



COVID-19: Information for VCSE organisations

Updated 20.3.20

In response to the escalating COVID-19 situation, please see www.voscur.org for key updates for VCSE's organisations. The Voscur team is now working remotely but we are very much on hand to help so please stay in touch.

Website: www.voscur.org **Email:** info@voscur.org

Phone: 0117 909 9949 is diverting to a mobile - give it time and leave a message if the line is busy.

1. Helping yourself

Advice regarding safety and protection during the COVID-19 outbreak can be found from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response> and <https://111.nhs.uk/service/COVID-19/>

2. Helping your organisation and its staff

Commissioning/procurement of public services: Voscur is in discussion with Bristol City Council and the Bristol, North Somerset and South Glos (BNSSG) Clinical Commissioning Group about commissioning/procurement at this time. We have requested some flexibility with timings and with contracted targets so that VCSE organisations are able to focus on services in the community, while managing workforce challenges and their ongoing commitments and business interests. You may have received some direct communications about your contracts already. We will provide updates.

Local funding: Quartet Community Foundation have launched a COVID-19 Community Response Fund for organisations supporting people most vulnerable to its impact: <https://quartetcf.org.uk/grant-programmes/coronavirus-response-fund/>

Policy Guidelines: advice on mandatory and recommended changes to organisational policies can be accessed through the [NCVO website](#).

The **.Gov Business pages** provide more detailed [guidance for employees, employers and businesses](#).

Currently charities and social enterprises that receive discretionary business rates relief aren't likely to get extra help – only businesses that get small business rate relief. Charities and social enterprises can [apply for support loans](#) but only if they earn at least half their income from trading.

Other charities and social enterprises seem unlikely to be able to get the first round of support announced but there may be other resources on the way via [negotiations between the government and various VCSE national bodies](#).

3. Helping your customers, clients and service users



Community transport: Voscur are in contact with the main community transport providers in Bristol to understand how they are updating their operations. We know some have reduced services already and where possible diverted vehicles to help with food deliveries and other priorities. We'll share further updates when we have them.

4. Helping your community

Can Do Bristol, Community Groups & Mutual Aids: a surge of concerted effort is taking place through new and existing community groups and mutual aids providing support within communities. Before setting up something new, check Can Do Bristol (www.candobristol.co.uk) and the [register of mutual aids](#) to see if there is something already happening in your area.

Coordinating community support across the city: Voscur, working with Bristol City Council, is collating a list of Mutual Aids and Community Groups providing support across Bristol to enable us to share wider communications. If you would like to be included on the list, please go to www.candobristol.co.uk and register your activity. Or [complete this form](#) and we will include you in any future communications.

The Voscur website also holds some guidance for [individuals and groups around volunteering](#). Here's our **'top 5 things to think about'** when overseeing a community group, forum or mutual aid:

1. Avoid providing unqualified advice – instead offer support and signposting to existing services
2. As group leaders/moderators, you should not personally arrange contacts or mutual agreements
3. Moderate posts on forums - be aware of safeguarding and your duty of care to protect vulnerable adults
4. Services provided should be voluntary - no financial transactions involved
5. Ensure that links to Government guidelines are accessible on your pages, and try to keep them updated regularly

Thanks for all you are doing. Stay safe, keep well.

The Voscur Team