

Notes/Key Points

- **Mark Jackson - Welcome and Introductions**

As High Sheriff of Worcestershire one of his official roles is to support VCS organisations. He welcomed the Chancellor's statement about funding for the VCS but warned that there will be less money in the sector and we need to capitalise on the way we have responded in the crisis - being quick off the mark, taking on new roles, and adapting to new ways of working.

- **Nick Parker – Finance slides**

- Trading income has been affected, evidenced by closure of charity shops, but uncertainty about funding shouldn't prevent us from identifying and taking opportunities.
- Responses have shown that there is a mixed bag of funding within organisations, and Lottery has been supportive of organisations they already fund.
- Local picture is based on Government stats and shows that the VCS is a significant part of the Worcestershire economy, but we can't ignore the impact that reduced funding will have so must look for ways that we can support each other, especially those vulnerable groups.
- Highlight that VCS is good at working with those furthest removed from the mainstream – drugs, alcohol, employment – and can be in a good position to mitigate the consequences of further damage to the local, national or global economy.

- **Comments**

- Danger that VCS has a false sense of security because of the speed that emergency funding became available, so responses may be over-confident
- Swift delivery of money from National Emergency Trust via Worcestershire Community Foundation was much quicker than funding decisions are traditionally made by Commissioners or Trusts. We should campaign for this to become the norm and procedures to be simplified.
- Princess Anne has previously warned against VCS becoming "Cheap Civil Servants". We should be chosen to deliver services because we have expertise, not because we're cheap.
- VCS must stand up and be counted early, to make sure we're not overlooked; our prompt and practical response may provide a powerful negotiating position.

- **Catherine Kevis – Mental & physical health slides**

- Marmot Review 2010 asserts that work is good for health, unemployment is bad for health. Economic recovery is dependent on good mental & physical health, and lockdown has affected everyone differently. Post crisis, recovery likely to be slow, particularly as pandemic has not gone away, so more outbreaks possible.
- Health Foundation slide amplified by local data from Worcestershire Wellbeing Hub; potential of delayed impacts from non-attendance at school; young adults & women likely to be affected hardest by domestic violence; young carers torn between school and caring responsibilities.

- Simon Trickett (CCG) – in recent blog he suggested looking at new determinants for good health which align with the slide on recovery. VCS can play a critical part in addressing the bullet points – we can demonstrate that organised and spontaneous community action would be instrumental in the county’s recovery
- Local picture may not be accurate; timing of the survey may have influenced responses as emergency money has been available to cushion the impact. Consider whether responses based purely on short-term position; has medium/long-term impact been taken into account? Some indication of negative impacts (redundancies etc) may spread; should focus on VCS agility and ability to adapt strategy to suit emerging needs.
- VCS is not a single entity; comprises different types and sizes of organisations, so there can be no “one size fits all” solution. Artificial distinction between citizens and community; we’re all citizens so need to consider how we and our organisations can add value to local community action which emerges naturally
- **Comments**
 - Crisis has seen surge in spontaneous community action but it may not last, so how do we as a sector enable and consolidate this?
 - Health Foundation data not comprehensive – doesn’t consider loneliness in general, or impact on older people at home for extended lockdown, others whose treatment for critical illness has been interrupted, or carers deprived of additional or respite cover.
 - Carol Cumino gave WAC perspective - helpline extended to match hours of central support in response to WCC request. Carers and others affected by loneliness may need post lockdown support to give them confidence. Need to bear in mind that changes in service delivery may not be linked to cutbacks, but may be in response to lack of confidence to engage
 - Tomasz Jarecki (Like You – organisation supporting migrants) endorsed CC’s view about confidence; many of his service users have language barriers and no social networks.
 - Sue Onions (Chair of Parents’ Voice) – Mental Health Foundation report identifies loneliness as key issue for 16-25s, so not limited to older people. Assumption is that young people happy to use technology but not necessarily true in all cases. Group has distributed information on mental health during crisis to address anxieties.
 - Pete Sugg (Young Solutions) highlighted the Seek and Reach mentoring project, funded by Lottery to address youth loneliness.
 - Mark Jackson referred to meeting last week (WCC et al) to set up a forum for vulnerable young service users a long way from education or employment markets; situation will be exacerbated by postponement of exams. Holistic solution required & VCS can/should contribute to NHS/Public Health restructure
- **Roger Britton – New Ways of Working slides**
 - More demand with reduced resources to be balanced with massive opportunity to make a difference, make things happen. Will focus on three key issues linked to impact of crisis.
 - Digital – offers a step change in our use of technology; not just Zoom meetings or conferences, but in the way we do our business. Provides access for the many but some exclusions e.g. people not connected so more at risk of isolation. Need to explore digital opportunities to run/enhance our own organisations. Will need assistance with implementation, but will be costly; will also be necessary to prove we’re as good as commercial operators, so need to exploit digital opportunities
 - Engagement with Statutory Sector – at present we’ve collaborated as equals to look for solutions, so don’t want to revert to business as usual; need to raise our profile to show we’ve done well. Need to shift from dependence on purse-holding statutory sector, to co-production or co-dependent partnerships. Remember that the purse does not belong to the Government or WCC – it is “citizens’ money” so we have a right to be involved in decisions on how it is spent. Essentially, keep the good practice which has emerged, don’t drift back.

- Relationships with each other – work more collaboratively, don't be protectionist; work together to influence and change the Statutory Sector relationship. Present situation can be compared with the end of WW2; appetite for change led to the creation of NHS
- **Comments**
 - Jonathan Sutton (St Paul's Hostel) recommended OODA loop - Orientate, Observe, Decide, Act (military terminology). If we're to collaborate with the Statutory Sectors, we need to be aware of the mindset and understand their thoughts before they make decisions, rather than after the event so that we are able to pre-empt or counteract with alternative solutions
 - Caroline Queckett (Our Way Self Advocacy) avoids Statutory Sector contracts as they engender co-dependency and can ultimately destabilise organisations.
 - Anwen Jones (Age UK Malvern) believes in making changes **with** people, not **to** people and recommends involving local people.
 - Mark Jackson commented that local communities have responded very well; demonstrated agility in responding at a micro level and succeeded in keeping clients' needs at front and centre.
 - Mark Herriot (Community First) advised that WCC is already carrying out a "Reform or Recovery" exercise to review all its services and contracts. Between 1 July – 1 November they will decide what they will continue to fund and what is no longer needed or relevant; any resulting cancellation of services or contracts will be made without notice.
 - Jenny Gage (Sight Concern) asked if there are opportunities to work together to support people in regaining confidence, such as linking people who have been isolated within the same communities.
 - Roger Britton – commented that all of the above issues on loneliness and connectivity are particularly severe in rural locations.
 - Mark Jackson – predicted changes in volunteering; some over-70s who are shielding may not return, so the new cohort (furloughed workers) needs encouragement to continue. This is an opportunity to retain them in some capacity and/or to actively recruit young people to provide them with skills and work experience
 - Tomasz Jarecki offered to get involved in setting up a digital forum.
- **Mark Jackson - Next Steps and Closure**
 - Copies of the slides, the full report of the survey results and a link to the video of the event will be circulated to all participants as soon as possible.
 - He will write to local MPs setting out the key headlines of the report.
 - Imperative that we intervene in WCC's Reform or Recovery exercise before it is finalised.
 - Offer council staff a day with, or secondment to, commissioned organisations to increase their understanding of what is involved in service delivery.