

BAB Partnership Meeting June 2020

How have some organisations in Bristol adapted their activities during Covid-19?

Partnership meetings are a central part of how BAB operates, bringing together organisations, individuals and community groups to share ideas, learn from each other and find ways to work together in order to improve the wellbeing of older people.

We are keen to ensure these connections continue during the Covid-19 pandemic and in June 2020 we held our **first online partnership meeting**. Five organisations shared their learning about adapting their activities during Covid-19 and UWE presented the findings from their **Apart But Not Alone rapid research** exploring neighbour support during the pandemic.

This Learning Digest shares the key messages and learning from this BAB partnership meeting.

Partnership meeting speakers:

- ▶ **Michael Prior, The Reader**
- ▶ **Miranda Lovelock, Community Navigators (North Bristol Advice Centre)**
- ▶ **Isobel Jones, Alive Activities**
- ▶ **Dan Lewin, CASS (Community Access Support Service)**
- ▶ **Jan Perry, St Monica Trust (Stockwood)**
- ▶ **Mat Jones, UWE Bristol**



Learning from The Reader

Before Covid-19

The Reader delivered face-to-face shared reading groups in community venues and residential settings, in Bristol and throughout the UK.

During Covid-19

The Reader are delivering shared reading groups on the phone and via video call. Some of these groups are continuations of those which existed before Covid-19 while others are completely new. These groups are working very well, including the groups which take place over the phone and who have never met each other before.

Initial challenges

Part of the value of face-to-face groups comes from being able to see non-verbal cues and read each other's body language. It was important for the adapted activities to be equally as valuable for those participating, not 'watered down' versions.

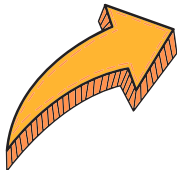
The shared reading groups are facilitated by volunteer Reader Leaders. It was important for these volunteers to feel supported and remain engaged throughout the process of adapting their activities.




Learning

- Success partly stems from the dedication of the volunteers.
- Flexibility is built into the model of shared reading; it is designed to be adapted to different situations.
- Being part of the Support Hub for Older People in Bristol has been a valuable way for organisations to share tips and provide a wider offer for those they are working with.

Thoughts for the future

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- The phone and video call shared reading groups are both working so well that The Reader would like to keep delivering in this way in the future, in addition to resuming face-to-face groups.
 - It would be valuable to compare the experience of participating in a phone/video shared reading group with other people from your local area, compared to doing so with others from elsewhere in the UK.



Learning from Community Navigators

Before Covid-19

From April 2020 North Bristol Advice Centre planned to continue delivering the Community Navigators service, scaled down to focus on Lockleaze, Horfield, Shirehampton and Avonmouth. The service provides one-to-one support for people aged 50+ to connect with activities in their local community.

During Covid-19

The service is now supporting people with practical support (including essential shopping and prescription collection), regular weekly phone calls and referrals for emotional support.

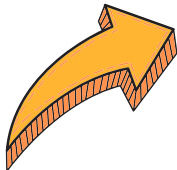
Learning

It is valuable to provide staff training and support in call handling, communication, boundaries and preventing burnout.

Initial challenges

- None of the previous volunteers could continue to volunteer during Covid-19 for a variety of reasons including shielding and health conditions.
- Once practical support has been provided, it is important to help individuals to build long-term social connections, yet this can be challenging from a distance and while many social activities are still closed.
- A key part of the Community Navigators service comes from home visiting and the extra barriers which can be identified when meeting someone face-to-face in their home. This contextual insight and nonverbal cues are more difficult during a telephone call.
- It is important to maintain confidentiality and to give clients your full attention, yet this can be challenging while working from home and managing childcare.

Thoughts for the future

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- The regular phone calls have been valuable for clients and the service would like to continue to offer this form of support.
 - They would like to reach a more diverse range of clients in the geographical areas they work in, including those from BAME backgrounds, those who are LGBT+ and those with hearing or visual impairments.



Learning from Alive Activities

Before Covid-19

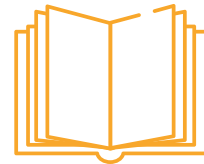
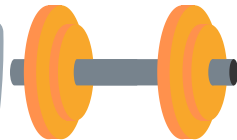
Alive delivered activity sessions for people living in care homes, including social activities, creativity, community gardening and physical exercise.

During Covid-19

Alive are delivering activity sessions to care homes via video call, as well as virtual memory cafes for people with dementia who are living at home.

Initial challenges

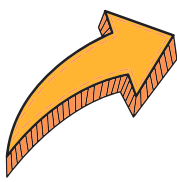
- Touch and tactile activities are highly valuable for people with dementia. The pandemic meant that this aspect was no longer possible and it was important to find an alternative way to have the same impact.
- The closure of care homes had a significant financial impact on Alive Activities as an organisation.
- Some care homes do not have WiFi, while others have very limited access to technology.
- The cost of teleconferencing can be expensive over time.



Learning

- There has been very positive engagement with the virtual activity sessions. It brings the added ability to respond to residents in real time by looking something up online and sharing your screen.
- Residents have found the group aspect of the virtual activity sessions to be valuable, bringing something extra than one-to-one interaction.
- Care home staff are under huge amounts of pressure at the moment and therefore cannot always provide as much support for Alive as they did previously.
- During Covid-19 it is particularly important to provide support for carers.

Thoughts for the future



Providing virtual activities has enabled Alive Activities to increase their reach nationally in ways that would not have been possible before. They are now delivering in London, Scarborough and Scotland.



Learning from CASS

Before Covid-19

CASS aimed to improve access to mental health and emotional wellbeing support through working with community, equality and faith groups in Bristol. They provided information about mental health services, broke down the stigma and provided relevant resources.

During Covid-19

CASS have produced an online directory of how mental health services in Bristol are currently operating. They have also produced two booklets; one on bereavement & grief and one on stress, anxiety & depression.

Furthermore, they have run two online campaigns focused on sleep and being kind to yourself, with accompanying mindfulness audios which can be downloaded.

Initial challenges

The majority of the resources which CASS have produced are digital, but it is important to also ensure this information reaches those who are not online.

CASS have been working with the Bristol Older People's Forum (BOPF) to support with this as many of their members are not online.



Learning

- It is important to strike the balance between providing individuals with useful resources and avoiding information overload. With mental health in particular, an individual may not currently need to use the tools provided, but it might be helpful for them in the future or for someone else they know.
- We need to move away from viewing mental health advice as only being relevant to those with more serious problems, and instead talk about how everyone has mental health and can look after it.



Before Covid-19

As part of the community development work in Stockwood, St Monica Trust has been working in an asset-based way to support local activities, with a specific focus on people aged 50+. This work involved detailed mapping of the assets, associations and institutions in the local community.

One of the associations supported by the project was the Greater Stockwood Alliance, a community association run by volunteers.

During Covid-19

In March 2020, the Greater Stockwood Alliance created a highly organised local community response team. Stockwood has 7 districts and each one was allocated a coordinator from the community response team.

They built on previous connections with organisations in the local area, working closely with the food bank, churches, pharmacies, children's centre and a food club.

Over 100 people came forward to volunteer for them doing a variety of activities including essential shopping, prescription collection and telephone befriending. A team of volunteers also ensured that every resident received a printed postcard through their door detailing the support that the community response team could provide.

Initial challenges

There has recently been a reduction in volunteers as a result of some people returning to work. This meant they needed to advertise for volunteers again.



Thoughts for the future

Covid-19 has escalated some of the vital support which may have happened anyway but would have taken a much longer time to implement.

