

## VCS COVID-19

### Conference call – 16 March 2020

#### Present:

- Cllr. Danny Thorpe, Leader of the Council; Takki Sulaiman, Assistant Director, Communities, Cultural and Leisure Services; Cllr. Averil Lekau, Cabinet Member, Health and Adults; Peta Cubberley, VCS Stakeholder Relationship Officer.
- 61 VCS leaders dialled in to the call

#### Welcome:

- DT welcomed everyone to the teleconference. Acknowledged the fast-moving events. Noted that the PM had just highlighted how the situation was worse in London than elsewhere in the country. Recommended stopping any non-essential gatherings, based on age, health condition, including pregnant women should shield themselves for 12 weeks.
- Earlier that morning, Council leaders had held a teleconference with the Secretary of State for MHCLG. The key points were:
  - Social care – there is extreme pressure and councils need to work with providers. Hospitals are under a period of extreme pressure. The situation on testing people for the virus has changed. Now only people going to hospital will be tested.
  - Local government – LAs have been asked to coordinate the situation locally. On Sunday, a form was published, and 700 people (as of 17<sup>th</sup> March this rose to over 900) have already signed up as volunteers. Proposals on how to harness the volunteer support are being discussed, without the risk of spreading the virus further.
  - Supporting local economy – LAs have been asked to coordinate management of a hardship fund but as yet, they don't know how much it is or who it is for.
- Key message is that we want to thank you for your support. This is new territory for all of us. We need everyone to contribute and work together.
- There are some very serious issues being raised in the questions and we will dedicate time to trying to answer them over the next week or so.
- It will take us a while to understand what our position is on some of the matters.
- Thank you for all your comments, and for making us aware of what we need to resolve. We will be working on these issues over the following days, and will get back to you all as soon as we can.

No.	Organisation	Name	Question/issue	Response
1.	Emergency Exit Arts	Daniel Bernstein	Greenwich Neighbourhood	Normal council meetings have had to be cancelled to focus on the Coronavirus, and so the GNGF decisions haven't been made. It is not possible to make these decisions

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			<p>Growth Fund decision needed</p> <p>General help with cash flow (rent, business rates)</p>	<p>virtually (e.g. by email) – unless or until the SoS enacts emergency legislation to make this possible. Therefore, we cannot make the decisions on GNGF yet – but we will as soon as we can.</p>
2.	The Forum at Greenwich	Jill Andrews	<p>Has there been any thoughts, discussion or consideration given to the possibility of utilising the current round of Growth Funding as a rescue fund to support the vulnerable groups and Community Centres through this difficult time?</p>	<p>Answered in earlier comments about hardship fund – we will do more when we have more instructions and details from the government about how much each LA will get for the hardship fund.</p>
3.	Greenwich Theatre	James Haddrell	<p>Many of us are going to hit cashflow issues with the impact that the current situation is having on revenue – losses in building hire, ticket sales, commissions etc. Could we draw down the next two years of our</p>	<p>A number of organisations have made similar observations and VCS grant funding for Q1 2020 has already been processed and RBG will consider additional requests for cashflow support. Details to come.</p> <p>Where performance outcomes have been damaged by the pandemic, and the early responses to it or by consumer behaviour, groups will not be penalised for this. They key is to speak with your grants officer and discuss the details on a case by case basis.</p>

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			<p>grant funding now?</p> <p>Can we also agree that, in line with the arts council's recent statements, the non-delivery of target outputs in the coming months is not seen as cause for clawback of funding?</p>	
4.	Volunteer Centre Greenwich	Michelle Martin	What are the council's plans for coordinating the use of volunteers?	<p>We will talk with VCG directly when we know more about what the volunteering support will look like. Plans are being developed to coordinate the various responses and to match offers of help to current and predicted needs.</p> <p>We ask that all organisations use Facebook, Twitter and other social media or emails to get the message out about the volunteering/volunteer sign-up form.</p> <p><a href="https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdOxKGTsLqSgM8fPTUE8dY0loMDFLPo-HJ9EH110HZuNJsNZA/viewform">https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdOxKGTsLqSgM8fPTUE8dY0loMDFLPo-HJ9EH110HZuNJsNZA/viewform</a></p>
5.		Thomas Mayne	What level of financial support can community centre's in RBG expect in the event of a material loss of revenue as a result of a short-medium term	<p>RBG is supportive of its community centres and will work with you all to ensure you can stay open to support the communities we all serve. You and your boards will need to take decisions based on the latest Public Health England advice on gatherings and events which includes a risk analysis of your user groups and the risk of spreading infection. RBG has been cancelling all its own non-essential events and meetings.</p>

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			closure of public facilities in the UK? Is the expectation that there will be central government support or will community centres be expected to mothball their costs during the quarantine (and for example encourage members of staff to claim universal credit while being placed on temporary redundancy (porters, cleaners etc?))	
6.	Charlton Central Residents Association (CCRA)	Jodie Coughlan	Concerns about reaching out to vulnerable residents in their area	Social care and reaching the vulnerable is a key priority for the social care team. We will be working with a range of services to identify the most vulnerable and we will engage with community organisations as the needs and situation changes. The preparatory work is being done now.
7.	Maritime Radio	Duncan Martin	Offer to promote public health messages over their radio station	Thank you. Most important action is to promote and highlight the messages from government at the key audiences.

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8.	Her Centre	Stacy Smith	Should all group bookings be cancelled to free up staff to take on emergency help in the community?	We recommend following the government's guidelines on non-essential gatherings, particularly those who are over 70, with health conditions and pregnant women. For other groups, we cannot yet say.
9.	Greenwich DPAC and Chair Inclusion London	Anne Novis MBE	Concern over a lack of communication from RBG – particular those who are vulnerable and receive care packages at home. Also worried about crime, safeguarding and isolation. Need for extra carers, training and equipment.	We will be working with grassroots organisations and volunteers to support people in need, and colleagues in HAS (social care) are focused on this. We will be working with them to coordinate this work. More details to follow.
10.	Mycenae House	Mark Johnson-Brown	As a community centre, our first priority is to continue serving our communities for as long as possible but if this gets worse at what point are we saving the	Not online. Details are being worked on and a full plan for working with CCs will be developed over the next few days.

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			<p>community from us or saving ourselves from the community?</p> <p>How can we best work cohesively together to provide consistent information, advice and support to communities. Already misinformation seems to be winning the day on the streets. We need constant calm, pragmatic support</p> <p>We think we can provide useful online and telephone support to our communities, particularly the aged and vulnerable members but we</p>	

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			<p>need rock solid information to share. Can RBG provide this.</p> <p>We are already finding lots of people offering to support but will need coordination</p> <p>Can we decide where that is coming from as a matter of urgency. Within a matter of days the VCS organisations will be thinking about their own sustainability. Maybe not a question for today but can we programme time and space to consider longer term impacts on service providers</p>	

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11.	St. Mary's Community Centre	Patrick O'Sullivan / Bob Treacher	As our main business is running the space for our groups to use in the community, are there any plans to financially support Community Centres if a curfew is announced by the Government causing further groups to cancel regular events?	We are watching the situation and will know more soon. See earlier response on RBG's commitment to supporting the CCs.
12.	GCDA	Gary Mack/Jane Downes	Should we work together to extend Holiday Meal Provision?  Should we cancel sporting activities?	Not online – RBG will consider this asap.
13.	Shrewsbury House	Sonia	If someone tested positive at our community centre, what is the communications	You must contact Public Health England to ask for the latest advice on a deep clean of the centre if someone tested positive who was using the centre.  Everyone in the key categories – over 70, with underlying health conditions and pregnant – needs to take note of the government's recommendation to stay at home.



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			<p>procedure to and from RBG and to our local community</p> <p>Will the Centre, and available staff, be used for other things?</p>	
14.	Metro GAD	Sue Elsegood	<p>Will RBG /CCG pay for appropriately trained nursing /care agency staff to cover for PA's Employed via Direct Payments if they are off sick self-isolating or to support PA's if we are sick with Coronavirus at home?</p> <p>Will Covid-19 testing be made available to PA /Carers who are front line health and social care providers?</p>	<p>Social care is our number 1 priority at the moment.</p> <p>Colleagues in HAS are working on this and we are putting together a plan to deal with the most vulnerable in the community.</p>

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			How will Disabled people get essential supplies of PPE, medicines and food supplies if self-isolated & or cannot be left alone and have added access barriers to using telephone, PC?	
15.	MetroGAVS	Naomi Goldberg		<p>We will take all the advice given by government, the PM and the Chief Medical Officer.</p> <p>We are doing our best to coordinate volunteers and volunteering activities to support the most vulnerable, including around people's mental health.</p> <p>We are talking to colleagues in Oxleas to provide mental health support to anyone who needs it.</p> <p>We will highlight to Oxleas what support is available from the VCS.</p> <p>The online and text support service "Shout" is also available to people who need it.</p> <p>The WHO provided information about supporting mental health during the pandemic. The guidance is available in this link.</p> <p><a href="https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf?sfvrsn=6d3578af_2">https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf?sfvrsn=6d3578af_2</a></p>
16.	Positive Plumstead			<p>All council meetings will have to be reviewed.</p> <p>Meetings will be virtual as soon as the SoS makes it legal to hold meetings that way.</p>

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17.	Greenwich Inclusion Project (GRIP)	Gilles Cabon	Syrian Refugee Project  Is the current government and council guidance and recommendations available in other languages?	We will provide guidance.  We will look into that.
18.	Food Bank	Alan Robinson	Volunteers at the Food Bank are mostly retired and over 70.	We will prioritise identifying volunteers for the Foodbank to enable the Foodbank to continue operating.
19.	HealthWatch	Joy Beishon	Access to prescriptions if they are told to stay at home	This will be a priority in terms of mobilising volunteers to support the most vulnerable.  AL to contact Joy directly to discuss. This will be taken onboard for the volunteering team.