



# #WAWM

## #WhatAreWeMissing

### Moving on From Covid

**Reflections and Action Points**

26<sup>th</sup> May 2021

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The #WAWM Moving on from Covid event was held on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2021 via Zoom. It was attended by 29 participants including our 3 speakers. We are very grateful to Ellie Roberts from Suffolk Refugee Support (SRS), Shirley Barrett from One Voice4Travellers, and Funmi Akinriboya from BME Suffolk for their contribution and reflections on operating during the Covid Pandemic.

Ellie spoke about Suffolk Refugee Support's (SRS) experience of volunteering during the pandemic – SRS support 600 people directly (including families 1,500). During Covid their advice service stopped, and core focus was to help clients understand what was happening. By the third lockdown the use of Zoom was very successful. SRS could not run without volunteers – the clients are used to this. SRS have 60 volunteers - variety of regulars and those who dip in and dip out, in a variety of roles. Covid meant an increase in 1 to 1 work and a decrease in group work. Early on SRS produced a remote working policy and gave each volunteer an SRS email address so that they did not have to use their personal email address.

Issues that SRS identified included working over the phone where it is difficult to develop a relationship with a client. Often clients are wary of who is calling, and it is tricky to build a rapport. Also issues with distraction – many were home schooling and children were distracting. Once developed the relationships did work well.

Volunteers were working outside of their comfort zone working in this remote way.

Since the lockdown SRS have not signed up any new volunteers – it is normally 1-2 per month but in the last year only 2 – both ESOL specialists. SRS don't consider it fair to sign up new volunteers in Covid circumstances.

Volunteers – it is important to keep in touch. Regular updates and check ins. All do training. SRS use Zoom and WhatsApp to keep in touch and to ensure that volunteers feel included.

Moving forward from Covid – there will be a mix of online and face to face activity. It will probably stay like this for a while. Some volunteers and clients are not keen on face to face yet.

Online has been really successful - lots of training on Zoom. With online delivery more women attend than for face to face.

SRS would like more client volunteers.

They are also looking at holding a big event for staff, volunteers, and trustees.

Shirley Barrett spoke about the experience of One Voice4Travellers (OV4T) during the Pandemic. Shirley outlined the history of OV4T to date. The charity was originally set up to address domestic violence (DV) in the Traveller community in Essex. OV4T have 135 volunteers. They find a need, write a skeleton bid and then this goes to staff and volunteers – key question is 'are you prepared to do the work?'

Volunteers and staff have supervision once per month. Volunteers pledge time each month – if they offer 6 hours, OV4T will ask for 4 – they then know that they are likely to get at least that time.

Issues during the pandemic have been that the Traveller community take many cues from TV – so when drinking bleach was recommended to avoid Covid OV4T had to act quickly to squash that idea.

OV4T are trying to quantify DV in the Gypsy and Traveller (G&T) community. Gypsies and Travellers often don't recognise County boundaries so need care with communication between County organisations.

OV4T have used Zoom, Facebook and postage to communicate with G&T community. OV4T are worried about any future lockdowns.

Funerals have been a particular issue for the community – the whole family like to be there at death – OV4T have spoken to hospitals, hospices, doctors, cleaners, kitchen staff etc. Comments have been anonymised to help people to speak out and avoid their fears of racism. OV4T wanted to help people in the G&T community to understand – this worked well – someone was actually listening.

Issues with DV – culture has not matched up with Covid. DV safe houses turned women out due to Covid. OV4T have 2 caravans as safe houses. Need to foster understanding. G&T community is very male dominated – so help and support is shaped as 'painting for a 2 year old and DV', 'cooking and DV'.

Moving forward from Covid – OV4T main bids that support work run out soon so need more funding to support highly trained staff.

Covid is the opposite of community life – dealing with misinformation re vaccine. G&T community see family as 'OK – they wouldn't hurt us'.

Need more publicity around good works that are done – G&T community have brought equipment for the hospital, and have also bought large amounts of food for the food bank.

Funmi Akinriboya – BME Suffolk – spoke about the experience of BME Suffolk during the Pandemic. The African Food Pantry was launched in Feb 2020 to provide culturally appropriate food for the black, Caribbean, and Portuguese communities.

There are a lot of migrant families in the UK for the first time, teenagers don't know the system and get into trouble easily. BME Suffolk help them with to understand attitudes and behaviours in line with 'system attitude'.

BME Suffolk have delivered some of this work online.

BME Suffolk also work with other organisations who have specialisms. There is an issue with 4-6 year olds where they are not in school, or have had time away from school during lockdown, and they need help with language and phonics. In Suffolk there was a gap in provision for families who don't speak English. Ipswich BC has helped with distribution of multi-cultural books to families. This has been co-ordinated by an ex-SCC employee from Uganda.

BME Suffolk has 35 volunteers.

The participants then went into break out groups covering the following areas:

## Policy and Procedures

### Common themes raised by participants:

1. Deeply embedding policies into organisation / community group ethos and to work these into working and user- friendly resources. Encouraging all to understanding the value, in particular Trustees and what truly means to 'sign these off' (trustee accountability.)

2. Smaller groups are expected to have the same (or very similar) policies as larger scale organisations who have more staffing resource to write and implement these.
3. It can be confusing at times (especially for smaller and newly established groups) as to who needs to write / sign off / amend / review policies.
4. Some umbrella organisations (Such as Ipswich Community Media) act as supportive structures that start-ups and smaller community groups can use as 'mentors', and utilize knowledge and practices, such as policies and administration and finance etc.
5. Online facilities such as 'HR Breathe' are useful ways to manage the updating and distribution of policies to all community members and staff.
6. Speaking with regard to the Suffolk Community Foundation, it was mentioned that there had been a marked improvement on quality and content with policies attached to application forms since the foundation had set up.
7. There can be a variation in skill-sets, experience and enthusiasm across community / village halls – a buddy system here might work.

#### Potential points for Action.

1. Revisit the **CAS health check** – do these clearly state which policies are needed, when and why. How are these presented? Are they accessible and inclusive?
2. Could we run some further **information / learning events** on policies – to assist and demystify what and why policies exist. Consider diversifying terminology and offering varying formats the learning and information is offered.
3. Could a **buddy / mentoring system** be developed to support and share best practice from those with experience / skillset with those newer to the concept.

## Unsuccessful funding applications

### Common themes raised by participants:

1. Funding match funding is an issue.
2. Most funders seem to be willing to discuss a failed application.
3. Some applicants have been successful with Suffolk based funders but have found it difficult to make the jump to success with national funders.
4. One applicant is looking for partner organisations (not necessarily working in same area) but with same ethos.
5. Observation – there seems to be a lot more local authority support in Suffolk than in Norfolk.
6. More longer-term funding is needed – it is frustrating for an established organisation to be applying for £3-4k at a time for 12 months when longer term funding would allow greater impact due to ability to focus on work as opposed to reapplying for funding.
7. Funders do try to signpost elsewhere but are keen to capture benefit is relevant to them. Tend to be responsive rather than pro-active.

### Potential points for action:

1. **Core costs are a big issue – not always possible to 'wrap these up' in a new project. Liaise with funders to raise issue and ask how it can be addressed.**

2. Longer term funding is needed - Liaise with funders to engage in programme planning and to raise issue and ask how it can be addressed.
3. Help with finding partner organisations – CAS could organise networking events focussed on partnering to help bring potential partners together.
4. Would be good to see more EOI's with a score 1-5 – what funder may be looking for or not at all. Would help to save wasted time. Raise with funders through Suffolk Funders Network.
- 5.

## Funding:

### Common themes raised by participants:

1. Issues that were raised during the breakout sessions from the WAWM Event on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2021 relating to securing funding covered a number of areas. The discussion had to be widened on the day as some participants were public sector and community development employees and had booked places to hear the voices of people from multi-ethnic groups.
2. Consultation exercises that attempt to engage multi-ethnic community groups have been disrespectful. An example given was where people were asked to join a consultation exercise at a Tesco café and were expected to pay for their own tea.
3. General tone from consultations discussions have been derogatory towards participants.
4. Another example quoted where leaders from multi-ethnic focused groups were consulted on planned work / projects that was just about to go live and not at the initial planning stage. The feelings were that multi-ethnic consultation exercises were not genuine and that there was no point in commenting because views would not be considered.
5. Accessing funding is difficult.
6. Larger organisations can act as gateways for smaller organisations.
7. Contact with panel that considers bids is really useful.
8. It would be useful for funders to give more info on their targeted themes – what needs to be met?
9. Longer term funding periods needed – 6-12 months is not enough – need 3-5 years funding.
10. EOI approach would be useful where each EOI is scored 1-5 in terms of priority for that funder in addition to whether the bid is a good one or not.

### Potential points for action:

1. Work with funders to feed into programme development – especially larger funders such as Lottery TNLCF.
2. Develop more case studies of successful bids from inception to successful delivery of the project.
3. Development of more networking to help identify partners who can work together to bid for and deliver a project. Common ethos of organisation more important.
4. Make more use of existing local resources - Community Police Support Officers have good local knowledge and connections with local groups and are a good resource for sharing news.
5. Raise awareness of support that it out there - not all participants were aware of the full package that CAS has to offer. Those that had accessed CAS services were happy with the support received.