

In the current crisis your organisation may need to change some of its working practices, make contingency plans, adapt services and support, whilst ensuring you continue to meet regulatory and legal requirements. For specific guidance please [contact us](#) directly. We will endeavour to help you overcome the challenges and/or use the information to advocate for more support for you and the rest of the VCS sector in Bury.

All organisations will have to review, update plans and make some key decisions in response to the COVID 19 crisis.

1. Planning

Questions for trustees to ask...

- a) Do we have, or need to [develop a plan](#) which:
 - sets out the potential risks and explores different scenarios
 - identifies responses to manage these risks
 - gives authority to staff or individual trustees to make key tactical decisions quickly
 - sets out a clear line of authority and decision making in the case of absence
- b) Can we refocus our efforts and activities, in line with our charitable purpose, to respond to coronavirus?
- c) What are our most essential operations and services? How could we continue to operate these in the event of isolation or staff absences?
- d) What organisations can we partner with to continue to deliver services or provide new support?
- e) What extra flexibility or support might employees, volunteers and beneficiaries need at this time and how can we communicate with them?
- f) What immediate actions do we need to take to manage our finances – considering cash flow and increased contingency costs?
- g) Can we speak to funders about the impact of cancelling, delaying project activities, or even in repurposing funds?
- h) How can the board and staff team utilise technology to continue to meet and make decisions if we cannot meet in person?
- i) How might this impact on our corporate decision making, audits and filing deadlines as well as meetings such as AGM's?

2. LEGAL

a. Financial planning

- The COVID-19 crisis has had a significant impact on voluntary organisations' income. NCVO has produced a very helpful list of [immediate actions to take](#) to manage your finances and the Charity Commission have also issued guidance on [Managing financial difficulties caused by the coronavirus](#) stating that the starting point is always what is in the charity's best interests.
- Cashflow management should be a priority

Make sure you're doing everything you can to get funding in: chase outstanding debts, get out invoices for services already delivered, report on time to your funders so you get the next payments quickly.

Identify amount and timing of unavoidable fixed costs and review whether or not certain projects, spends or activities can be stopped or delayed in order to focus on essential spending.

Agree delays to payments with lenders and suppliers if feasible.

[Cranfield Trust's webinar on Cash flow](#) forecasting gives practical suggestions, ideas and resources to help you.

- Decide if you should use your reserves to cover your costs, and how much you can allocate to this; e.g. how much of your reserves could you spend before you have to think about closing down altogether, taking into account any costs of closure.
- Review the impact of the financial crisis on any investments, and consider seeking professional advice on actions to take.
- You may need to consider whether your organisation can continue to operate. The [Charity Commission's guidance on managing financial difficulties](#) sets out some questions to ask yourself when considering the organisation's financial position. You should also seek professional advice.
- [Charity SORP](#) has issued advice on how the current situation might impact your financial reporting.

b. Funders and donors

- Get in touch with your current funders, tell them about the steps you are taking and agree any changes to your delivery and funding with them. Contact any funders you have applied to and update them on your situation.
- Your donors will probably welcome an update and in some cases, this may even prompt them to make further donations.
- Explore funds available through our [Funding Bulletin](#). Contact VCFA to for a detailed and specific funding search.
- Consider any other fundraising options which may be open to you e.g. an online appeal.

c. Risk management

The current situation may throw up new risks for your organisation or require different approaches to risk management. Some examples of risks voluntary groups are facing include:

- Inability to deliver projects or services in the usual way
- Loss of income through trading no longer taking place and cancelled fundraising events
- Reduction in investment income
- Reduced staff or volunteer capacity due to sickness or self-isolation
- Safeguarding of service users and staff/volunteers
- Increased data protection and cybersecurity risk due to working remotely.

Refer to the [Charity Commission guidance on risk management](#).

Zurich has produced a helpful guide on [Organisational resilience and pandemic planning](#).

d. Legal and HR

You may need to consider issues around contracts, insurance, employees and volunteers.

- HR and employment law
- Contracts, insurance and serious incident reporting
- Governance and solvency considerations
- Legal considerations when managing volunteers
- Meetings and decision making
- Data Protection - The Information Commissioner's Office provided helpful guidance on how to apply data protection proportionately in the face of the unprecedented challenges COVID-19 has presented: [ICO Guidance: Data protection and coronavirus: what you need to know](#).

3. SERVICE DELIVERY

- Trustees will need to decide whether and how services can be provided within government guidelines. You may prioritise, reorganise or refocus services subject to funder requirements and ensuring compliance with your [charitable purposes](#)
- Explore supporting clients/beneficiaries in different ways if its no longer possible to operate normal services. Here is a useful by Charity Digital - [summary of digital tools for service delivery](#).
- UK Government has published extensive [guidance for different types of workplace](#) on how to work safely during the pandemic. Consider the guidance that most closely aligns with your organisations work. You can use multiple guides. There is a multi-purpose Community Centres [guide](#).
- For a checklist covering some of the issues that should be considered prior to reopening - <https://www.hse.gov.uk/voluntary/village-halls.htm>
- Cranfield Trust has published its webinar [A Practical Guide to Re-Opening after Covid Closedown](#) with the option to download the webinar as a pdf with notes, as well as other resources including a helpful [re-entry checklist](#).
- Risk assessments should also be completed for all activities.
- Charity Retail Association have published a [re-opening pack](#) including a poster to assure people that the shop is "COVID-19 Secure" and that the Government's guidelines are being kept to.
- Organisations need to [record details of people](#) on their premises to support NHS Test and Trace. The ICO have published [guidance](#) for organisations about collecting and retaining these details.
- Specific guidance is for people who may need different support:
 - Mencap has [easy read guidance](#)
 - [Coronavirus information in different languages](#) for service users.

4. MANAGING THE TEAM

- If staff or volunteers need to work away from their homes you must ensure they do so safely and within government guidelines – [government guidance for employers](#)
- If staff and volunteers are working from home:
 - Ensure they have appropriate equipment. Although one option may be to allow usage of personal devices, but you will need to ensure security and data protection.
 - Use DSE guidelines where possible to ensure they take plenty of movement breaks.
 - Consider using remote software e.g. MS Teams, and/or Zoom
 - Support the home based teams with appropriate communication, more frequently than usual ensure no one feels isolated when being physically separated
- Staff and/or volunteers have increased mental health and wellbeing needs. UK Government has produced [guidance for the public on mental health and wellbeing](#). Including having a routine; prioritising sleep; maintaining physical wellbeing; keeping connected to friends and family; doing things you enjoy and setting goals.
- Keeping people safe remains of utmost importance, but you may have to make different decisions in the current situation in order to meet people's needs.
- [DBS has made temporary changes to ID checking guidelines](#) so these can be done via videocall.

For further Information

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-guidance-for-voluntary-community-and-social-enterprise-organisations>

Find out about the government response to coronavirus (COVID-19) and what you need to do - [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): what you need to do](#)

Guidance for small organisations. Small Charities Coalition have produced a guide which you can download [here](#)