to make the shift to remote working without access to the internet, IT equipment or adequate space.

Funding and fundraising

19. It was found that the majority of small VCSEs were operating with little or no reserves prior to the pandemic with many, especially small BME-led VCOs, at risk of closure⁵. Cashflow issues were cited by many VCOs including those with adequate reserves at the start of the pandemic as, for many, much of this had been used during lockdown, and there were concerns over a lack of certainty as to how long the pandemic would last.
20. Those that had diversified their funding to attract donations and trade income were most affected as space hire and fundraising events were cancelled with some corporates ending their support. Many VCOs with payment by results contracts would not be paid once delivery ceased, and some contracts were suspended.
21. Those who had struggled to engage with emergency funding found that they either lacked capacity to engage or were unclear of their eligibility or were restricted from applying by nature of their governing structure, i.e. community interest companies.
22. There was some frustration relayed by VCOs towards funders that had suspended their usual funding rounds to focus on emergency support which they felt was small and short term, preventing them from planning ahead.

⁵ Presentation by The Ubele Initiative on the Impact of the Coronavirus on the BAME community and voluntary organisations, 16th April 2020

Appendix D: Online survey questions

About your organisation

- 1. Name of your organisation [text]**
- 2. Your role [text]**
- 3. Where are you based? [either / or]**
 - a. In Ealing
 - b. Outside of Ealing (please tell us the borough)
- 4. Where do you deliver services? (please tick all that apply)**
 - a. In Ealing
 - b. Across London
 - c. Outside of London (please tell us more)
- 5. What type of services do you provide? (please select no more than three)**
 - a. Culture and recreation
 - b. Development
 - c. Education
 - d. Employment and training
 - e. Environment
 - f. Grant-making
 - g. Health
 - h. Housing
 - i. International
 - j. Law and advocacy
 - k. Parents and Teachers Association
 - l. Playgroup / nursery
 - m. Religion
 - n. Research
 - o. Social Services
 - p. Umbrella body
 - q. Youth Club
 - r. Other (please specify)
- 6. Who are your main service users?**
 - a. Children
 - b. Young People
 - c. All public
 - d. Older people
- 7. Which particular community or ethnic groups attend your services? (please specify)**

8. What is your organisation's annual income / turnover?

- a. 0 - £10,000
- b. £10,001 - £50,000
- c. £50,001 - £250,000
- d. £250,001 - £500,000
- e. £500,001 - £1m
- f. £1m - £5m
- g. Over £5m

About the people who work at your organisation

STAFF

1. How many people worked at your organisation before Covid-19? (please include all staff and volunteers)

- a. Employed full time; how many?
- b. Employed part time; how many?
- c. Term time only; how many?
- d. Sessional staff (paid per hour, perhaps on zero hours contract, either paid on receipt of invoice or on PAYE); how many?
- e. Intern (someone who supports the organisation but also is there to develop and learn key employability skills); how many?
- f. Volunteer (who provide support for the organisation for no or little payment, e.g. per day rate or reimbursed for travel and lunch); how many?

2. How many people now work at your organisation?

- a. Employed full time; how many?
- b. Employed part time; how many?
- c. Term time only; how many?
- d. Sessional staff (paid per hour, perhaps on zero hours contract, either paid on receipt of invoice or on PAYE); how many?
- e. Intern (someone who supports the organisation but also is there to develop and learn key employability skills); how many?
- f. Volunteer (who provide support for the organisation for no or little payment, e.g. per day rate or reimbursed for travel and lunch); how many?

3. Have either of the following applied to your staff during Covid-19? (please tick all that apply)

- a. Sickness (relating to Covid-19)
- b. Lack of capacity / unavailability (related to Covid-19) e.g. due to caring responsibilities.
- c. Furloughing
- d. Redundancy

4. Do you expect either of the following to apply to your staff over the next 3 – 12 months? please tick all that apply)
- Lack of capacity / unavailability (related to Covid-19) e.g. due to caring responsibilities.
 - Furloughing
 - Redundancy
5. Please describe any issues that you faced in taking decisions relating to staffing, if applicable.

TRUSTEES

6. How many trustees does your organisation have?
7. In what ways have the trustees supported your organisation during the crisis?
8. Please tick one of the following:
- My trustees are active in supporting me to run the organisation.
- Not at all
 - A little bit
 - Quite a bit
 - A great deal

YOUR ROLE

9. What business functions did you carry out in your role prior to Covid-19?
(please tick all those that apply)

	My role	I share this with someone else	Someone else does this
Strategic development			
IT / systems			
Managing staff			
Volunteer management			
Governance, e.g. writing policies			
Finance			
Fundraising			
Grant reporting			
Marketing and comms			
Evaluation			
Attending stakeholder meetings			
Service delivery			
Other (please list)			

Other (please list)			
Other (please list)			

10. How has Covid-19 affected your role? [text]

	My role	I have spent less than usual time on this	I have spent more than usual time on this
Strategic development			
IT / systems			
Managing staff			
Volunteer management			
Governance, e.g. writing policies			
Finance			
Fundraising			
Grant reporting			
Marketing and comms			
Evaluation			
Attending stakeholder meetings			
Service delivery			
Other (please list)			
Other (please list)			
Other (please list)			

11. From where have you taken advice and guidance to help you in decision making relating to the crisis?

12. How much have you referred to the following:

- a. Local authority guidance (on website, or directly)
 - i. Not at all
 - ii. A little bit
 - iii. Quite a bit
 - iv. A great deal
- b. Government guidance (on website, or directly)
 - i. Not at all
 - ii. A little bit
 - iii. Quite a bit
 - iv. A great deal
- c. Support from Ealing CVS (on website, or directly)
 - i. Not at all
 - ii. A little bit
 - iii. Quite a bit

- iv. A great deal
 - d. Support from Ealing Community Network (on website, or directly)
 - i. Not at all
 - ii. A little bit
 - iii. Quite a bit
 - iv. A great deal
 - e. Support from Young Ealing Foundation (on website, or directly)
 - i. Not at all
 - ii. A little bit
 - iii. Quite a bit
 - iv. A great deal
 - f. Other (please list)
13. **Please describe any issues that you have found with the guidance / support that you have accessed.** [text]
14. **What support have you received to support you in your role?** [text]

About your services

SERVICES

1. **To what extent has Covid-19 affected the services that you provided?**
 - i. Not at all
 - ii. A little bit
 - iii. Quite a bit
 - iv. A great deal
2. **To what extent has your organisation been able to adapt your services to provide digitally?**
 - i. Not at all
 - ii. A little bit
 - iii. Quite a bit
 - iv. A great deal
3. **Have there been any issues?** [text]
4. **How confident are you that your organisation will be able to resume services in a socially distant way?**
 - i. Not at all
 - ii. A little bit
 - iii. Quite a bit
 - iv. A great deal
5. **Please describe any changes to your services that you expect to make** [text]

SERVICE USERS

6. **To what extent has Covid-19 affected the amount of engagement that you have had with your service providers?**
 - i. Not at all
 - ii. A little bit
 - iii. Quite a bit
 - iv. A great deal
7. **What has happened to the number of service users that your organisation is engaging with?**
 - i. No change
 - ii. Reduced service users

- iii. Increased service users
- 8. **Are there any groups of people who you are working with more as a result of the crisis?** (please explain)
- 9. **Are there any groups of people who you are working with less as a result of the crisis?** (please explain)
- 10. **Are there any groups of people who you think are not being adequately supported during this crisis?** (please explain)

About your funding

1. **Before Covid-19, what level of reserves (how much running costs) did you have put aside?**
 - i. None
 - ii. Less than £10,000
 - iii. Between £10,000 and £25,000
 - iv. Between £25,000 and £50,000
 - v. Above £50,000
2. **Please tick all sources of your income**
 - i. Donations from individuals, including auctions, monthly gifts, etc.
 - ii. Grants from organisation, including from Trusts and Foundations, Corporate donations
 - iii. Contracts, e.g. payments by results or public sector funds for services
 - iv. Paid for services, e.g. room hire
3. **What was your main source of income?**
 - i. Donations from individuals, including auctions, monthly gifts, etc.
 - ii. Grants from organisation, including from Trusts and Foundations, Corporate donations
 - iii. Contracts, e.g. payments by results or public sector funds for services
 - iv. Paid for services, e.g. room hire
4. **How much of your income did this make up?**
 - i. Less than half our income
 - ii. Between 50-75%
 - iii. Over 75% of our income
5. **What was your second main source of income?**
 - i. Donations from individuals, including auctions, monthly gifts, etc.
 - ii. Grants from organisation, including from Trusts and Foundations, Corporate donations
 - iii. Contracts, e.g. payments by results or public sector funds for services
 - iv. Paid for services, e.g. room hire
6. **How much of your income did this make up?**
 - i. Less than 25% of our income

- ii. Between 25 – 50% of our income
- iii. Between 50-75%
- iv. Over 75% of our income

7. To what extent has Covid-19 affected your income?

- v. Not at all
- vi. A little bit
- vii. Quite a bit
- viii. A great deal

8. In what ways has Covid-19 affected your income?

- i. Severe reduction
- ii. Slight reduction
- iii. No change
- iv. Slight increase
- v. Significant increase

9. Have you applied for any emergency funding?

- i. Yes
- ii. No
- iii. Not yet (but plan to)

10. Have there been any issues with applying for funding?

11. What are your fundraising priorities?

	Low priority	Medium priority	High priority
We want to access emergency funding			
We want to diversify our income			
We need to renegotiate our current agreements with funders			
We need to understand our current financial situation			
We need to work out the possible different funding scenarios for our organisation			
We need to focus on a particular type of income			

12. Please explain any further issues with your fundraising priorities
13. How will you meet the financial priorities that you have identified?
14. Who / what support would be most useful to you to meet the priorities that you have identified?

Looking ahead

If anything were possible, what would you say is needed to help you in your role and the sector more generally to Build Back, Better? [text]

Please tell us anything else that you would like us to consider in preparing this report [text]

Appendix E: Members' topic guide

Interviewee (s)	
Name of organisation	
How long has the organisation been delivering services for Ealing's residents?	
Who are the organisation's main service users?	
What are the organisation's main services?	
Interview date	

Section A: Impact of the pandemic on the people in your organisation

1. To begin, could you tell me the size of your staff and anyone else who was working for your organisation at the time the pandemic started.

Prompts:

- Does your organisation have the support of volunteers?
- What types of contracts do you have with your employees?

Follow up:

- How did lockdown affect your staffing?
- How did you take decisions relating to your staffing?
- Were there any issues?

2. In what ways have your staff / volunteers been affected by the pandemic?

Prompts:

- What has been the impact of this on your organisation?
- What has been the impact of this on them?

3. What do you expect your staffing to look like in the medium and longer term?

4. In what ways has your role been affected by the pandemic?

Prompts:

- What has been the impact of this on your organisation?
- What has been the impact of this on you personally?

Follow up:

- From where / who have you sought advice and guidance?

5. In what ways have your trustees supported you during this pandemic?

Follow up:

- How does this compare to the support that they have provided to you in the past, prior to Covid-19?

Section B: Impact of the pandemic on services and service users

6. In light of the pandemic, what impact did it have on your ability to deliver services?

Prompts:

- To what extent were you able to continue delivery?
- *Were there any issues?*

Follow-up (if applicable):

- *How have your services changed?*

7. In light of the pandemic, what impact did it have on your ability to deliver and engage your service users?

Prompts:

- *Are you able to engage all your service users?*
- *Are there any issues?*

8. Looking ahead, how will you resume services in a socially distant society, post lockdown?

Follow-up:

- *What effect will this have on your service delivery?*
- *What effect will this have on your ability to engage your service users?*

Section C: Finance and funding

9. What were your main sources of funding income?

Follow-up:

- *What level of reserves did you have prior to the pandemic?*
- *What effect did the pandemic have on your organisation's finances?*

10. What are your financial priorities in the short and medium term?

Follow-up:

- *How will you meet these priorities?*

Section D: Looking ahead

11. Finally, if anything were possible, what would you say is needed to help you in your role and the sector more generally to Build Back, Better?

--

Thanks, and close

- Ask whether there is anything else that has not been discussed that they feel you should take away from this conversation
- Establish whether interviewee would be happy to be contacted further with follow up questions or as part of developing a case study
- Thanks, and close
- End recording and upload accordingly.

Appendix F: Strategic partner topic guide

Interviewee (s)	
Name and description of organisation	
Role description	
Which professionals / organisations does the role bring the interviewee into contact with?	
Which communities does the role bring the interviewee into contact with?	
Interview date	

Section A: Impact of the pandemic on the VCS

1. What impact have you observed of the pandemic on the people in their work for the VCS?

Follow up:

- What impact has it had on charity leaders?
- How have trustees engaged with these challenges?
- How have staff been affected?
- What changes in staffing has this resulted in?

2. What support is available for the VCS for issues associated with staffing and organisationally?

Prompts:

- How effective has this been?
- Have there been any issues with this?

Section B: Impact of the pandemic on services and service users

3. How has the pandemic affected services?

Prompts:

- To what extent has service delivery continued?
- To what extent has service delivery changed?
- *Were there any issues?*

4. What examples have you seen of exceptional practise demonstrated by the sector in response to the crisis?

Prompts:

- What was exceptional about it?

5. How has the pandemic affected engagement with service users?

Follow up:

- *Which service users are continuing to engage with services?*
- *Which service users are not continuing to engage with services?*
- *Which communities are not having their needs met?*
- *Are there any [other] issues?*

6. How well equipped are organisations to resume services in a socially distant society, post lockdown?

Follow-up:

- *What effect will this have on service delivery?*
- *What effect will this have on the ability to engage your service users?*

Section C: Finance and funding

7. Which types of VCSOs have had their funding most unduly affected by the pandemic?

Note:

- *Type can be according to size, income type, ethnicity, services, service users...*

8. What support is available to VCSOs to support them to navigate the funding landscape as it stands?

Follow-up:

- *How effective is this support?*
- *Are there any issues?*

Section D: Looking ahead

9. Finally, if anything were possible, what would you say is needed to help the sector more generally to Build Back, Better?

Thanks, and close

- Ask whether there is anything else that has not been discussed that they feel you should take away from this conversation
- Establish whether interviewee would be happy to be contacted further with follow up questions or as part of developing a case study
- Thanks, and close
- End recording and upload accordingly.