

Communities of Interest Q&A Forum Notes
Thursday 28th May 2020
2:00-3.30pm

Attendees

- **Ali Kaye** – Leeds Older People's Forum
- **Alison Spaul** – Forum Central
- **Ann Crossland** – Voluntary Action Leeds
- **Anna Chippindale** – Healthwatch
- **Annette Morris** – Voluntary Action Leeds
- **Charis Green** – Leeds Society for Deaf & Blind People
- **Daisy Morgan** – Forum Central
- **Emily Turner** – Women's Lives Leeds
- **Janice Fife** – Leeds Women's Aid
- **Jenn Bravo** – Turning Lives Around
- **Karen Fenton** – Forum Central
- **Lucy Graham** – Forum Central
- **Owen Walker** – Leeds Autism AIM
- **Pip Goff** – Forum Central
- **Pria Bhabra** – LCC
- **Rajesh Fernandez** - LCC
- **Simon Phillips** – Leeds Faiths Forum
- **Wendy Cork** – Leeds Autism AIM/Advonet

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

- **Ali; older people:** great diversity within the population; ageist framework of pandemic has made it difficult to talk about the needs of older people; third sector organisations were quick to respond to the need and reconfigure services, most went to a telephone befriending service to maintain contact with some delivering over 1000 calls a week; activity packs are being delivered across the city; a number of organisations have been promoting digital inclusion – one of the positives that's come out of this, although still a concern for people who aren't digitally connected, which is a key issue particularly in some areas including Seacroft & Middleton; mixed reporting in terms of mental health and wellbeing – new service users seem to be struggling the most, particularly older men; short- to mid- term issue is how to deliver activities that are socially distanced for those that aren't shielded/vulnerable, some people will need confidence boost about going out again; good example is Richmond Hill Elderly Action did street bingo that was really successful; organisations concerned about the longer-term effects of any mental health issues.
- **Ann; young people:** been trying to communicate around message changing to 'Stay Alert'; issue around young people getting bored and now going out; outreach workers are

meeting people in parks to try to get the message across; a lot of activities have been focused on children with additional needs; organisations trying to organise play schemes for the summer holidays; issues around social distancing and reduced group sizes; families going back to substance abuse/self-harm as coping mechanisms; dealing with expected influx of mental health demand.

- **Annette; BAME community:** main issues are around the disproportionate impact of Covid on BAME communities and people going back to work/school – is it a risk for those people, is there provision in place for them, a lot of families not sending their children back to school yet; need to continue pushing forward around inequalities once this is over; issues accessing medical services for people who don't have English as their first language if they don't have support with translations etc.
- **Charis; deaf and/or blind community:** initially services were delivered virtually, now seeing big increase in face-to-face requests and how services can be delivered in this way again - preparing staff, ensuring PPE adequate; also looking at how to best provide virtual services where face-to-face not possible; providing BSL befriending services for hospitals.
- **Emily; women's health:** Leeds Women's Aid are launching a questionnaire around women's experiences of lockdown/Covid; juggling childcare is an ongoing issue; women looking after themselves or caring for others/children that are shielding or around going back to school.
- **Janice; women's health:** demand has been gradually increasing and anticipating further increase once restrictions are lifted; taking longer to get professional help for clients.
- **Jenn; Turning Lives Around:** issues with PPE but sorted now; some staff shielding or extremely anxious around working with clients who weren't social distancing but easing now; most staff are delivering face-to-face support now, whilst adhering to social distancing; need to see what happens with Test and Trace as it will have implications for staff and service.
- **Owen; people with a learning disability and/or Autism:** engagement is fairly low but is uncovering mental health difficulties; a lot of services aren't specific to people with Autism so challenges around getting the right support; less anxiety now around going outside and being stopped by the police; working with police to get 'black and white' statements around guidance and what people can and can't do; developing alert cards for people to carry.
- **Rajesh; care leavers:** focus on ensuring care leavers are still staying in touch and occupied; weekly Zoom catch ups are taking place with learning activities; have set up a Facebook group for care leavers including social care staff with over 100 members – using to get key health & wellbeing messages out and signposting to services; boredom is one of biggest concerns – trying to keep people entertained whilst also up-to-date with the latest guidance.
- **Pria; refugees and asylum seekers:** the Migrant Access Project works with community leaders from across the city who are key in helping to bridge the gap between communities and services; virtual drop-in every week to share guidance, ensuring community leaders understand messages so they can share them, and understanding

what issues are for getting messages through to the community; involved with translating information and looking at where the gaps are; Romanian community have valued video content – ripple effect of messages being spread; questions around what's being done in people's home countries – have had to direct people to guidance in place here; some communities identified as needing extra support e.g. Czech community – virtual group set up.

- **Simon; Leeds Faiths Forum:** work going on to support people with Autism but welcome any comments on how people with other disabilities/impairments can be supported; focused on Places of Worship opening up again and guidance that will need to be put in place – planning an online forum where people can share good practice or ideas/requests for support and advice, ideas including limiting people that come to a service, whether prayer books should be disinfected, how religious organisations can triage people; also involved with food banks and support around that; ongoing issues around burials and cremations.

Updates from infrastructure organisations

Healthwatch (Anna)

- This week's check-in is focused on surveying carers, and reluctance to go out came up as a big issue for unpaid carers in particular, due to concern around bringing virus back to loved ones at home
- Healthwatch are developing a mental health crisis resource for young people, and volunteers are also working with MindMate to create videos to encourage young people to seek mental health support during the crisis and to remind them that services are still open
- A recent check-in focused on young people's mental health suggested that the impact is greater for people aged 19-25 compared to the slightly younger age group.

Forum Central (Karen/Pip)

- **Mental Health & PSI specialisms:** organisations are looking at where they target peer support sessions and young people are coming up strongly around that, especially issues around body image caused by online sessions etc; working parents struggling with young people at home and conflicting demands; whether people with Autism are getting the right services; concerns around both existing population of people with mental health issues known to services, but also the cohort of people that might be struggling with their mental health for the first time and what the demand might look like in the future.
 - FC are doing some work around paper-based resources to make sure we're connecting with people who may have never experienced mental health issues before, and also for those that aren't digitally connected
 - Also aware of issues around those who lip-read and people wearing masks as a barrier to communication – use of facial expressions so important especially for people with learning disabilities; also those with long-term health conditions and that cohort of people, there's confusion around what is shielding and who should be doing it.
- **Walk-to test centre:** Leeds is pioneering walk-to test centre approach, partly because FC raised issues around accessibility of testing sites. Located at Bridge Street Community Centre just outside the city centre for people who live within walk/cycling distance– we need to prioritise ensuring that the message goes out to those people.. If

people do have access to a car, they'd be asked to go to the Temple Green site. [Leaflets are available](#) to communicate the message. A lot of work has gone into ensure the information has gone out in easy read format, and to translate into main community languages. Important to think about how we as organisations make sure word is out there within our networks.

- **Reset of services:** people are putting efforts into to reopen things but obviously that needs to be done very carefully and incorporating social distancing. There's a push in the city to ensure we're thinking about equality and accessibility for people who might struggle to access services. For example use of 11 and ensuring people make better use of that before going straight to A&E/walk in centres. It would be good to hear people's thoughts/ideas on how we can ensure equal access.
- **Shielding:** Rachael Loftus has done a huge amount to humanise the issue of shielding in Leeds, and generally a lot has been done to put people at the heart of it, especially around people in areas where take up of support is lower, often people from BAME communities. We want people to think about what more we can do to make sure people who have received letters are signing up to get the support they need and that we know who the people that need support are. We're reminding people to keep the conversation going and the importance of doing everything we can to help to reach people. The focus is now on ensuring people are healthy and happy at home.
 - Annette: VAL are looking at pulling together a simplified explanation of why it's important to register for support to be targeted at people within BAME communities
 - Charis: concerned around how we look at reconnecting with the community and social events they provide without encouraging people that things are back to normal. It would be good to link in with organisations and look at ways we can support communities and get people back involved.
 - Pip: it's worth remembering the R U OK befriending service which will hopefully help reconnect people with services both now and in the future.
 - Wendy: worried about increased mental health demand and the likelihood of being flooded by people who need support and not being able to manage it. We will have to work together even more creatively in the next stage. People who are currently not accessing services or going to the hospital for example will need support with building their confidence to come back to using them. People still concerned about going to hospital etc in the long term, too scared to go if they're ill.
- **Reporting:** the information the group has gathered is feeding up through Public Health and the LCC communities team. We're interested to make sure we have a third sector voice on this, so focusing on where else do we need to take the information.

Follow up on issues raised at previous session (Pip)

- Accessible clear info in formats that people can access: testing centre leaflets include easy read, focus on use of video, producing pictorial ways of representing Communities of Interest work. Also hear what people have said about shielding and needing greater clarity around messages
- Mental health & uncertainty, fear, bereavement: concerns have been fed back, mental health awareness week was a good opportunity to focus on that and the theme of

kindness resonated for a lot of people. Continuing to work and get blogs and published some really useful information – a reminder of the great local resources we are lucky to have.

- Forum Central is supporting work around getting mental health paper-based resources developed and is asking people to complete [this brief survey](#) to people to find out what's needed and would be most useful.
- Owen raised importance of ensuring information is accessible and mentioned [this resource](#) around optimising communications for this purpose.