

VOLUNTARY COMMUNITY SOCIAL ENTERPRISE (VCSE) SUSTAINABILITY ADVICE AND SUPPORT

Community Action Suffolk is committed to supporting our Voluntary Sector throughout the ongoing pandemic with Coronavirus (COVID-19). As we have seen the impact is being felt across the board and continues to move at rapid pace. This will continue to be updated as more information becomes available. If you have a question about any aspects of this guidance please contact us.

- **Furlough** – The Government Job Retention Scheme came into power in light of the COVID-19. This scheme allows charities and businesses to put employees who would otherwise be unemployed as a result of the coronavirus (if they were on the payroll on 28th February 2020) on 'Furlough'. This means that the employee does not work and the state finances 80% of their salary up to £2,500/mth. Employers have the opportunity to top this up to 100%

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>

- **Charities Loan** – This is available for Charities that raise at least 50% from trade, but must be in a position to pay it back.

<https://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/coronavirus-business-support/>

- **VAT registered?** You can find out how to defer your payments.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/deferral-of-vat-payments-due-to-coronavirus-covid-19>

- **Good Finance** have produced a Resource Hub for Charities and Social Enterprises to navigate effectively the COVID-19 Pandemic

<https://www.goodfinance.org.uk/covid-19-resource-hub-charities-social-enterprises>

- **Remote Working Hardware, Software, Meetings, Support**

Where remote working allows this can bring added pressures especially so if you may have children or elderly dependants – Information in the below links helps you

<https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/coronavirus/protecting-your-staff-volunteers-and-beneficiaries#section-4>

It is vital in these challenging times to support staff with their own mental health and Mind have some useful information about the coronavirus and supporting your staff.

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/#collapse76484>

- **Using Digital Platforms to continue services**

In a time where we are limiting social contact, more and more of us are putting our digital skills to the test and holding our meetings across media platforms.

Facebook / You tube 'Lives' Keep Fit classes are still operating, but live and online

Parish Council Meetings and other community organisations such as band practice and healthy eating groups who would usually meet in a community building are using platforms like Zoom, teams and Skype

Crowdfunder have removed their charges so that organisations can continue to fundraising.

- **Fundraising**

Many events have been postponed, the Fundraising Regulator explains that we should "Weigh up the benefits and risks of their ongoing fundraising activities and exercise judgement when deciding what is in the best interests of their beneficiaries, supporters, staff, volunteers and the public. If carrying out fundraising over the phone ensure that this does not cause undue pressure and anxiousness.

<https://www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/more-from-us/news/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-fundraising>

- **Contracts**

If a party is unable to fulfil their obligations under a contract they should make contact with commissioner to discuss the most common issues and challenges as soon as the challenge has been recognised

- **Legacies**

With the economic downturn legacy income is likely to slow down, but wills are showing an increase.

- **Business Continuity Management Toolkit**

What are your organisation's key products and services? What are the critical activities and resources required to deliver these? What are the risks to these critical activities? How will you maintain these critical activities? The Government have provided this toolkit Mitigating threats by putting in place a framework which allows key functions of the business to continue even if the worst happens.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/137994/Business_Continuity_Management_Toolkit.pdf

- **Funder Flexibility**

Speak to your Funder if your focus has had to shift elsewhere and you feel that your award may be compromised, maybe you need to use your funding to help cover sickness, purchase equipment, or deliver services differently.

- **Funding 4 Suffolk -COVID-19 Response – Funding – Funds are being released constantly, this is a one stop shop for you to search your funding needs. You can save your search and it will notify you when you show eligibility**

- **Organisational Resilience – Anticipating Threats and responding effectively**

This checklist from Zurich provides key considerations and guidance on the steps that an organisation can take to plan for a pandemic to minimise the impact upon their business activities, employees and customers.

<https://newsandviews.zurich.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Organisational-Resilience-Guidance-on-Pandemic-Planning.pdf>

- **Contingency and Continuity planning**

The Government advises businesses to build their own resilience by reviewing their business continuity plans. It is helpful to identify the impact of a reasonable worst-case scenario and identify contingency plans. Considerations include:-

- Developing a contingency plan and how your insurance will be impacted
- Immediate actions to manage your finances
- What to expect from funders
- How your investments will be impacted
- Other financial implications

NCVO have provided detailed information here.

<https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/coronavirus/contingency-planning-and-financial-implications#section-1>

The Charities and Facilities Management Group have put together some information:-

<https://charitiesfmgroup.org/business-continuity-management-charities>

- **Reserves**

We always suggest that it is good practice to have reserves and indeed a reserves policy. Whilst we could never have dreamt that this particular risk would arise our reserves come into play if the income and expenditure of your organisation is showing that there is likely to be a shortfall. If you have reserves and this is unrestricted this means that it can be spent on any of an organisations charitable purposes to help cope with unexpected events.

- **Charity Commission Returns**

Wherever possible the Charity Commission would ask you to try to get your annual reports submitted on time. However, where the current situation impacts on the completion of annual returns and accounts, charities with an imminent filing date you can email them. filingextension@charitycommission.gov.uk

- **Charity Insolvency, Rescue and Resilience**

If it is deemed that your organisation is insolvent (Insolvency is when a person or company does not have enough assets to pay all of their debts) we would always recommend that you contact Community Action Suffolk to explore the rescue solutions available to you and to work with you on exploring alternative funding and avenues for financial resilience. More information can be found below:

<https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/organisation/financial-management/insolvency>

<https://bateswells.co.uk/2020/03/charity-governance-and-solvency-a-coronavirus-guide/>

- **Coronavirus Scams**

Please be aware that there are a number of Coronavirus scams, protect those who are vulnerable to avoid becoming a victim of financial abuse.