

How a Community Organisation Adapted During the COVID-19 Crisis

September 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



Cancer United is a unique cancer support charity for all those whose lives have been affected by a cancer diagnosis.



We aim to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of those with cancer from diagnosis onwards, inspiring them to embrace the things they can do and to refuse to be defined by what they can't.

We are welcoming, caring and fun to be with so please do not hesitate to get in touch with us and see how we can help and support you and your loved ones.

Jan Sherwood Founder



What were the immediate challenges?

Cancer United is unsure what the exact impact of Covid-19 will be for people, as treatments and outpatient appointments stopped because of the pandemic. The full situation is unknown but referrals are down by 75%. People have not contacted their GP's and even if they did manage to reach their GP's referrals to hospitals for tests and/or treatments were not readily accessible, 1,000s of people had their treatments cancelled due to a lack of safe treatment spaces.

Healthwatch Update: Cancer services are being resumed, and as a member of the Sussex Cancer Programme Board we are keen to understand peoples' concerns around accessing services and we can reassure people that services have put in place safe working practices to minimise the risk from Covid-19 to individuals.

Maria told us: I recently (end of July 2020) had my three-yearly mammogram at the mobile breast scanning unit at K2 in Crawley. It was me and two members of staff only in the unit, but I only dealt with one staff member. I went straight into the unit and immediately into the screening area. The lady doing the screening wore PPE and her manner and approach filled me with confidence. The service was quick and pain-free. I got my all clear results a week later - was expecting it to take at least two weeks!

Jaqui Wise in her BMJ article of 29 April stated how grave the situation was. <http://www.bmj.com> : *New analysis estimates that at least 6270 additional deaths could occur in England over the next 12 months in patients with new cancer diagnoses—a 20% increase—as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.*

Cancer United would have had at least 5 referrals weekly and have had just 3 over the first 10 weeks of the crisis.



We visited St. Richards Hospital Cancer Centre - to check the leaflets- and there was no-one there - no nurses, no patients.



Cancer United Lead Coach has been really busy telephoning members to ensure they are alright. Many people are worried, anxious and depressed. They are also keeping in touch with Macmillian support workers.

How has Covid-19 affected their finances?

Cancer United finances has been affected by at least 50% loss in income, as the gym could not open. They did not have to pay rent as the centre was gifted to them. Fundraising and donations have been massively affected.

The charity directly employs two people - the lead Cancer United Fitter Instructor and the Musical Director who is the head of the choir. These two people are key workers and could not be furloughed. All gym classes were transferred online as was the choir rehearsal, which was so much more difficult for these two people. The charity has a members committee of 14 who are volunteers. They also have peripatetic cancer trained gym instructors who could no longer work and an Administrator who worked from home at reduced hours. One of the trustees has been helping with grant applications and updates to the website and this has worked well. The Founder is working longer and longer hours to try to stay ahead





We are selling on eBay and have generated between £500 and £1,000



Funders who normally do not offer revenue funding have been offering Covid-19 emergency funding during the past 5 months They applied for emergency funding to Sports England and were awarded £6,280. Their application to Sussex Community Foundation was also successful.

How have they begun to Forward Plan?

They have worked hard to ensure that the gym is clean because of challenged immune systems. The aim is to begin with a couple of people and others can join virtually by Zoom. They know that *people are nervous about going out and driving is scary and shopping a horrid experience*. However, members are glad they are part of Cancer United because it creates a feeling of togetherness, friendship and understanding.

What are the concerns for the future, post Covid-19?

It would seem that cancer has slipped to the bottom of the pile yet over 400 people die from cancer each day and pre Covid-19 every two minutes someone was diagnosed. It is a fact that around 40% of cancers are preventable through lifestyle choices.

They do work with other support organisations like Age UK West Sussex and would like to work in partnership with more such organisations as they each have something unique to bring to the table to support their members.

Update since conversation

They have been awarded funding by *Active Sussex* and are about to launch an **OUTCYCLECANCER** project at the end of September. They have received £9,784 from the *Government National Lottery* and £1,403 from *Littlehampton Town Council* and £5,000 from *Sussex in Crisis*.

They have just re-started (September) face-to-face choir rehearsals in Angmering and at the Age UK, Laburnum Community Centre, Bognor Regis. Their Cancer United Fitter gym is operating both Zoom and face-to-face sessions.

Contact details

To learn more about Cancer United

Call **01903 779880** Or visit their webpage <https://www.cancerunited.org.uk/>



Voluntary Action Arun and Chichester

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

- Support for Member Organisations. Please contact us by downloading our referral form from our [website](#) or emailing lucie.maldoom@vaac.org.uk
- We provide a Funding monthly e-newsletter, and our funding surgeries via zoom.
- We provide regular Networking and Training Events, see our e-bulletins and website for details.
- Our e-bulletin provides the latest information for the VCS.
- Volunteers - if you would like to advertise for volunteers please get in touch with Jenny.holmes@vaac.org.uk or go to our website to upload your information. <https://www.vaac.org.uk/volunteering>

Website: www.vaac.org.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/VAArunChi/

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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:



Telephone - 0300 012 0122



Email - helpdesk@healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk



Website - www.healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk

You can also follow our social media channels to always be updated with the latest
in health and social care news across West Sussex: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#).

If you have questions about the content of this update, please either call 0300 012
0122 or email cheryl.berry@healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk

