

# 100 DAYS & COUNTING

**Community Action Suffolk**  
**Covid-19 Impact Report**  
(April – June 2020)



# Foreword

100 days and counting... What a 3 months it has been! On the 23rd March 2020, life as we know it changed significantly for the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector in Suffolk and indeed across the nation. At Community Action Suffolk (CAS), our doors to our buildings closed, employees started working from home, trading income stopped, and demand for our services soared. But we weren't alone, it happened to nearly every charity, community group, voluntary organisation and social enterprise in Suffolk and, my goodness, the sector responded with the biggest show of human kindness, neighbourliness and passion it has ever been my pleasure to witness.

Community Action Suffolk (CAS) is the 'go to' organisation for VCSE organisations in Suffolk. We exist to ensure the sector, and its volunteers, is supported, safe and sustainable and that our communities are active and resilient. We provide (or signpost) whatever is needed behind the scenes to enable this, so the sector can concentrate on doing what it does best – making Suffolk an incredible place in which to live and work; and as the outbreak hit our shores, our services and projects faced the highest levels of demand we've ever seen.

Throughout this booklet, you will see the many different areas of work we have been involved with, numbers of toolkits and resources we have produced, and how far our work has reached. But for me, perhaps one of the greatest achievements for our sector during the pandemic, has been the increased collaboration and partnership working we have seen across geographical areas, systems and sectors enabling the best support to reach those who need it.

We have been key partners in the strategic response to the crisis particularly with the local government and health sectors and also through our unequivocal commitment and involvement with the Suffolk C19 Collaborative Communities Board. We have also collaborated with others to work on key campaigns providing vital support such as Home But Not Alone, the Suffolk Coronavirus Emergency Fund and Rebuilding Local Lives with Suffolk Community Foundation. Thousands of individuals across the county have had access to support providing a vital lifeline in dark times.

Nationally, we have lobbied government alongside our national infrastructure partners – NCVO, NAVCA and ACRE\*, to keep the Suffolk voice heard, contribute to key policy decisions and take part in national sector campaigns. After all, our sector really has been **#NeverMoreNeeded** than now and indeed **#EveryDayCounts**.

So before I leave you to have a look through just some of the work we have been doing in the last 3 months, I would take this opportunity to personally thank each and every resident in Suffolk (you are all **#SuffolkCommunityHero**'s!), every partner and organisation we have worked with or who has helped our sector during C19, our funders who have given us flexibility around the use of our grants, those who have funded us since, and of course, CAS staff and board of Trustees without whom none of this work would have happened.



**Chris Abraham,**  
**Chief Executive, CAS**

\* National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), National Association for Voluntary & Community Associations (NAVCA), Action for Communities in Rural England (ACRE)





# Support for VCSE Organisations during Covid-19

Covid-19 has had a vast and wide-ranging impact on our sector since lockdown began on 23rd March.

Not only did organisations have to rapidly leave their usual premises/offices, enabling staff to work from home and deliver services online where possible, but they also faced some of the biggest financial challenges they have ever experienced at a time when demand increased drastically and staff resource, for many, decreased.

CAS Organisation Support team quickly mobilised to ensure information, guidance & resources were available to help organisations with whatever they needed.

Safeguarding support was essential. Enquiries soared as organisations faced increased digital activity and concerns for staff & volunteers with new ways of working. Enquiries, policy development and implementation surgeries, running 'pop up'/emergency response groups safely, and developing accessible and relevant training materials was key to CAS provision during the first few weeks of the pandemic. We also created and **hosted our first on demand Virtual Safeguarding conference** with partners (SCC, Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership, Norfolk & Suffolk Constabularies and Suffolk Trading Standards).

In addition, we have transitioned our face to face training to online platforms, offering a range of webinars, 1:1 support, training courses and a range of on demand training courses and accompanying resources. Courses include the Volunteer Passport, Introduction to Safeguarding, Introduction to Good Governance for Trustees, and Writing a Successful funding Application.

*Suffolk ProHelp* has also provided a series of **expert webinars** and digital resources to support organisations and groups including a focus on Business Continuity Planning, Digital Platforms, HR issues, Business Strategy, and Brand Awareness.



The forced closure of *village halls & community buildings* during lockdown left many communities with a lack of amenities and activities that usually form such a big part of rural life in Suffolk. In addition, it meant that buildings across the county were no longer able to earn any of the income so vitally needed for their survival. CAS has been instrumental in publicising various grants during the pandemic, not least the Retail, Leisure & Hospitality grant from the government ensuring a great take-up of the support and reduction in anxiety for many management committees. VH/CB advice culminated this period on the 1st & 2nd July as buildings looked to re-open, with **109 individuals attending 2 online sessions** with CAS to navigate through the national guidance.

We also took our *Specialist Business Support online*, most notably through weekly **Facebook LIVE Q&A sessions starting on the 28th April with a 2.3k reach** – the highest CAS has ever seen on this medium. These sessions sit alongside online 1:1 surgeries and digital video conferencing to ensure vital business support continues to reach organisations across the county.

With scarce finances and limited time to plan and apply for funding opportunities, *financial sustainability advice* has been #NeverMoreNeeded. In partnership with SCC, we have shared 5 podcasts specifically written to help when applying for funds and delivered 29 1:1 funding surgeries since lockdown began covering a range of topics from grant searches, financial reviews, application support and meeting the needs of funders. The **Funding4Suffolk portal has had 2,695 visits** in 3 months and continues to rise.

Social Investment support has also seen increased enquiries and anticipates a further uplift as we move through the recovery phase. We have been busy networking and forming regional partnerships to enhance the offer in Suffolk as well as providing various digital resources including a guide to Social Investment and a short podcast on 'Impact for Small Charities'.



**6 ProHelp webinars**

**1000+ individuals received safeguarding guidance**

**1 virtual Safeguarding Conference – 8 workshops, 262 views**

**9 NEW online training courses & on demand guides**

**140 Village Hall/Community Building referrals**

**5 Facebook LIVE Q&A's**

**1st FB LIVE reached >2,300**

**29 1:1 Funding Surgeries on partnership with SCC**

**Funding4Suffolk portal, visits UP 27% in April, 35% in May & 41% in June**

**@Funding4Suffolk, 8111 impressions**

**@socialInvestmentCAS, 9.5k impressions**

**21 Organisation Support digital resources created**

**434 Webinar views**

Covid-19 also didn't stop us celebrating **Small Charity Week** again this year, albeit a little differently, using the opportunity to provide more invaluable resources and shine a light on the great work VCSE organisations do through our virtual platforms.




**SMALL CHARITY WEEK**  
15th - 20th June 2020  
**How CAS can support you**

**MONDAY 15TH**  
**1 I ♥ Small Charities Day**  
1. Get involved in the conversation, use the hashtag #SmallCharityWeek.  
2. Volunteers are often the lifeblood of small charities. We have a suite of resources on the Volunteer Journey.  
3. We are running a follow up, facilitated group discussion session for senior managers who have watched or taken part in the webinar with Elizabeth Pearce on Making Strategy Work.

**TUESDAY 16TH**  
**Big Advice Day**  
1. Learn about organisational resilience, in a video from Giles Kerham at Larking Gowen.  
2. The #SI is running three online workshops to mark Big Advice Day.  
3. On Tuesday you can join Sabrina Ward our Business Support Officer on her regular Facebook Live. On 16th June at 11am she will be chatting to Kim Pattock, Region Manager at RSPCA Martlesham FB: @communityactionsuffolk

**WEDNESDAY 17TH**  
**Policy Day**  
1. Managing Volunteers: Book your online one to one Community Volunteering Surgery with a Volunteer Officer.  
2. Safeguarding is still of paramount importance. CAS has developed an On-demand safeguarding conference for the Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise Sector.  
3. CAS's organisational Health Check is an online tool for Trustees and staff to assess the internal processes of their organisation.

**THURSDAY 18TH**  
**Fundraising Day**  
1. You can book your one to one bespoke online funding surgery now with CAS.  
2. For Small Charities Week you can also listen to Podcasts on Big Writing: Funding & Development Support from Suffolk County Council & Community Action Suffolk.  
3. Take a look at the Funding4Suffolk portal to source funding and C-19 Emergency Funding for Suffolk Organisations

**FRIDAY 19TH**  
**Small Charity Big Impact Day**  
1. Using the template provided why not take a photo or record a short (60-90 second) video highlighting the amazing impact you made over the past 12 months. Post it on social media using #SmallCharityBigImpactDay and tag Community Action Suffolk.  
2. There will be an audiolibrary from Sarah Lohmeay, Social Investment Officer, about how small charities can demonstrate their impact. Take a look @socialinvestCAS on Twitter for more

**Appreciation Day**  
None of the impact small charities achieve would be possible without the hard work and commitment of the volunteers and staff behind them. Share your appreciation using the hashtag #AppreciationDay and tag Community Action Suffolk

communityactionsuffolk.org.uk  
Search Small Charity Week in news for links

#SmallCharityWeek  
smallcharityweek.com

@CASuffolk

# Spotlight on...

## Supporting FoodBanks in Suffolk

Food banks are designed to provide short-term, emergency support with food during a crisis. Their aim is to relieve the immediate pressure of the crisis by providing food, whilst also providing additional support to help people resolve the crises that they face.

The ability to purchase sufficient food is a luxury that not everyone has. As Covid-19 continues to unfold food banks have been hit hard in terms of meeting increasing demand with a matching supply. They play a major role in the provision of food by distributing donated and purchased groceries directly to families in need.

Pre-C19 there were just over 20 established food banks in Suffolk providing food to people in need; there are **now 49 established** and pop up food banks operating weekly. Since the end of March 2020, CAS has been working in partnership with Suffolk County Council, Ipswich Borough Council and East Suffolk, Babergh/Mid Suffolk and West Suffolk Councils to establish a food supply chain to food banks across Suffolk.

The newly formed collaboration has continued to meet regularly to look at the information being collected from food banks and offer help where needed; this has included additional food at short notice and extra storage. CAS have been able to provide advice on both funding and sustainability and appropriate governance for those food banks looking at a more formal structure going forward.

These tough times have inspired many organisations to create pop-up food banks:

*Bacton Foodbank was set up by Rev Carl Melville in direct response to the lockdown. He originally planned to help the villages in his local area to the north of Stowmarket but is now serving a wider catchment since he has plenty of food available and funding in place. The Foodbank has been supporting over **20 households weekly** to date. As Carl says, **"I have been shocked at how quickly things have changed for families, particularly families with children"**.*



*Castle Hill Community Centre have repurposed their premises to set up a food bank in North West Ipswich. In the first 5 weeks they went from supporting 20 families per week to 79 with this number increasing ever since.*

The National food charity FareShare has a base in Suffolk and has been a member of CAS for a number of years. CAS contacted FareShare who already supplied food banks across Suffolk to ask them to take on further food banks. This partnership has gone from strength to strength and with help from the MOD for deliveries, FareShare is continuing to expand the number of food banks it supplies weekly. Between the beginning of April and the end of June **FareShare distributed 33159.41 kg of food to Foodbanks in Suffolk.**

Alongside the work with FareShare, CAS has liaised with national and local companies to provide extra and luxury food items. Cadburys contacted Suffolk Police offering Easter Eggs which CAS quickly linked up with FareShare for distribution. Claire and Matthew Thacker of Kingfishers at Cretingham Country Park donated 500 frozen meals, the Teapot Project were happy to take delivery of these and distribute widely.

CAS's CEO was contacted by National Business Response Network with an offer of frozen food from Greggs as well as pallet loads of donations from Nestle. Working with food banks with freezer capacity CAS was able to distribute these much needed donations amongst the food banks with all ambient food being distributed through FareShare.

**In the first 5 weeks  
they went from  
supporting 20 families  
per week to 79**



# Community & Voluntary Action during Covid-19

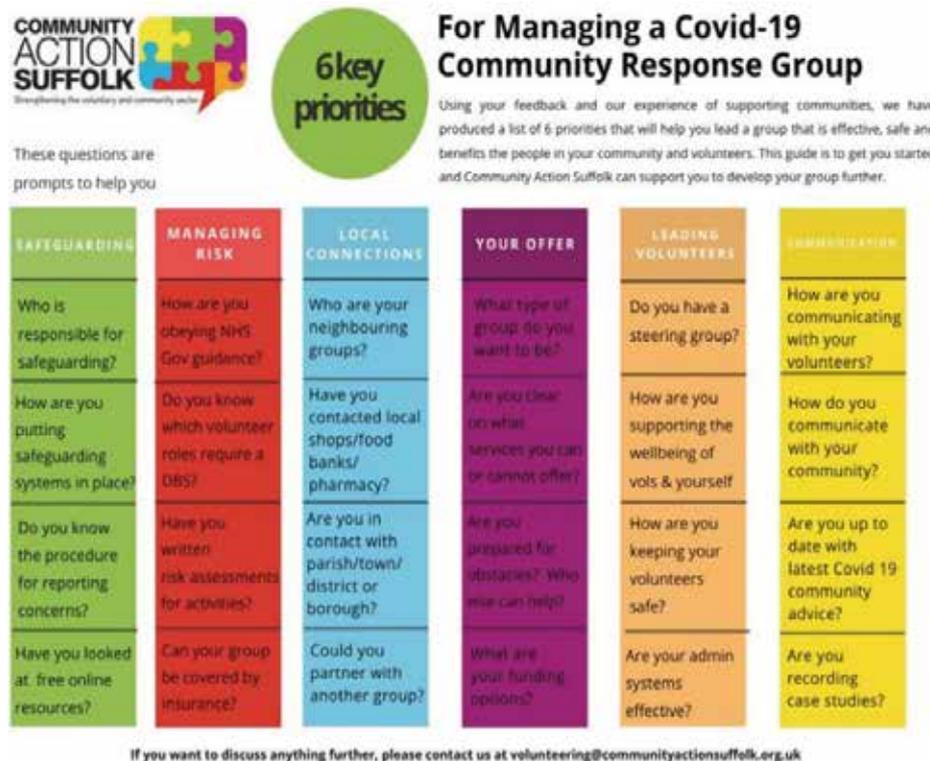
## Volunteer Management

The C19 pandemic has had a huge impact on Volunteering in Suffolk. Volunteers aged 70+ needed to self-isolate and those with certain health conditions were told to shield. Volunteers that had loved ones that were in these categories also found themselves in the position where they were unable to volunteer in the usual way. Groups and organisations found themselves closing their services almost overnight and not requiring some or all their volunteers. As the situation progressed, volunteer managers had to adapt their service and volunteering offer in response to Covid-19.

But CAS volunteering team remained on hand to help - available remotely to volunteer managers and supporting them through challenges, encouraging them to think ahead and reflect on the current situation. At a glance Volunteer Management guides were developed and peer support groups provided a way to learn from each other. Regular newsletters to both the registered 700 volunteer managers and the 3400 volunteers' members of Volunteer Suffolk provided up to date information and guidance.

Alongside this, the team found that there was a rapidly growing army of volunteers for the 100s of mutual aid groups that were starting up in incredibly quick timescales. The challenge was how to enable these groups to respond to the urgency of the pandemic while also promoting good and safe volunteer management. A dedicated webpage was set up for Volunteer Management and setting up a Community response group. Over 1000 views to both pages were recorded during the 3 months of April to June 2020. There was a suite of resources that included quick guides to more comprehensive toolkits and our new 6-point guide provide popular as a way for groups to think about structure.

CAS also led the mapping exercise of community groups across Suffolk creating a database of 1500+ providing a C19 response to 436 parishes and towns across the county used by the Home But Not Alone campaign partners to find available support. A survey was sent to 620 group leaders to find out what was available. 165 responses were received, a response rate of 27% compared to a national average response rate for these surveys of 10-15%.



**COMMUNITY ACTION SUFFOLK**  
Strengthening the voluntary and community sector

**6 key priorities**

### For Managing a Covid-19 Community Response Group

Using your feedback and our experience of supporting communities, we have produced a list of 6 priorities that will help you lead a group that is effective, safe and benefits the people in your community and volunteers. This guide is to get you started and Community Action Suffolk can support you to develop your group further.

These questions are prompts to help you

SAFEGUARDING	MANAGING RISK	LOCAL CONNECTIONS	YOUR OFFER	LEADING VOLUNTEERS	ADMINISTRATION
Who is responsible for safeguarding?	How are you obeying NHS Gov guidance?	Who are your neighbouring groups?	What type of group do you want to be?	Do you have a steering group?	How are you communicating with your volunteers?
How are you putting safeguarding systems in place?	Do you know which volunteer roles require a DBS?	Have you contacted local shops/food banks/pharmacy?	Are you clear on what services you can or cannot offer?	How are you supporting the wellbeing of vols & yourself?	How do you communicate with your community?
Do you know the procedure for reporting concerns?	Have you written risk assessments for activities?	Are you in contact with parish/town/district or borough?	Are you prepared for obstacles? Who else can help?	How are you keeping your volunteers safe?	Are you up to date with latest Covid 19 community advice?
Have you looked at free online resources?	Can your group be covered by insurance?	Could you partner with another group?	What are your funding options?	Are your admin systems effective?	Are you recording case studies?

If you want to discuss anything further, please contact us at [volunteering@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk)



**Sally Connick** ▸ Covid 19 Community Action Response - Leaders Support Group  
Admin · 9 April · 🌐

Have you started to put a little structure behind your group? Our team has put together this short guide to help you prioritise what may need to be considered.

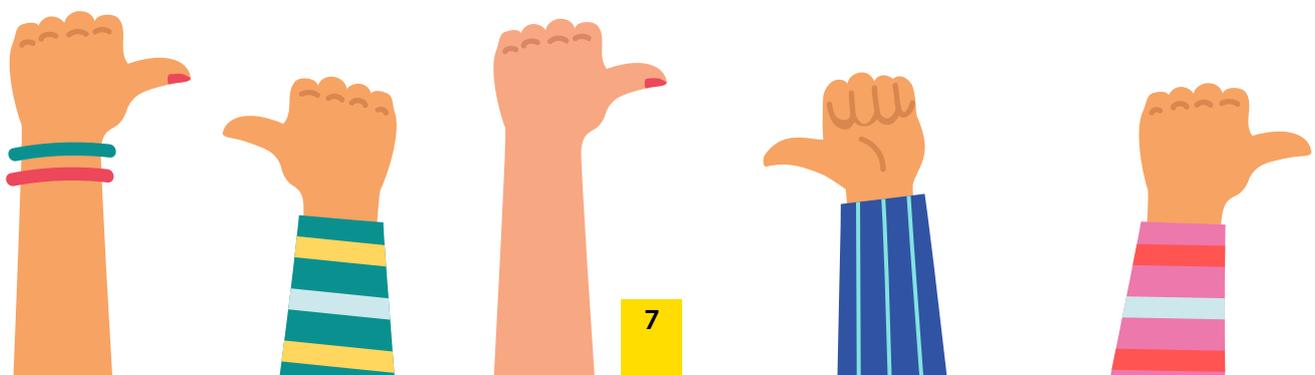
<https://www.communityactionsuffolk.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/6-key-priorities-question-sheet-April-2020.pdf>

4 🗨️ 9 comments Seen by 7C

Like Comment

👤 This is brilliant Sally!! I'll be having a good look over the weekend. Have a lovely Easter break everyone and stay safe.

Comment as Volunteer Su...





## Volunteer Recruitment

CAS Volunteering Team were involved with Tribe and led on the impact survey of the app. The Tribe Volunteer App was introduced in March 2020 by Suffolk County Council through the Collaborative Communities Board to assist the matching of volunteers to vulnerable people needing help through the single point of access telephone line Home But Not Alone.

To understand more about volunteering during C19, a survey was sent to all 1800 registered users on the tribe App. **471 responses** were received - a 26% response rate compared to the national average 10-15%. The results found that Suffolk communities have provided an incredible response to C19 with neighbour to neighbour interactions of help being how most people have been able to respond. We have also seen an amazing number of community groups set up and, through another CAS led survey at this time, we know that shortage of volunteers is not a challenge that many groups are facing.

CAS have since used the app to signpost over 130 registered users to local groups and organisations needing volunteers. In addition to this, **Volunteer Suffolk connected over 200 volunteers to C19 related roles.**

Via Volunteer Suffolk: T registered as a telephone befriender with a local organisation "but heard nothing back". A CAS Volunteering officer contacted the charity and it transpired that he had been contacted via an email which was lost in his email filter. T was feeling neglected and due to a recent bereavement was starting to become depressed. Since contacting T he has been in contact regarding the befriending service and is also starting a series of music nights within Covid guidelines in the village where he lives. These will be themed for different decades starting from 1940's through to 1980's.

T said "I have done a great deal of charity, fundraising, youth, community, aid work in my past spare time. I am 65 and a half years young and have a 37-year career in field sales also done promoting and admin work. Good listener (and talker). about 12 years ago I did and passed a year's diploma course "Access to social care and social work professions" so if anyone can think of a way I can be of use at home here in North Lowestoft either admin work, befriending people on the phone, or laptop internet work (not very good on these) Thank you"

**60% of volunteers contacted by CAS** to find out how the matching process has gone, have shared their stories of how they have volunteered and made a difference during the pandemic.

Via Volunteer Suffolk: K had volunteered to work at a soup kitchen and a night shelter but had heard nothing back.

K wrote "I hope this email finds you well in these very uncertain and difficult times. I have trying to contact someone for a while now with regard to volunteering at the soup kitchen.

I am the area manager of two nurseries in Ipswich and find myself in a position of wanting to give my spare time to help those in need and would love to volunteer with yourselves to help at the soup kitchen. I would be extremely grateful if you could let me know how best to do this and I thank you in advance for your time"

We advised that many charities have been working within "protective bubbles" or been closed and so there has been a delay in some of them responding to people who want to help. We contacted the soup kitchen and K is now volunteering there following our intervention.



This Community Can is a project that tackles rural isolation with a range of volunteer-led activities across Suffolk but Covid-19 meant these activities abruptly stopping and people facing increased and prolonged periods of isolation.

The project has therefore developed a new way to support those in isolation to return to activities launching 'Buddy up' to link volunteers 1:1 to an individual, initially for telephone support and then later to accompany them on walks, a class or even just a trip to the local shops to regain confidence. Volunteers recruited for the Buddy Up roles are DBS checked and will be able to enjoy a specially developed range of training opportunities specific to the role.

**1800** groups/organisations mapped responding to Covid-19 to support the Home but Not Alone helpline



**Covid-19 Community Action Response - Leaders Support Group Facebook Group:**

**126** members **270** posts

**832** Comments

**1007** reactions



## Good Neighbour Schemes

**88** Mutual Aid groups thinking about becoming a GNS

**12** Toolkits

**9** groups committed to becoming a GNS

Facebook live on becoming a GNS – **204** engagements



## Volunteering

Supported **89** organisations with volunteer management

**200** volunteers registered for C19 related roles on Volunteer Suffolk

C19 themed Volunteer Newsletter to **4000+** people

CAS website - **799** page views for the community groups covid-19 support page and **320** for the Managing Volunteers covid-19 support page, **646** views on the I want to volunteer page



## Lowestoft Community Enabler Team

More than **60** organisations and individuals helped

**700+** face shields delivered

More than **£10,000** of funding identified

Two Community Freezers in action



# Volunteering & Community Action Case study

## Virtual Volunteering - "Counties, Countries and time zones are no longer barriers to volunteering"

### Paisley Museum

CAS were contacted by Renfrewshire Leisure which is an independent charitable trust in Paisley, Scotland. They were looking for support with virtual volunteers to support the newly refurbished Paisley Museum (closed due to lockdown). The volunteering team within CAS are developing the virtual volunteering offering and writing a two-part information sheet for the VCSE regarding virtual volunteering recruitment.

*Section one – "advertising your roles"  
Section two – "onboarding" how do you interview, welcome, and induct volunteers*

The Paisley museum had heard about the amazing work that The Museum of East Anglian Life have done with their recent drive to recruit virtual volunteers using the Volunteer Suffolk web site. It is a great example of what Paisley Museum were looking to achieve. We contacted the Museum of East Anglia Life and the two museums are assisting each other with information sharing. This is an example of how technology had made the distance between volunteers disappear.

### People's Health Trust

The Local Conversations in Kirkley and Haverhill South are funded by People's Health Trust using money raised by Health Lottery East and are led by the residents. Both projects encouraged residents to check on their neighbours and help each other in safe and appropriate ways. While much of the activity moved online, VE day celebrations presented an opportunity to deliver a little joy to their residents in the form of goody bags delivered to their doors which helped residents and families to celebrate VE Day at home as well as beyond that.



*"The mix makes some scrummy scones, thank you! They didn't last long enough in our house for a photo!"*

*"They were lovely thank you xx had them for lunch with homemade quiche"*



Game Changer Giles Bryant, was running free community yoga sessions prior to the pandemic and was keen to keep people active and moreover connected during the period of enforced isolation. He recorded a series of online videos on a variety of platforms to enable as many people as possible to access them and feel part of a community group. As part of Move Suffolk week, Giles along with other volunteers released videos on YouTube for us to share that were accessible to people of all abilities. These were shared with local residential homes for elderly people to enjoy as well as individuals and they were thus able to enjoy trying a range of exercises from belly dancing to yoga.



# Spotlight on...

## Suffolk Good Neighbour Network & Community Covid-19 Response



GNS across the county found themselves in demand as never before; many bolstered by new volunteers stepping forward to support residents through these unprecedented times, while others found volunteer numbers halved or less, as many long-time volunteers found themselves falling into the shielding or higher risk groups, and needing to isolate/ potentially use the services they have long delivered.

We've also seen communities adapt their GNS, or join forces with other community organisations and parish/town councils, in order to manage supporting activities in their area, and where no GNS was active, newly formed pop-up C19 Community Response Groups or Mutual Aid Groups developed to fill that void. From grocery shopping & prescription collection, telephone befriending and check-in and chats to organising emergency food parcels or freshly cooked hot meals delivered to those in need, and from acts of neighbourly kindness such as anonymous homemade jam drops to Birthday Afternoon Tea deliveries to those shielding, or organising Friday fish & chip orders and deliveries to help lift spirits; Good Neighbours have continued their commitment to supporting their most vulnerable, lonely or isolated residents, and found new ways to build community spirit and spread kindness, inclusion & joy within their neighbourhoods.

In an ever changing C19 landscape, many communities and their voluntary groups, both GNS and pop-up Community C19 Response Groups, their committees/steering groups, volunteer coordinators and volunteers on the ground have been supported to navigate challenges and next steps by the GNS Development Officer and wider CAS Volunteering Team.

### The story so far...

- 2 new GNS launched – Melton GNS & IP17GNS supported to launch ahead of schedule to provide support within their communities as lockdown approached/was implemented.
- 2 Community Covid-19 Response Toolkits launched incl. temporary 'print at home' ID templates.
- Remote DBS support and checks were developed by CAS with 8 GNS accessing checks and approx. 40 volunteers checked.



- Shopping & Money Handling Guidance was created and updated regularly
- 3 GNS Bulletins were sent to all GNS with a larger combined double issue sent in April/May, plus additional specific add-on emails, supporting Schemes with navigating changing Government guidelines, C19 funding opportunities, managing risk and best practice, links to supporting resources, volunteering safely, safeguarding residents receiving support and different ways to support these service users. Feedback from one of our West Suffolk GNS Committee Members read '**Thank you for the recent bulletin. It's really good-very informative and well presented!**'
- Links were made between Age UK Suffolk and Suffolk GNS to offer support calls from trained Age UK Suffolk staff to GNS service users with Dementia or their Carers.
- The GNS DO hosted an Online Talk Volunteering: Networking Event for leaders of Covid-19 Community Response Groups
- Our GNS DO hosted a Facebook LIVE event – Introduction to becoming a Good Neighbour Scheme, aimed at communities who might like to harness the positive community spirit and voluntary good will that has come about, to create a positive post-Covid legacy from their Covid Community Response groups - **reached 653 people, had 404 views and 204 engagements.**
- Contact made with 88 community group survey responders saying they might like to continue their activities and need help to move forward.
- Existing GNS Toolkit updated to support Community Covid Response Groups looking to sustain their voluntary activity as they identify ongoing need for community support and look to transition into new GNS across the county. So far supplied to 12 community groups new to GNS activity to help them consider their next steps.
- 9 communities/groups committed to working towards becoming new Good Neighbour Schemes, 6 converting from being Community Covid Response groups.
- Monthly online 1 to 1 Community Volunteering Surgery sessions and Community Leaders Peer Support Groups.
- A network of Ipswich based Community Covid Support Groups have been linked up to help build relationships and together. Fantastic news as prior to C19 not a single GNS operated in Ipswich.



# Connecting Communities

Arguably one of the most valued ways CAS has helped communities is by providing connections and putting people in touch to learn from each other and share skills and resources. Below are just a few examples of how we have done this during the pandemic.

The emergence of mutual aid groups in Suffolk saw people becoming leaders of volunteers, many for the first time. The volunteering team set up and administered a successful Facebook group for these new leaders of Volunteers. It was a place for the officers to share local and national guidance and information, but more importantly for the leaders to support each other.

## Top Posts on the Facebook Group for Volunteer Leaders of Covid-19 community response groups.



Hello all, I'm looking for a recommendation today for a cheap mobile phone to use for our Good Neighbour Scheme. What have you guys gone for?  
*12 comments seen by 75*

One of the replies:

We have talk mobile monthly sim £5 a month which I put in an old phone. It's unlimited calls and texts 250mb data. You can cancel anytime as it's 30 day contract. so £60 a year.

Has anyone had any talks about 'exit strategy' for the volunteer groups? I appreciate support may still be needed and we are doing our absolute best, our group is getting smaller from an already very small one, fatigued and we are looking at discontinuing our services within the next month or two. What is everyone else planning?

*25 comments and seen by 40*

Hold the vision!. Your group will be smaller but still vital to some. My group, Rendlesham Good Neighbour Scheme, was here before covid and before lockdown. We will still be here afterwards. Less shopping perhaps, less volunteers as they return to previous lives perhaps but still here. But looking to develop new initiatives, digital isolation? (getting the non tech generations to get the benefit of internet etc) Anti isolation meet ups? a village meal once a month, coffee groups?

Either way the spirit that brought you here needs to be nurtured. Consider morphing into a Good Neighbour Scheme (Jane A-c will advise) and your parish council and/or town council WILL support you (or the covid collective will fetch out pitch forks and surround their offices 😊) Join with others here and on other forums to spread good ideas. Also remember that volunteering benefits the volunteer as well as the recipient.

Good luck and feel free to PM me if you want.



**NETWORKING - It was identified through the Suffolk C19 Collaborative Communities Board that Health and Wellbeing of Volunteers responding to C19 could be impacted. CAS worked with partners from Suffolk County Council, West Suffolk Council and HealthWatch Suffolk to put together a set of resources to support volunteers and leaders – including networking meetings for the leaders to discuss challenges and problem solve together – facilitated by one of our Volunteering Officers.**



*Home But Not Alone (Suffolk Collaborative Communities Board) – Response to Community Groups Survey*

"I have lived in my street for 6 years and have got to know my next door neighbour's and the lady across the road, but that's about it!

"As soon as lockdown started, I called on them to let them know that I could help with any shopping. The older lady was very grateful for this and had a list of items that she needed. But it did make me think if anyone else in the road needed my help?

"I signed up to the Tribe App to offer my services as a volunteer in Ipswich. I was pleased to be connected to a local Mutual Aid group - Ipswich Community Support group. I was sent some easy to read guidelines about volunteering safely and what to do if I was worried about somebody who I was helping.

"Within a few days of being connected to Ipswich Community Support Group, I was asked to help another neighbour on my road. I have now been shopping for this neighbour each week for 2 months. Each time I do her shopping we have a bit more of a chat and find out about each other – as you do as neighbours!

"Through our chats I have discovered that she has not been out of her house socially for 4 years. We have talked about being able to have a cup of tea together soon and maybe even going for a drive to Felixstowe.

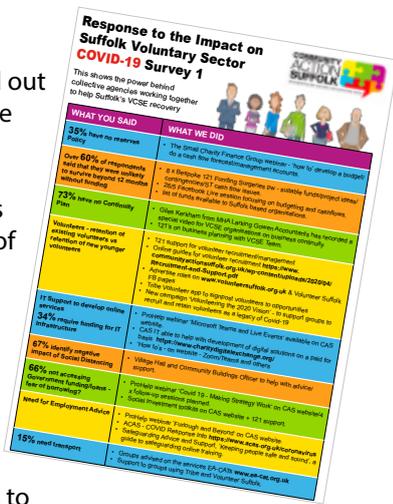
"While the lady I am supporting is obviously benefiting from me doing her shopping for her, I am gaining so much myself. The weekly shopping trip gives me a welcome break from my full-time working from home and to be honest, it gives me a good feeling to know that I am making a difference."

# Partnerships

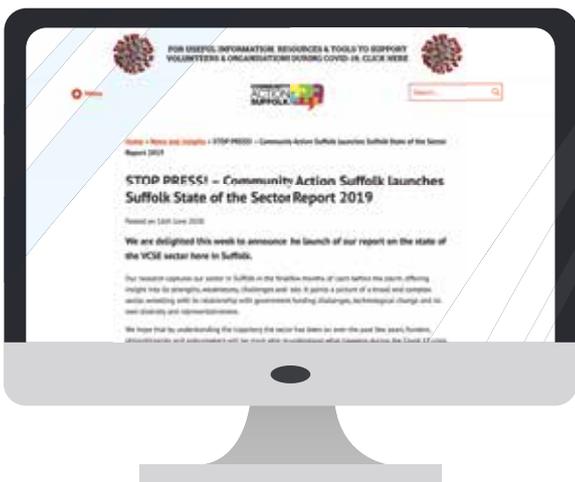
- We have worked with New Anglia LEP to ensure the voice of the VCSE is heard in planning for an inclusive economy with the Economic Strategy and Local Industrial Strategy going forward. Working with leaders from across the VCSE sector, CAS fed into the planning for the **Restart Recovery Plan** to address issues coming out of Covid-19, highlighting the role of the sector in creating employment and skills development opportunities which, in turn, will feed into the emerging Renew Plan.



- Research work - **3 VCSE C19 Impact surveys** were carried out in April, May and June with the last survey focusing on an area identified in previous surveys - 'New Ways of Working' - including use of digital and plans for the future. Findings have been used by Suffolk system partners to inform recovery planning and by CAS to ensure sector needs for support have been met throughout the crisis.



- The **State of the Sector research** carried out in late 2019 was published in June on our website and via social media. The report provides a snapshot of the sector before Covid-19, offering insight into its strengths, weaknesses, challenges and risks. It paints a picture of a broad and complex sector, wrestling with its relationship with government, funding challenges, technological change and its own diversity and representativeness and will be repeated post-C19 to reflect the changes resulting from the pandemic.



- Minding the Gap** – funded by the The National Lottery Community Fund and European Social Fund. The partnership has adapted delivery to our young people with **130 Minding the Gap participants contacted remotely during first 2 weeks of lockdown**, and **80% of participants engaging regularly** with their key worker remotely i.e. telephone, email or text. Given that only 30% of participants have access to IT equipment or the internet at home, other than their mobile phone this was no easy task! The "Minding the Gap Network" on Facebook was launched - 41 participants have joined the group and are interacting with the page. Facebook HUBs launch every Wednesday, with themes as follows: British Sign Language; Wellbeing & meditation; 'Live' cooking demo; Setting up a Youtube Channel; Hair hub; Interview skills & CV preparation.



## Case Study: Voluntary Sector Leaders (VSL) Group:

Presenting a united voice of the VCSE sector in Suffolk on key issues and during discussions with the wider public and health sectors is a challenge for such a diverse sector as ours. Formed in 2019 and open to all VCSE organisations of all sizes, the VSL Group enables our sector to effectively present data and information that reflects the situation in relation to issues such as rurality, community interests, young people skills and employability, deprivation on many fronts and loneliness and isolation.

The group, aimed at senior leaders and chief executives to enable a wide cross section of organisations to participate and engage, has a role in raising issues that may not have traditionally been seen as VCSE concerns such as inclusive economy planning with New Anglia LEP. But as funding for skills and employability is increasingly being channeled through the LEP the need to engage more and present the work the sector does to support inclusive economic growth has never been more prevalent.

So far we have been successful in engaging a cross section of speakers from national and local level including Stuart Keeble - Director of Public Health for Suffolk, Tom Hunt MP, Susannah Howard – Suffolk Transformation Partnership, and we have a line up of speakers going into the Summer and Autumn. The engagement of VCSE leaders and chief executives has been really positive so far.

# CAS COVID-19 VCSE Sector Impact Survey 1



CAS resources, tools and partnerships to support the sector

WHAT YOU SAID	WHAT WE DID
Over <b>60%</b> of respondents said that they were unlikely to survive beyond 12 months without funding (35% have no Reserves Policy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bespoke 1:1 Funding Surgeries delivered each week providing tailored advice and guidance on all aspects of funding.</li> <li>Specialist Business Support Facebook Live session in May focused on budgeting and cashflow.</li> <li>Covid-19 list of available funds continuously updated in partnership with SCC and available on CAS website.</li> <li>The Small Charity Finance Group webinar – ‘how to’ develop a budget/do a cash flow forecast/management link available on the CAS website.</li> </ul>
<b>73%</b> of respondents had no Business Continuity Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Suffolk ProHelp member Giles Kerkham from MHA Larking Gowen created a specialist video on business continuity.</li> <li>Bespoke 1:1 support for business planning with CAS Business Advisor, Sabrina Ward.</li> </ul>
<b>Volunteers – retention of existing volunteers vs retention of new younger volunteers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bespoke 1:1 support for volunteer recruitment/management via CAS Volunteering Team.</li> <li>Developed a suite of new Covid-19 specific guides &amp; resources for volunteer recruitment/management.</li> <li>Continued support to advertise roles on <a href="http://www.volunteersuffolk.org.uk">www.volunteersuffolk.org.uk</a> and Volunteer Suffolk social media.</li> <li>Signposted the Home But Not Alone campaign and Tribe Volunteer app alongside partners in the Suffolk Covid-19 Collaborative Communities Board.</li> <li>Developed campaign ‘Volunteering the 2020 Vision’ – to support groups to recruit and retain volunteers as a legacy of Covid-19.</li> </ul>
<b>IT Support to develop online services</b> <b>34%</b> require funding for IT Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Suffolk ProHelp member Lorna Rose partnered with CAS to deliver the ‘Microsoft Teams and Live Events’ webinar now available on CAS website.</li> <li>IT Services @ CAS Ltd are able to offer a range of digital solutions and support to organisations across Suffolk <a href="https://www.suffolkonline.net/">https://www.suffolkonline.net/</a></li> <li>Compiled a variety of ‘How to’ resources on CAS website from partners to help organisations make use of digital communications platforms.</li> </ul>
<b>66%</b> not accessing Government funding/loans – fear of borrowing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Suffolk ProHelp member Elizabeth Pearce partnered with CAS to deliver the ‘Covid-19 – Making Strategy Work’ webinar now available on CAS website.</li> <li>Produced various Social Investment toolkits to guide the sector and offered 1:1 support through CAS Social Investment Officer Sarah Lomasney.</li> </ul>
<b>Need for Employment Advice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Suffolk ProHelp member Lucy Pakes of Ashtons HR Consulting partnered with CAS to deliver the ‘Furlough and Beyond’ webinar now available on CAS website.</li> <li>ACAS – COVID Response Info <a href="https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus">https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus</a></li> <li>Safeguarding 1 to 1 Advice and Support.</li> <li>On-demand safeguarding conference ‘Keeping Yourself and Others Safe and Sound’.</li> </ul>
<b>15%</b> need transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Groups signposted and advised on the services provided by EA-CATs <a href="http://www.ea-cat.org.uk">www.ea-cat.org.uk</a>. This organisation can provide help during emergency events with transport.</li> <li>Support to Community groups using Tribe and Volunteer Suffolk to provide a matching service to volunteers offering help with transportation..</li> </ul>

# CAS COVID-19 VCSE Sector Impact Survey 2



CAS resources, tools and partnerships to support the sector

WHAT YOU SAID	WHAT WE DID
<p><b>47% of respondents said that they were unlikely to survive beyond 12 months without funding, down from 60% in Survey 1 (49% identified core costs as their priority for additional funding)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 40 1:1 Funding Surgeries offered in April/May providing tailored advice and guidance on all aspects of funding.</li> <li>• Covid-19 list of available funds continuously updated in partnership with SCC and available on CAS website.</li> <li>• Free webinar on CAS website, Making Strategy Work, a session to guide organisations through key issues.</li> <li>• Free webinar on CAS website, Through furlough and beyond, an employers guide.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Volunteering – retention, recruitment &amp; safety concerns</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bespoke 1:1 support for volunteer recruitment/management via CAS Volunteering Team</li> <li>• Updated suite of new Covid-19 specific guides &amp; resources for volunteer recruitment/management.</li> <li>• <a href="http://www.volunteersuffolk.org.uk">www.volunteersuffolk.org.uk</a> and Volunteer Suffolk social media promoting &amp; advertising roles.</li> <li>• ‘Keeping people safe and sound: A basic guide to safeguarding’ - A free 30 minute online learning session for volunteers and pop up community groups.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Concerns re: fear of social contact and social distancing and the impact on Health &amp; Wellbeing</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free webinar on Microsoft Teams and Live Events to help people stay in touch.</li> <li>• Free ‘Keeping yourself and others safe and sound’ online Safeguarding conference.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Need for better communications between organisations re: changes to service delivery likely to affect services of others</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent statement in CAS C19 newsletter directing to individual websites for service changes to prompt action.</li> <li>• 13 Voluntary Sector Leaders Group meetings.</li> <li>• CAS is a partner of the Suffolk Collaborative Communities Board, disseminating weekly newsletter to network which includes key information from other organisations across Suffolk re: delivery &amp; practice.</li> </ul>

## What you said about Us

“Morale is a vital, albeit out-of-sight, dimension in these strange times. So much of what you do, I suspect, ministers precisely to that... It sounds as if you really do engage directly and effectively.”

*The Lord Phillips of Sudbury, OBE*

“Well done for assembling such a vast array of materials... It’s a **phenomenal achievement**”

*Anthony Douglas, Chair of Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership*

“I just wanted to let you know we have been successful in obtaining this grant which will obviously be a big help. So a big thank you for making me aware of this & pointing me in the right direction!”

*Copdock & Washbrook Village Hall*

“Thank you for such a **swift response**. I did not expect a response until Monday at the earliest! And thank you for the **decisive advice**. It is just what we wanted. I will certainly sign up to the newsletter.”

*Bradfield St. George Hall*

# CAS COVID-19 VCSE Sector Impact Survey 3



CAS resources, tools and partnerships to support the sector

WHAT YOU SAID	WHAT WE DID
<b>40%</b> (down from 47%) of respondents said that they were unlikely to survive beyond 12 months without funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 29 1:1 Funding Surgeries during June providing tailored advice and guidance on all aspects of funding.</li> <li>• Covid-19 list of available funds continuously updated in partnership with SCC and available on CAS website.</li> <li>• 5 podcasts to help navigate the funding environment and help organisations apply on website in partnership with SCC.</li> <li>• Free webinar, 'Branding: How to raise your awareness in your cause'.</li> </ul>
<b>63%</b> (down from 73%) of respondents had no Business Continuity Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various resources available on CAS website to support 'next steps' financial planning <a href="https://www.communityactionsuffolk.org.uk/organisation-support/sustainability-and-funding-advice/coronavirus-funding-and-sustainability/">https://www.communityactionsuffolk.org.uk/organisation-support/sustainability-and-funding-advice/coronavirus-funding-and-sustainability/</a></li> <li>• 9 bespoke Planning and Strategy Surgeries with CAS SBS Officer, Sabrina Ward.</li> </ul>
<b>66%</b> not accessing Government funding/ loans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Investment blog, spotlight on social investment loans.</li> <li>• CAS Funding Newsletter, highlighting Business grants available in Suffolk via Borough and District Councils.</li> </ul>
<b>46%</b> reported challenges with Digital technology including lack of expertise, connectivity/ infrastructure issues, increased cost, online safety etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VCSE Digital Leaders group convened to share issues, challenges &amp; offer support/ sharing of expertise in partnership with NHS.</li> <li>• 'C19 – The VCSE sector in Suffolk &amp; Digital ways of working' report produced with clear recommendations to partners and organisations.</li> </ul>
<b>69%</b> have not undertaken any training since lockdown began	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 Webinars provided by CAS in partnership with Suffolk ProHelp members since lockdown.</li> <li>• Free safeguarding policy and procedure surgeries available weekly.</li> </ul>

**And Finally... We hope you have enjoyed reading this report.**

**We, like many others, have been very busy but couldn't have done it without you all.**

**From all of us at CAS – Keep being kind, stay safe, and THANK YOU.**

**#TeamSuffolk**

**www.communityactionsuffolk.org.uk**

**info@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk**

