



Press Release (31/7/20)



Dialogue at The Care Forum Finishes Round of Covid-19 Insight & Engagement for The VCSE South Gloucestershire Health & Social Care Network

[Dialogue](#) at The Care Forum has recently finished a round of insight and engagement with the VCSE Health & Social Care Network in South Gloucestershire on behalf of South Gloucestershire Council.

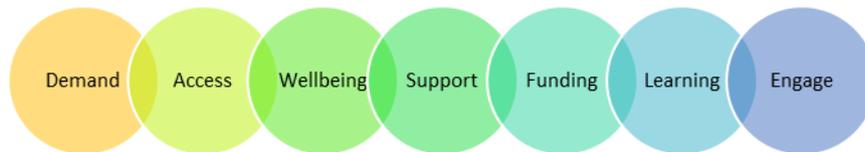
Comprised of a webinar and two online focus groups that took place in July 2020, this insight and engagement process sought to increase understanding of how the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector was responding to the coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic. We spoke to VCSE participants about a number of key issues, including the opportunities for learning, and the impacts and challenges for their organisations during this period. The event offered the opportunity for participants to tell their story of responding to the epidemic, and allowed us to gather data for local authorities and regional commissioners to better support the sector in the months to come.

The findings from this insight and engagement process have been shared in the form of a short report with Dialogue's commissioners at South Gloucestershire Council. Our hope is that this insight can inform the local authority by highlighting the successes and learning, challenges and support needs of the VCSE sector during this time, and so guide broader strategy and decision-making on support for the sector into the future.

We thank all participants for their responses during these challenging times.



Key Findings



Our findings during this engagement provided a powerful insight into the experiences of the South Gloucestershire VCSE sector in responding and adapting to the challenges posed by the coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic.

- **Opportunity To Adapt:** Participants demonstrated enthusiasm for the positive learning opportunity the epidemic offered, demonstrating successes in terms of having adapted to new ways of working in a short space of time.
- **Holistic & Interconnected Working:** Participants felt the epidemic had re-iterated to their organisations the value of working in an interconnected, holistic way with sector partners and stakeholders.
- **Demand:** We found significant challenges for participants around the uncertainty of managing changing demand pressures from service users.
- **Service Access & Digital Exclusion:** Concerns were raised around service user access and unmet needs as services moved online.
- **Staff Wellbeing:** Concerns were raised around support staff wellbeing during periods of significant change and uncertainty.
- **Service User Needs:** Service users have been presenting with increasing complex needs, and many participants were struggling to address these.
- **Future Funding & Sustainability:** Participants expressed concerns about where future funding to guarantee sector sustainability would come from, with presently little clarity available.

Questions & Further Research

If you or your organisation is interested in working together to develop a similar piece of insight and engagement work, please get in touch with the Dialogue team:

dialogue@thecareforum.org.uk

About Dialogue & The Care Forum

[Dialogue](#) is the health and social care *insight* and *engagement* service of The Care Forum, supporting the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector across the West of England.



[The Care Forum](#) is an independent voluntary and community sector organisation, celebrating over 20 years of achieving better outcomes for people using health and social care services. We work across Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire and Swindon. We can also work across the South West.