

Communities of Interest Q&A Forum Notes
Thursday 11th June 2020
11:00am-12:30pm

Attendees

- **Ann Crossland** – Voluntary Action Leeds
- **Anna Chippindale** – Healthwatch
- **Annette Morris** – Voluntary Action Leeds
- **Charis Green** – Leeds Society for Deaf & Blind People
- **Charlotte James** – Leeds GATE
- **Daisy Morgan** – Forum Central
- **Damian Dawtry** – Feel Good Factor
- **Emily Turner** – Women's Lives Leeds
- **Janet Spencer** – Turning Lives Around
- **Janice Fife** – Leeds Women's Aid
- **Jez Coram** – Forum Central
- **Karen Fenton** – Forum Central
- **Lucy Graham** – Forum Central
- **Owen Walker** – Leeds Autism AIM
- **Paula Gardner** – Barca Leeds
- **Pip Goff** – Forum Central
- **Sam Powell** - LCC

Purpose

Working together to improve outcomes for Communities of Interest during Covid-19; embrace and progress the inequalities agenda and have an impact for people in the most marginalised and vulnerable communities in the current crisis and beyond.

Updates on the challenges facing each community and actions organisations are taking to overcome these

- **Ann; young people:** some organisations are having to change the way they're working – online isn't working as well, people's data isn't good, young people have been out more due to good weather; doing some outreach work to reach and educate young people better; confusion and concern around return to schools, including reluctance from some BAME communities, and children with health conditions; looking to develop play schemes throughout the summer; some groups starting to do 1:1s while maintaining social distancing to support people's mental health; invited to be part of a working group to look at the decline in referrals for children and how they can be reached.
- **Annette; BAME community:** feedback on anxieties around going back to work/school, worries around accessing healthcare services and people not wanting to go, concerns around this leading to longer-term health conditions, people from BAME communities tend to not present early at services when there's an issue so that is a worry; one of biggest issues is of course the death of George Floyd and its impact on the black community but also the wider community, hopeful that positive outcomes are coming and have received lots of positive letters about making change; will keep the group updated.

- **Charlotte; gypsy and traveller community:** a lot of people struggling with isolation, especially if they live on their own, are elderly, or have mental health issues; a lot of families struggling due to people being self-employed, facing difficulties more and more as time goes on; got some funding to support families that are struggling, offering food vouchers; members with low literacy skills struggling to access online services, supporting people with basic things like booking appointments, no access to internet also an issue, looking at getting Wi-Fi to some sites; supporting through welfare calls, trying to speak to people who are vulnerable to make sure they've got support in place.
- **Charis; deaf and/or blind community:** things are getting busier – seeing more appointments coming through, more face-to-face but generally more requests for BSL interpreters; started befriending trial within hospitals offering 30 minute appointments for anybody in hospital who may want communication, predominately via BSL; working with Karen and 100% Digital Leeds; positive time despite circumstances but remains challenging.
- **Damian; men's health:** it's been confirmed that men are twice as likely to die from coronavirus; Feel Good Factor men's groups are online now and coming across nicely; part of communities of interest group looking at getting funding in for a city wide network for men, something like Women's Lives Leeds or Time to Shine.
- **Emily; women's health:** 930 responses received so far to survey launched to find out about women's experiences of lockdown, hoping to get to 1,000 by end of week; interesting data has come out – lots around women bearing the brunt of caring responsibilities for children and also family members, concern extends to long-term and how it will go on to affect their jobs, security etc; comments about going backwards by decades in the fight for gender equality; mental health coming through as huge issue; interesting stories around women's safety; trying to create initial report within one week but a huge amount of data to get through.
- **Janet; homeless people:** big concern at the moment is transitioning homeless people accommodated in hotels into supported or dispersed accommodation and move people on successfully; a lot of people have had a positive experience of staying in hotels, trying to capitalise on the realisation that there are positives of living in a stable environment; services have been managed successfully – been able to keep staff and keep the motivated, done some face-to-face/telephone to keep engaged with client group.
- **Janice; women's health:** workload has been increasing throughout; specific issues around digital inclusion but managed to get laptops and dongles to help people, although more difficult within the community; a lot more cases requiring interpreters including signing, and all sorts of languages, some not come across before – suggests reaching people we haven't done previously; just got some funding to support extra accommodation; challenges around shared accommodation – very difficult to bring new people in whilst ensuring they're tested for the virus.
- **Jez; people with a learning disability and/or Autism:** a lot of anxiety over when non-essential travel resumes and new measures including face masks etc; worry about financial payments and benefits; issue around general understanding about social distancing; track and trace and consequences from an organisation perspective; staff management and redeployment; resources being stretched; financial and funding

concerns; trying to work through recovery plans; juggling technology across conversations with statutory services; concern around performing annual health checks online; in terms of resilience, Andy Rawnsley has set up a Building Based Services Recovery group where people are coming together to look at recovery plans; people joining in with training and skills training; push for collective working and move to join up online offer and services.

- **Karen; people with mental health issues or physical and sensory impairment:** definitely seeing an increase in low level wellbeing MH support people are requesting, & those with severe mental illness deteriorating including issues around problem gambling and alcohol abuse coming up; a [Synergi survey](#) has gone out looking at ethnic inequalities and people with severe mental health issues; young people, particularly from the BAME community, are really struggling with lockdown and isolation, some rebellion amongst young people; decrease in section 136s across the city but organisations reporting increase in mental health act assessments over the last week or two; issues around living in shared accommodation and aggressions/arguments increasing due to tensions of lockdown; from PSI perspective – digital access also an issue.
 - FC is progressing the development of MH paper-based resources with Mindwell and hoping to get those out to people over the next couple of weeks; looking at easy read and translated versions
 - Another conversation going on around MH prevention & comms.
- **Lucy; carers (on behalf of Carers Leeds):** carers feeling lack of respite support and not wanting to access services for fear of contracting virus; huge impact around carers' mental health as lockdown continues; not having any respite within the home, or worry if person they care for doesn't live with them; doing a lot to adapt services via digital, lots of activities for Carers Week but digital doesn't work for everyone, people don't necessarily have the equipment/resources they need; issue around privacy if accessing from their home; need reassurances for carers from adult social care around carers assessments and how that will work; impact of people currently in care homes.
- **Owen; people with a learning disability and/or Autism:** concerns about taking up digital loans and aware a lack of available equipment now – grants would be more beneficial than loans; steady increase of referrals to service; main themes around access to health services - GPs & dentists have changed their systems, advocacy around rights people have in terms of adapting services; apart from lack of available activities, a lot of people have adjusted to lockdown in quite a positive way – not having to go out or go to appointments which are usually quite challenging; referrals for people facing eviction from various settings including shared living services – eviction ban has been extended but anticipating issues continuing to come up again; part of the Keeping Neurodivergent People Connected service, seeking out people who are neurodivergent (mainly Autism & ADHD amongst other conditions) & looking at what they can be helped with, uptake has increased over the past week; Advonet advocacy statutory services – reminder that if working people who have been sectioned and struggling, there is advocacy in place to support them.
- **Paula; people with drug or alcohol issues:** for some people, lockdown is proving to be a bit of a turning point in terms of their recovery journey and being able to access services they need in a focused way; real challenge in terms of substance misuse & housing support in terms of getting offer for people right; some staff working well from

home, others struggling with isolation; looking at being flexible going forward, for both staff and people we work with, while still meeting commissioner needs; problem with people who are alcohol dependent being able to still access alcohol.

- **Sam; migrants, refugees & asylum seekers**: communication & addressing language barriers continues to be biggest concern, working with colleagues around translating information, have made YouTube videos; trying to get key messages with longevity that don't have to be updated all the time; widening communications across communities, and exploring using various routes of engaging communities; Hamara's cultural food hub is working really well; support provided for accommodating homeless people, and those with no recourse to public funds that normally wouldn't be accommodated by the council but have been during Covid; concerns about organisations re-opening their offices; Refugee Week takes place next week with all activity taking place online, also working on online celebration later in the month to mark the 2nd Windrush celebratory day.

Other updates

Healthwatch

- This week's check-in is focused on surveying people who are shielding, please encourage people to complete the survey [here](#)
- Healthwatch are also doing a questionnaire about the emotional wellbeing of care home residents and their families. People who have a relative in a Leeds care home can complete the survey [here](#) – views will be used to produce some guidance for care homes.
- The People's Voices Group digital inclusion work is coming to a head; they are putting together a briefing that will go out to health and care organisations next week so please keep your eye out for that and share any feedback you have about people's experiences of using digital services.

Forum Central (FC)

The longer it goes on, the harder things seems to be getting for people so it's important we continue to keep an eye on what the issues are and keep feeding them in through the network. Also important to link up work looking at inequalities across communities and intersectional issues, both in terms of data but also narrative and bringing issues to life as we are doing through this group.

- **Test & Trace programme:** Leeds is pioneering walk-to test centre approach while some organisations are posting out test kits and making sure that's available as an alternative. The clear message for people who are shielding is to use home test kits. The test & trace programme will be key over the next year or two. Leeds is one of 11 pilot sites nationally, and we have funding that goes alongside this – we're making a case from a third sector perspective that we need additional capacity to do the work. Initial focus is around schools & what that means, and also care homes. In Leeds there's a focus on trying not to just have a message about keeping infection down, but how do we have a preventive, proactive message about all of this. The spotlight on Leeds is an opportunity to profile what we're doing. There will be a focus on data with daily reports produced, and it's important to identify what are likely pressure points, for example reopening shopping centres and related behaviours of young people, reopening of LCC hubs.

- It would be great to hear what people think future pressure points might be from in relation to communities you work with and ideas around how we can work to address these.
- There are clear concerns around trust and people not wanting to give their data, it's hard to reassure people about what its being used for and where its stored etc
 - Owen – a lot of people we work with will probably rather stay inside than give data, anxiety around receiving messages about being in contact with people – what support will be available for this, perhaps a helpline is necessary
 - Also a rights issue and we need to understand its limits, but equally the more that we can use the testing to help make people safe, the sooner people can get back to life they choose
 - Test & Trace language is quite scary language especially for particular communities – how can we make it work on a local level? Clear need to follow up around the language we use
 - Huge issue around trust in BAME communities in general, whether systems are fair and why the health system wants their data. People have legitimate fears around being identified and being discriminated against.
- **Shielding:** Waiting for updated 'routes to support' document for people who are shielding and will circulate to the group once we have it. Issues around people who are shielding overlaps all communities.
 - Paula – Linking Leeds have been reaching out re people who are shielding so ti might be worth contacting them to find out about what they've been hearing.
- **Reset of services:** as things start to reopen, what does that mean – services are working out how to manage that and ensure social distancing and safety of workers as well as meeting people's needs. A one page document has been produced that talks about principals – we will share once available.
 - It's crucial that we continue to feed in issues around people's fears and concerns of restarting services and bringing a voice to that.
 - It's important to think about staff as well and whether what's being asked of them is realistic.
 - FC is working on a piece work around MH support for the workforce, making sure people are getting the right support, but this involves practical needs as well as mental health.