



Findings from VCS Future Scoping intelligence gathering work – 2020

Since May 2020, KCSC has held a series of 'Scoping the Future' conversations with the voluntary and community sector. Below is a summary of all of the discussions that took place. Following this, KCSC is working on a series of recommendations to help inform our future work and to shape conversations with decision makers which we will report on in further paper. A full report on the survey conducted will be made available within the next week.

1. 13 May – VCS Future Scoping Meeting (attended by 29 people across the voluntary and community sector)

Key points

- Ongoing challenges with youth services and young people in general
- Increasing Mental ill health
- Keeping up with Covid-19 policies, procedures and developing appropriate practices
- Food poverty within the borough - Food strategy work – campaigning role/supporting strategy development
- Need to adapt services due to SD measures
- Challenges with space current and future use
- Sustainability for the longer term - Long term funding Longer term funding opportunities – strategic planning longer term
- Stress and emotional impact of current environment on staff
- Need to work more collaboratively

2. 9 June Voluntary Organisation Forum (attended by 25 people across the voluntary and community sector)

Key points

- Pressure on organisations to think about purpose and mission in light of Covid-19 and future impact
- Loss of income for VCOs particularly if generating income through hiring of space

- VCOs need to use the VUCA tool (Volatility, Uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity) for scenario planning
- Impact of Brexit on the VCS is still unknown
- Legal issues for VCOs as concern in adhering to Covid-19 guidance
- Sector needs to look at mergers/partnerships more so in this environment
- Clarity on Covid19 public health/government guidance is needed to help the sector interpret impact on services
- More support needed on sharing of space /using space differently
- More needs to be done to ensure residents know what services are available
- Major issues with digital access for residents

3. 30 June - BAME VCS – Future Scoping Meeting (attended by 35 people across the voluntary and community sector)

Key Points

- **Use of the Term BAME**
Growing discontent with the use of the term BAME which does not allow for individuality within and between ethnic groups and can make for lazy generalisations. This is a national debate which we need to be in tune with locally.
- **Health Messaging/Communications**
Concerns around track and trace and trust within the BAME community. The BME Health Forum has worked with Imperial Healthcare Trust to develop videos on hospital safety in different languages including Somali, Arabic, Farsi and Kurdish. This demonstrates what can be done if working collaboratively across to improve communication with non-English speaking residents
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZZIdKPeNY8&feature=youtu.be>
- **Digital divide**
One of the biggest issues relating to larger size, disadvantaged families with the digital divide having a disproportionate impact on BAME families. Digital exclusion for older BAME people has also been raised as a concern.
- **Health & wellbeing**
General discontent over disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on the BAME population. Growing concerns over the mental deterioration of BAME people who are feeling increasingly isolated as they can no longer socialise in groups. The cultural connectedness is being lost due to Covid-19. Need free access to PPE for families struggling financially.

- **Voice**
Statutory sector needs to hear the voice of BAME residents directly, but also need to work with BAME groups on how to communicate/reach out to BAME residents whose voices are rarely or never heard.
- **Direct Support for BAME organisations**
There has been no additional support/resource given to BAME VCOs given the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on BAME community. What has been the council's attempt to reach out and better engage with BAME communities?
- **Inequalities & Influence**
There is a real sense from BAME organisations that they are unable to influence any decision making around the issues of inequality and injustice. Organisations want a focussed lens on BAME issues and want to be a part in co-production of services. We can learn from what is happening elsewhere to shape this agenda. Also, what took place in Westminster with Council involvement is a positive start. [Slides from the Westminster meeting here.](#)

4. 22 July - Borough Voluntary Organisation Advisory Group (10 VCS representatives)

A push for the council to adopt a stronger community led approach in the design and delivery of local services working with the VCS and residents. Including a call for the council to sign up to a co-production commitment to include a community participation model. This could be implemented through the Charter for Public Participation and a refreshed Compact with the Sector.

5. 13 August - Grenfell Network Group (15 members in attendance)

- VCS services operating online means less immediate access to services for residents, particularly if online and digitally excluded
- Need to ensure ongoing capture of emerging needs within the community due to Covid-19
- Ongoing dislocation, rolling lockdowns impacting on resident civic participation
- The need to understand how the Council will culturally adapt to the Charter for Public Participation
- Residents need to be kept up to date with what services are available, meetings and campaigns are taking place
- Increasing financial challenges for residents due to impact of Covid-19.

6. July - September 2020 Covid-19 VCS Survey

The key findings are based on a Covid-19 VCS survey that took place between July and September. The survey was sent out to KCSC's VCS organisations on the database. Respondents totalled 24 so is difficult to make conclusions based on such a small sample. However, the detailed responses provide some understanding of how VCOs are coping since pandemic. Within the analysis small organisations are defined as organisations with annual income less than £100,000, medium organisations are organised with annual income of over £100,000 and less than £1m and a large organisation is defined as income £1m.

Key findings

- Service users from Black and Minority ethnic backgrounds, families, residents with English as a second language and the elderly have been identified as key groups facing the economic, technological and mental health challenges brought about by the crisis.
- Large organisations are more likely to carry out intelligence-gathering exercises to better-understand the issues faced by service users.
- Most organisations who delivered online services during the pandemic report that they are considering delivering some of their services online moving forward.
- There has been an increase in food collection and delivery services offered by organisations.
- 45% of respondents believe the financial adaptations made to tackle the crisis will not be permanent with 42% planning a full and safe return to face-to-face provision.
- 50% of respondents are less confident about their financial future for this financial year and 67% were less confident about their financial future for the previous year before the Covid-19 Crisis.
- 88% of respondents have developed new partnerships to aid their response to the crisis
- Respondents put advocating for the voluntary and community sector (VCS), providing advice and best practice sharing around service delivery and transitional working arrangements as the topmost ways in which KCSC could provide support to their organisations.

7. 17 November – KCSC AGM (68 stakeholders in attendance)

- A word cloud exercise carried out during the AGM showed that the top concerns for residents were: housing, mental health, poverty, participation, isolation and unemployment.
- The top 3 issues stakeholders said KCSC should focus on over the next 18 months were participation, collaboration and poverty.

8. Recommendations

KCSC

- Continue advocating on behalf of the voluntary sector – survey suggests more needs to be done to better understand their needs and needs of service users. To also advocate on behalf of the VCS on the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on organisations and services
- Support members (especially from small and medium sized organisations) to develop their intelligence gathering practices.
- Targeted engagement for members who serve predominantly BAME communities to ensure benefits of KCSC provision are enjoyed by everyone.
- Encourage organisations to gather data on key groups and develop KPIs (MOU for members)
- Assess effectiveness of KCSC intelligence- gathering (intensify, combine, introduce) - create specific criteria for credibility i.e. how many views/responses, key groups, organisation size, prior engagement
- Assess effectiveness of advocacy (progress against KPIs, collaboration, media coverage, annual survey, policies)
- Distinguish between Covid-19 and non-Covid-19 priority areas to inform advocacy work
- External comms audit to improve usership and capture views
- Encourage partnership working (e.g. forum to highlight skills and resource gap for organisations to sign up to and exchange expertise)
- Share knowledge and insights with other social councils across England and feedback to local community

- Work collaboratively with local partners to bring in new funding to tackle impact of Covid-19 on those most disadvantaged
- Work with the local partners and the Council to develop a borough wide food strategy and to tackle the digital divide issue.
- KCSC to work strategically with the sector to maintain oversight of developing needs within the community due to Covid-19.
- KCSC to review how community development work can extend into the south of the borough
- Policy development in responding to ongoing impact of Covid-19 on the VCS and communities
- Improve better links between community development issues with the voluntary organisation forums to find ways to improve communications with residents

Voluntary sector

- Produce a joint policy recommendation in response to covid-19 to present to council which includes key insights
- Monitor experiences and engagement of key groups during covid-19 and measure progress against KPIs
- Keep track of the resources and money that were used or diverted to support local food collection and distribution during covid-19 as a way to capture the sector's aggregate aid response
- Record how much civic generosity¹ was received during this period
- Seek to improve outreach to local residents who do not access services

Statutory sector (fundors and council)

- Engage voluntary and community sector in covid-19 response and seek approval before ratification incl. Representation of key groups and field of work
- Make covid-19 guidance clear and accessible for all residents and keep line of communication open at all times

¹ Voluntary acts of kindness (and giving) from members of the public

- Produce a VCS specific work guidance to enable essential work to be carried out in a safe way
- Invest in closing/ending the digital divide – set ambitious goal to ensure reach across the borough
- Encourage private sector to provide financial and non-financial resources to support VCS and local community
- Encourage funders to be flexible with funding, especially for small and medium sized organisations with ring-fenced funding
- Prioritise coordinating a joint-up approach for food collection and delivery
- Provide free PPE kit and testing for frontline staff needed to deliver essential services
- Work with KCSC on how the Charter for Public Participation can increase local participation in decision making particularly for those disproportionately affected by Covid-19.