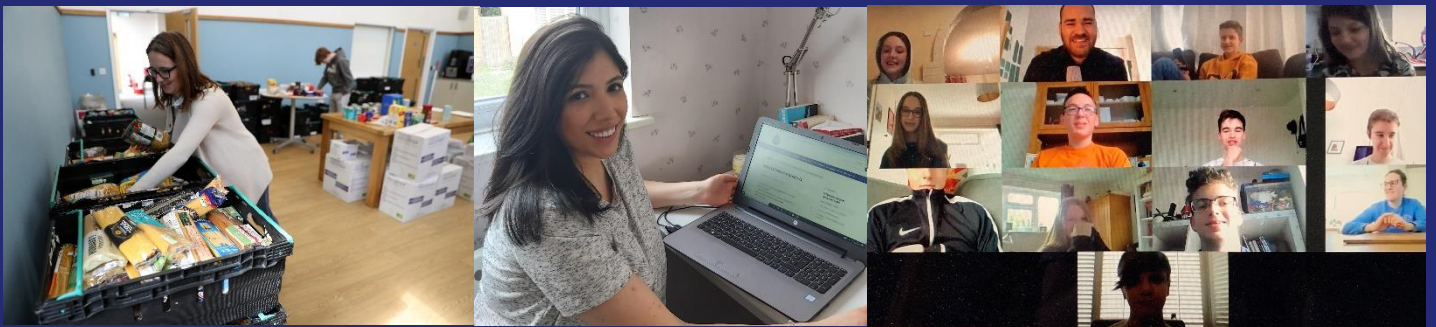




Hertfordshire Community Foundation

Coronavirus Relief Fund



**Working with the voluntary sector
towards recovery**

Survey headlines and results

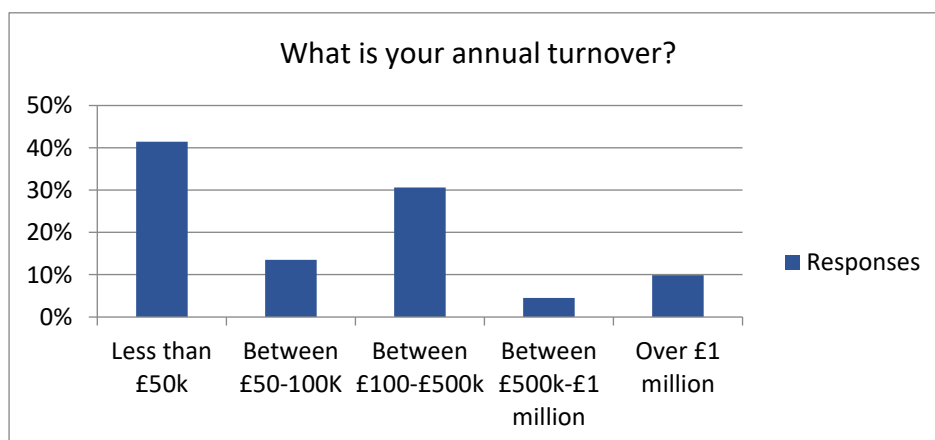
HCF issued an online survey on 11 May 2020 to 2,500 local community and voluntary groups with a deadline of 18 May. 222 organisations responded. 14 local organisations working across a range of needs were also interviewed by video conferencing or phone. The aim of the research was to find out how the local voluntary sector has responded to the initial phase of the Coronavirus outbreak and to learn more about plans and challenges for the future. The survey also gave the opportunity to find out about emerging needs and how the pandemic is affecting people across the County. The findings will help inform how HCF shapes its grant-making in response and be shared more widely.

Responding organisations

- Of the 222 organisations who completed the survey more than three quarters have been in existence for more than 10 years. Many of our local groups are deeply embedded in the communities they serve

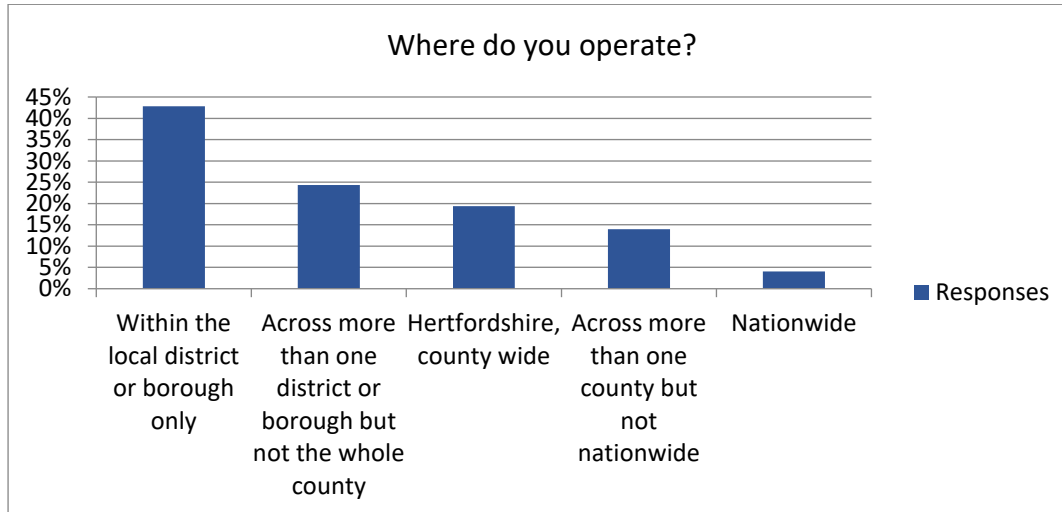


- 42% of organisations responding have an annual income of less than £50k, with 10% having an annual turnover of over £1 million. The feedback received reflects the impact of Coronavirus on both micro and larger charities.



- Those responding represented organisations working across a wide range of beneficiary groups, supporting people of all ages in the community with a variety of needs.

- Whilst 43% of organisations responding operate in their own district or borough, almost 20% work across the whole County.



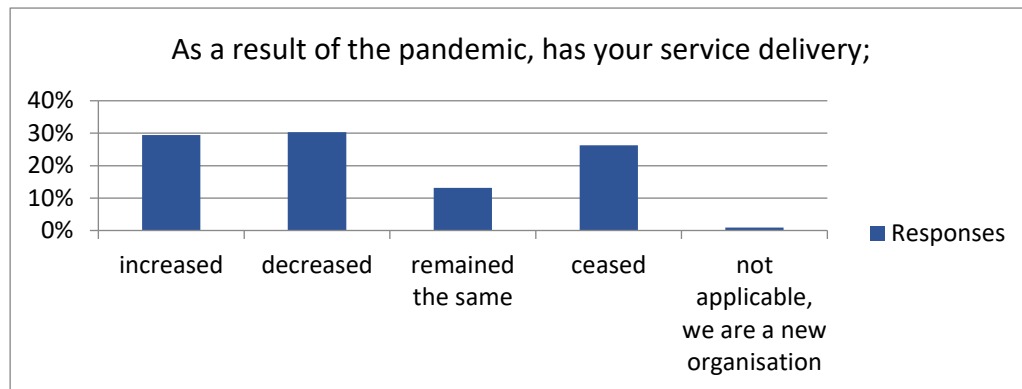
- 72 organisations told us that they had no paid employees and are volunteer led, whilst some of the larger County based groups have over 100 paid employees. 39% of those with employed staff have furloughed people as a result of the pandemic.

Working with volunteers

- We asked how organisations are benefiting during the pandemic from support from volunteers. 60% are working with the same number of volunteers as before lockdown, 30% are working with fewer and 10% working with more. Some organisations have volunteers that are over 70 and are therefore self-isolating, others recruit and train volunteers to enable them to work efficiently with the organisation and have had to put training on hold due to social distancing.
- Just over half (56%) of responding organisations said that they did have the capacity to work with more volunteers, 44% said they did not.

The impact of Coronavirus on the sector

- As a result of the pandemic, almost 30% said that their service delivery had increased with the same number saying theirs had decreased. 13% said their service delivery had remained the same, with 27% saying they had ceased delivery completely. Two organisations said that their service was new and formed as a result of the pandemic.



- The organisations that seem to be suffering most are those who charge their clients for services which they are no longer able to provide and those that are reliant on rental income.
- Where the model of an organisation is based on group settings and interaction, in particular those working with older people, it is difficult for them to reach their client group, many of whom are not digitally comfortable.
- Of those organisations that have been able to continue providing a service, the overwhelming change has been to adapt services to be provided digitally and remotely. Small and large organisations are providing group and 1:1 sessions online, using Zoom or similar, Whats app and other digital platforms. Phone counselling, support, advice and guidance and helplines are also being widely used.

What positives have emerged?

- When asked what positives had emerged from the new ways of working, the key themes are: better sense of community; learning how to work remotely and offer online services, better collaboration with other organisations and less red tape.
- With the exception of some groups for older people, many organisations have said how well their services have transferred to online and that they have been able to adapt their services quickly. In normal times, trustees, staff and clients would have been reluctant to commit or it would have been a very lengthy process.
- On-line support is working well for staff and clients, it offers flexibility and efficiency and means that more people are able to be supported.
- We were told of pride in the ability of organisations to be proactive, resilient and brave.

Services after lockdown

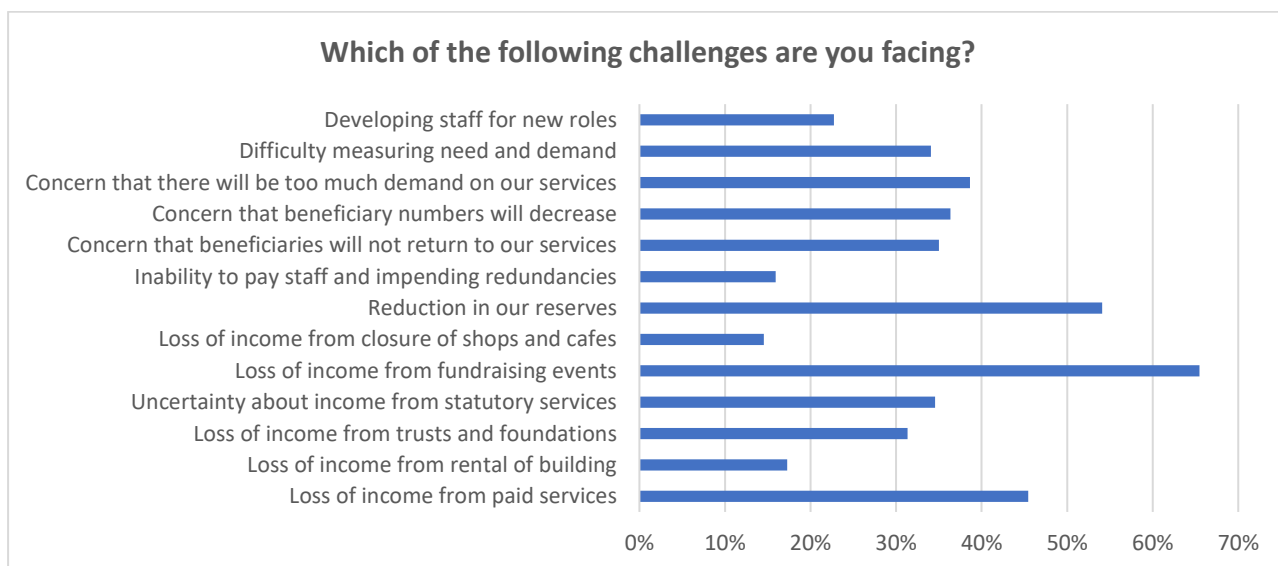
- When asked what services would be offered once lockdown is lifted, organisations said that this would depend on what that meant and when. There is particular uncertainty around groups that work with young, older and vulnerable people in group settings and when they will be able to operate again. Those organisations that have already adapted their services and are able to, are more confident about the future and many intend to keep their digital services as part of their offer with face to face returning as and when the lockdown restrictions ease.

Needs of local people as a result of the coronavirus and priorities for support

- When asked about the emerging needs of people and the areas that will need support, the overwhelming single issue is anticipated to be a spike in mental health problems in people of all ages, especially depression and anxiety. Other issues as a direct result of the pandemic will be; impact of lack of income, redundancies, long-term unemployment; reliance on services and dependency, including foodbanks; poverty and housing; substance abuse, particularly alcohol; increased family breakdown, pressure on parents and carers, and domestic abuse; bereavement processing; increased homelessness; unwillingness to venture out of the home due to fear and lack of confidence, especially older people; social isolation of all vulnerable groups; those who are not digitally competent will get left behind.
- Interestingly, referral numbers to a number of organisations have gone down since lockdown, including those working in bereavement and mental health. This may be because people are not accessing GP services or there is a feeling that whilst everyone is in lockdown, people are in the same boat and there is real concern that as restrictions are gradually lifted there will be a disproportionate surge in need.
- Some frontline workers will need a lot of support with mental health problems and this will not reveal itself for some time. Hospital workers are an obvious group but others highlighted by respondents include funeral directors, pharmacists and bus drivers.

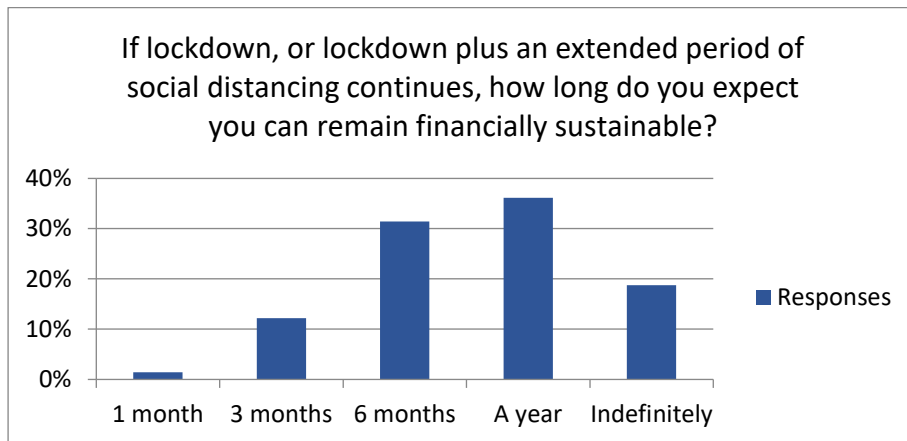
What challenges is the voluntary sector facing in light of the pandemic?

- The responding organisations named a number of challenges, with the following being the top 3: Loss of income from fundraising events, reduction in reserves; loss of income from paid services.



- Some organisations have been able to make savings on service delivery and have also received emergency funding.

- If lockdown, or lockdown plus an extended period of social distancing were to continue, more than 60% of charities would be able to remain financially sustainable for between six months and a year. The negative financial impact will hit more next year with uncertainty about longer-term funding.



- Funding is the biggest concern of organisations of all sizes. The most helpful response from funders would be unrestricted multi-year commitments.

Looking to the future

Nearly 80% of respondents said that they had started planning their future strategy.

Barriers to developing a new strategy include: uncertainty about the whole situation; hard to know what the future will bring; how we work around social distancing and develop new approaches; reduced income and fewer grants available; HCC funding on hold, we need clarity; we don't know when we'll be able to resume our services; trustees need to think outside the box.

Opportunities in developing a new strategy include: increased importance on community; improved technology means the ability to help more people more efficiently; a perfect time to think about how to offer services in new ways.

We asked what would be helpful to organisations to support their resilience and recovery apart from financial support

- 54% said that they would like to form partnerships with others, 44% would like fundraising advice and 36% resilience planning. Other support is highlighted on the chart below.



HCF is grateful to everyone who completed the survey, to those who were interviewed and to HCC for their support. The information received will help us to shape our grant-making in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. Further information will be released in the coming weeks.