

How a Community Organisation Adapted During the COVID-19 Crisis

November 2020

By working with our colleagues in the Voluntary and Community sector, we have a series of reports on our website that capture the experiences and issues from the point of view of services and groups that support local people in the community.

This is an independent case study showing an example of one community organisation's story of adapting and what the future holds.

About the organisation



The Apuldram Centre is an independent registered charity, working to support adults with learning disabilities, and has delivered services in Chichester and surrounding area for 30 years.



Our services include a dedicated Day Centre offering meaningful and enterprising daytime occupational activities such as: horticultural, both on and off site; woodwork; cookery and arts & crafts. We also support a number of people in the Chichester area to live independently in their own tenancies. We run a community outreach service, Hub Club, three times a week in central Chichester.



What were the immediate challenges?

Apuldram had to close the day centre and outreach. They had identified the members who needed to *shield* prior to the letters being received and put in place appropriate provision. All volunteers and 23% of staff had to shield or self-isolate. They began speaking with people in the homes, families, volunteers and staff as the situation unfolded, as people were in shock.

It was so important that the organisation provided clear and honest communication to staff, volunteers and users by telephone or email. Once the initial crisis response had been communicated they set up *virtual users forums* twice a week and ensured they celebrated people contributions such as during Volunteers Week. Whatsapps groups and video calls, very much making best use of technology in good ways.

People had so many questions for example; queries about school places, COVID-19 testing and personal protective equipment (PPE). As many of their users lack capacity, they had to convey in easy terms why things had changed, why we were wearing PPE, why there was change to routines. They also re-installed new routines.

Sleep-in staff stayed for longer periods to provide consistency. People began cooking more across Apuldrum and virtual events helps such as the Easter hat competition.



There is only so many times you can watch Netflix.



As the crisis went on there were more and more mental and physical health issues, especially those living together, as not everyone understood social distancing.



We did online shopping and downloaded cash. We had to create processes to do online shopping. We also spoke with local independent shops to be able to pay with a card over the phone instead of using cash. Shared transport was not possible so we encouraged more walking and physical activity to maintain motor and muscular skills.



How has COVID-19 affected their finances?

The pandemic has been a difficult and challenging time. They have lost revenue and costs have increased. They do not know how they will recoup the lost £72,000 and in reality, this will take the next five years if they do as they did pre-COVID-19. They have increased costs for PPE. There was an electrical fire during Lockdown, which was covered by insurance but added to the chaos.

Some of the staff costs was cushioned by the furloughed scheme as staff from projects that could not connect with the public - gardeners, kitchen porter and shop - were furloughed until the beginning July. They found the process complicated but needed to protect funds. They do not plan to re-open the shop until the autumn as they are mid-redevelopment and relocating.

West Sussex County Council were speaking with daytime organisations to see when provision will re-open again and this organisation planned to re-open at the end of July.

Apuldram did apply for some of the emergency funding streams and were successful with some such as Sussex Community Foundation.



It has been interesting living through this experience and supporting people in social care.



Funding is required urgently in the medium term.

How have they begun to Forward Plan?

Apuldram have re-opened their seasonal kiosk in the town centre. They are back at the farmers markets selling produce. The main centre remains closed, and they hope to re-open in August with reduced capacity and social distancing. Staff will come back first to ensure we have the right policies in place for a safe return. Those shielding are not able to return yet to the day centre. Gradually, bringing back volunteers but reduced numbers to be COVID-19 secure.



Some of our active volunteers who are shielding are desperate to come back. They are naturally cautious.



As part of their forward planning they will concentrate on more community-based activities. As previously the service favoured more of a school structure activity and less focussed ones. Maybe more levels of independence as clients can do a walking activity. Zoom has proved popular with music.

They are looking at innovative ideas for the medium to longer term regarding funding. Working in partnership will be a major way forward so that the collective voice is heard.

Contact details

To learn more about call **01243 783370**

Email Sarah@apuldrum.org

Or visit their webpage <https://www.apuldrum.org/>



Voluntary Action Arun and Chichester

Our role is to enable, support and promote VCS groups across Arun and Chichester.

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We have a simple ambition at Healthwatch West Sussex...
to make local health and social care services better for
people that use them.



We are here to listen, take action and influence positive change for local people
living in West Sussex.

We record what people tell us and share this anonymously with those who make
decisions about our health and care services.

You can contact us in several ways:



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Email - helpdesk@healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk



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