Coordination in place

Interim report

Introduction

As Covid-19 struck the UK in March 2020, we witnessed our communities coming together to address the pressing needs of those around us. Relationships were formed or deepened between residents, local councils, the private sector and the third sector. These relationships were critical to the response to Covid-19 and they enabled organisations to act with the speed required to address the immediacy of the problem. We want to understand what positive shifts have occurred in the way people work together and the attitudes towards collaboration, that can and should be sustained in order to overcome the challenges that lie ahead. NPC has initiated six months of research, running from August 2020 to January 2021, to explore:

- **The positive changes** we have seen in how people and sectors work together.
- **The challenges** for maintaining these changes in the medium and long term.
- **The opportunities** for overcoming these challenges and building on good practice.
- **What needs to shift—**in policymaking, commissioning and funding practices—to support the changes.

This interim report for our [Coordination in place](#) project brings together our learnings from the first three months of research—covering the changes we have seen, some of the main challenges and the early signs of opportunities. In February 2021, we will be publishing the final paper, building on the good practice identified and our key policy asks for the field.

Method

We are taking a lean approach to this research, given limited capacity across local councils and community groups at this time. We are running a longitudinal study, tracking the perspectives of three local practitioners (described as our 'coordinators' in this report) in three areas of England, as they transition through response to and recovery from the Covid-19 outbreak. We are taking an inductive approach, building on key themes as they emerge from our engagement. The research will be carried out through a series of monthly interviews with the coordinators and supplemented by background reading and conversations with other key players in the three areas. The research is intended to provide insight into how change is happening on the ground, and what positive changes can be capitalised upon and championed amongst other practitioners and the funding community.

When identifying places to take part in this research, we sought areas that showed; strong cross-sectoral working between organisations; signs of community informed approaches; ideas for working well or learning from mistakes; the availability of a lead coordinator to take part in the research over the six months; a mix of geography and demographics. The areas taking part in this research are; Buckinghamshire, Coventry and the London Borough of Sutton. Our coordinators representing their areas are:

- Jenifer Cameron, Chief Executive, Action4Youth Buckinghamshire.
- Jane Moffat, Early Help Manager, Coventry City Council.
- Alison Navarro, CEO, Community Action Sutton.

Summary of findings

Our research so far has helped us to identify a number of key positive changes we've seen in ways of working and attitudes to working together. We have also uncovered some key challenges and potential threats, and explored different ways for overcoming these threats. These are summarised in the diagram below.
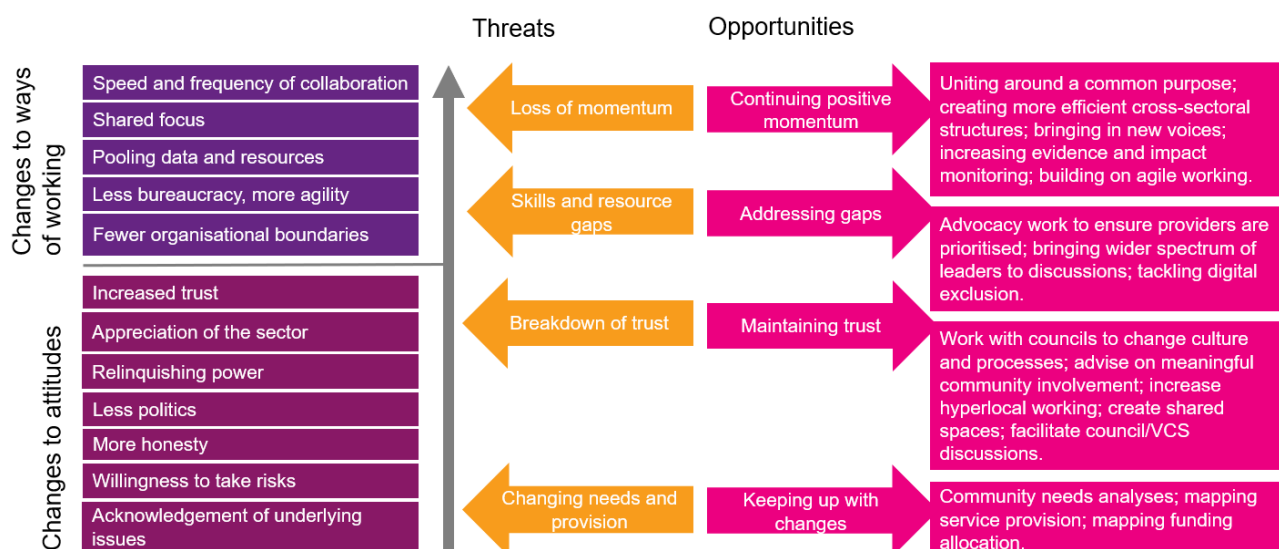
Covid-19 has accelerated the shift towards many of the ways of working and attitudes that place-based working had been aiming to address for years. In terms of how organisations work together we're seeing:

- faster collaboration;
- a stronger shared focus;
- more pooling of data and resources, and less bureaucracy;
- and the lowering of organisational boundaries.

These are underpinned by some fundamental attitudinal changes, including:

- stronger levels of trust, demonstrable appreciation of the third sector and a relinquishing of power by local councils;
- a willingness to take risks and try new things;
- more honesty about what's working and what's not working in meeting needs;
- and a stronger awareness in the community of underlying societal issues, which have been exacerbated by this crisis.

These changes are positive and helpful when rethinking how people and places can work together in a collaborative effort to build back better and overcome the challenges that lie ahead.

However, these changes were enabled by mechanisms that were quite unique to the crisis response. These mechanisms include:

- permission to focus on a single shared priority;
- the momentum driven by the immediacy of the problem and the need for urgent solutions;
- and the additional time and flexibility afforded to us by remote working.

So, given these mechanisms are likely to dissipate, what can we do to maintain these shifts in the medium and long term? Firstly, we explored what currently threatens those shifts the most, including:

- a breakdown of trust;
- a loss of momentum;
- skills and resource gaps;
- and difficulties in keeping up with changes in need and provision.

At the end of this report, we share some early emerging themes for addressing these threats. As we look ahead to the next phase of research, we will explore these themes in greater detail, identifying opportunities to build on good practice happening on the ground. We will also be asking participants for their opinions on what needs to shift in the field—in policymaking, commissioning and funding practices—that can support the changes identified here.

Exploring the changes

Our research has so far uncovered a number of positive changes in ways of working and attitudes to collaboration over the past six months. These changes appear to be common to all three of the areas we have engaged with, although some changes are particularly prominent in some areas. In the Appendix of this report, we have included a set of diagrams which detail which themes stand out in each area.

Changes in ways of working

1) **Increase in speed and frequency of collaboration**. We've seen a strong shift in how people collaborate. Many charities, community groups and council workers felt that collaboration in their local area had felt more genuine, with conversations happening quickly and frequently, resulting in faster decision-making.

> *'Everyone genuinely collaborated much more quickly … whereas normally there might be an element of competition … a lot of that's been left at the door.'*
>
> **Buckinghamshire Council employee**

2) **Stronger shared focus**. We heard of organisations having a stronger sense of shared purpose, working more closely together, towards the common goal of supporting the most vulnerable people in their communities. In all three areas, local councils established or extended forums for working with local voluntary organisations. These included Buckinghamshire's four 'Recovery Boards', Coventry's 'Community Tactical Cell', and Sutton's 'Operational Leadership Group'. Work has been more solutions-focused, with organisations offering to re-deploy staff and to limit their focus to key priorities.

> *'A shared vision had become very real to people, and that was becoming more important than people's position or sense of stepping over anybody's toes.'*
>
> **Coventry coordinator**

3) **Better pooling of data and resources**. The crisis prompted organisations to commit to sharing data and resources. In Buckinghamshire, a funders' group was established which saw local grant-makers pooling their information to better understand needs and existing responses in their area.

> *'We [the funders' group] rapidly put a spreadsheet together, and realised who we were funding, where we were funding, and what we were funding, so we all pooled our data.'*
>
> **Buckinghamshire councillor**

4) **Less bureaucracy, more agility**. Lengthy and complex processes were simplified to get support to vulnerable people quickly. We heard of funders sending money to charities within days or hours. Due diligence processes were either streamlined or removed. One charity leader in Coventry observed that processes to engage volunteers were streamlined: *'What I've heard is that there's less red tape around just getting people involved.'*

> *'When the charity is faced with a crisis … where it's immediate, the role of the funder should be to facilitate quick access to money.'*
>
> **Buckinghamshire funder**

5) **Less formality / organisational boundaries**. Barriers between organisations were broken down, relationships became more interpersonal, and dynamics between organisations felt more relaxed and informal. Coventry's coordinator felt there was *'less professional boundary protection … a lot more blurring of boundaries.'*

> *'I think the organisational boundaries and lines that we draw—I feel like they've pretty much disappeared.'*
>
> **Sutton coordinator**

Changes in attitudes

1) **Increased trust**. Trust and understanding between organisations and sectors developed quickly, accelerating shifts in ways of working. Trust was also an enabler. In areas where there were already established trusting relationships between the public and the third sector, organisations were much better equipped to respond and adapt quickly to emerging needs. Sutton's coordinator reported that: *'Trust has developed much quicker than it might have done, which means that conversations and communication has been much better.'*

> *'The thing that was quite refreshing I think was that the approach taken in that group [Coventry's 'Community Tactical Cell'] … was very much an enabling one, and a recognition that it was a shared responsibility … nobody owned the agenda.'*
>
> **Coventry VCSE leader**

2) **Greater appreciation of the sector**. Local authorities and statutory services developed a greater understanding and appreciation of the voluntary sector. A member of Sutton's Clinical Commissioning Group commented that they *'did not appreciate our voluntary sector … as much as we do now, when we saw the way they came through together to deliver for the most disadvantaged people … they helped us reach people that we didn't know existed.'*

> *'Voluntary sector groups … are much more plugged in to the statutory bodies than they used to be. A good example of that is the mental health group … it's 90% statutory but the voluntary sector is in there and regarded with respect, not just filling a chair.'*
>
> **Buckinghamshire coordinator**

3) **Councils and funders were more comfortable with relinquishing power**. Charities and local statutory services were able to share power more freely. Coventry's voluntary, community and social enterprises (VCSEs) that were invited to join the council's 'Community Tactical Cell' felt that they were engaged as equals, and no longer just as delivery partners. Coventry's coordinator also observed this shift from within the council: *'I think people absolutely and utterly understood that our expertise and capacity and resource was best placed to help and assist and enable, but not necessarily to do it.'* Some charities in all three areas also found that funders were more flexible in reporting requirements and how funds were used.

4) **Less politics between organisations**. Organisations were less focused on promoting their own work or competing with other services, and more focused on who was best placed to solve a particular challenge. A council employee in Sutton felt that organisations had adopted a 'place-first' rather than 'organisation-first' way of thinking: *'It was almost like it suddenly wasn't just a job … we were all kind of in this … trying to solve this crisis together.'*

> *'We had to be a lot more agile, and I think that was across the board for a lot of organisations, and I think a lot of politics went out the window at a local level.'*
>
> **Sutton VCSE leader**

5) **More honest conversations**. There was greater honesty, openness and transparency when working in partnerships, particularly between local authorities and the voluntary sector. One council employee in Sutton described how a local charity leader had provided honest feedback on parts of their referral process that were not

> *'We [operational leadership group] meet weekly and at the start we were meeting twice a week, to talk about tensions in the system, issues, challenges, opportunities, whatever it was, and they were open and honest conversations.'*
>
> **Sutton coordinator**

functioning well during the crisis, which helped them to improve the process: *'Being able to have an honest conversation and say when something's not working is really important.'*

6) **Greater willingness to take risks**. Organisations were generally less risk-averse during the crisis, and more willing to try new ways of working. Sutton's coordinator found that the council were willing to entrust responsibility for coordinating food distribution to the voluntary sector, whilst still holding themselves ultimately accountable.

> *'There's more trust in terms of what the voluntary and community sector can deliver, I think there's a recognition that there's other ways of doing stuff, and I think a kind of real willingness to give things a go.'*
>
> **Sutton coordinator**

7) **Acknowledgement of the underlying issues**. The crisis generally increased awareness of underlying issues. A charity leader in Coventry felt that the crisis had revealed the extent of poverty in the city, and that the local council was now more willing to acknowledge this.

> *'I think people have realised within the authority that Covid has kind of laid bare the precarious nature of a lot of people's lives.'*
>
> **Coventry VCSE leader**

What facilitated these changes?

There are a number of mechanisms, specific to the crisis response, that the participants think have facilitated the changes we have seen. These are summarised below.

1) **Shared awareness of the immediacy of the problem**. The immediacy and seriousness of the crisis forced organisations to quickly adapt to new ways of working, and to come together to solve problems effectively.

> *'It's a little bit of a wartime spirit, it's like "this terrible thing is happening to our country, and we're all going to have to step up and help each other get through it."'*
>
> **Coventry CVS leader**

2) **Stronger shared purpose**. Organisations were motivated by the same purpose—to get appropriate support to vulnerable people in the community. As well as an increased frequency of meetings, the purpose of the meetings became much clearer and more focused on making decisions and taking action.

> *'You're all coming together for the same purpose—so it might not be a pandemic, but it might be thematic groups around specific issues … you're all working together.'*
>
> **Buckinghamshire Council employee**

3) **Permission to focus on one single priority**. The crisis allowed people to focus on a single priority—helping the community through immediate issues—rather than juggling many competing priorities. In some organisations, this freed up capacity as staff could be re-deployed into essential roles.

> *'We had the permission to put down our juggling priorities in this hand and just focus on one thing.'*
>
> **Buckinghamshire Council employee**

4) **Fast response from the council and strong momentum**. The local councils in each area were able to work much quicker than usual, and immediately began coordinating efforts at the start of the crisis period. There was a sense that having the right people in the right seats had been essential for enabling genuine collaboration with the sector.

> *'I think now we've got the right structure in the council, we've got the right people in the right seats who have the authority, the power, to make things happen really quickly.'*
>
> **Buckinghamshire coordinator**

5) **Online working**. Remote working allowed for more frequent and more targeted conversations between different teams and organisations (where appropriate technology was in place). It also saved time by removing the need to travel between meetings.

> *'I think the online world has massively enabled conversations that would've taken much longer.'*
>
> **Sutton coordinator**

Exploring the threats

As we reflect on how organisations have responded to the crisis, it's clear that some of the positive shifts we've described above are harder to sustain in the long term than others. There is a recognition that the key mechanisms of change are likely to dissipate in the coming months, and that this may give way to old attitudes and ways of working returning. By identifying what threatens these changes the most, we believe organisations will be in a better position to take the required steps to overcome these threats based on their individual contexts.

According to our research, it seems that the single biggest threat to the positive shifts that we have identified is the breakdown of trust. Other key threats include the loss of momentum due to burnout, increasing gaps in skills and resources, and difficulties with keeping abreast of the shifting landscape of needs and provision. There are signs that some of these threats are already having an impact locally, whereas others are predicted to be on the horizon if left unaddressed. We explore the threats in more detail below. It will be interesting to return to these threats over the coming months, and in our final report in Febuary 2021, to see to what extent these threats are being avoided or overcome.

Breakdown of trust

1) **Council funding pressures risk creating less transparency over budget allocations and less prioritisation of issues**. Council workers are under pressure to tighten budgets, which is causing nervousness about sharing funding allocations and commitments with providers and communities. This results in reduced transparency and trust, and feelings

> *'There's a return to kind of the old language of … us as partners, external partners, rather than being part of the actual solution to some of these problems.'*
>
> **Coventry VCSE leader**

of unequal power and confrontation between VCSEs and councils. This can also cause tensions over what and how issues are being prioritised.

2) **Upholding reputations**. We also heard about council staff feeling under pressure to uphold organisational reputation, and finding it harder to admit to mistakes and lessons learned. The hit suffered by the third sector, due to recently reduced public donations and a loss of trading

income, is also likely to increase competition for smaller pools of funds. This will lead to VCSE's scrambling for funds and putting themselves forward for work they might not be best placed to deliver.

3) **Reduction in community involvement**. In some areas, organisations felt that community participation had been handled well during the crisis, with local authorities taking more steps to involve the community in their response and with them being more aware of assets, resources and needs in the community. In others, there was a concern that this momentum had been—or would be—lost, with a return to more traditional consultation rather than participatory approaches.

   Meaningful and proportionate community participation has been a challenge to uphold alongside the need to make urgent changes and decisions. Keeping up with the required pace of action was cited as one threat to meaningful participation, particularly in engaging with underrepresented groups where there weren't pre-existing relationships in place. Another challenge to meaningful participation was that VCSEs felt that their council hadn't understood or fully committed to engaging with their communities, resulting in priorities being set without the right local input.

4) **A return to old processes**. Although there are aspirations to continue to work together in the sector, participants feel that this is not always translating into direct action. For example, through joint funding bids. A return to lengthy tendering processes risks undoing relationships built through the trust-based commissioning models experienced during the crisis. There are concerns that shared working was just reserved for the crisis.

Loss of momentum

Participants have also flagged a number of concerns about seeing the early signs of a loss of momentum, which—if left unaddressed—could result in a return to old patterns of working. The issues contributing to the loss of momentum include staff burnout, relationships being harder to form or uphold online, the risk of a number of charities—particularly those not involved in crisis response—lagging behind, and reduced public and government buy-in.

1) **Risk of burnout**. Burnout is a worrying possibility, particularly for staff who stepped up to cover for reduced capacity during the emergency. If collaboration feel less productive, for example if meetings aren't leading to clear decisions and actions, there is a risk that people will begin to engage less.

2) **Networking and building new relationships**. Relationships are much harder to form and maintain remotely. Participants described particular difficulty addressing differences in opinion. Loss of networking opportunities also threatens fundraising efforts.

3) **Charities not involved in the emergency response lagging behind**. Many charities not involved in the emergency response risk not keeping up with the changes that are involved. This then puts a greater responsibility on a smaller group of leaders to drive momentum.

4) **IT and systems are unfit for the desired collaborative and agile behaviours**. Many organisations experienced difficulties getting new technology and systems up and running at the start of the crisis. Whilst some organisations got around this by using temporary solutions, these may not be appropriate for long-term use.

5) **Reduced public and government buy-in**. This is likely to happen as the issues related to the pandemic become less visible or urgent. Buy-in could also be weakened by a lack of evidence that new ways of working have increased the sector's impact.

Skills and resource gaps

As we continue to navigate our way through the pandemic, the national picture shows a clear disparity between the shifting jobs landscape and current workforce skills and capacity. The also applies to the charity sector. In particular, there are concerns over providers not keeping up with changes in needs and the skills required to meet these needs. There is also the risk that the pool of organisations involved in response and recovery will narrow, as some charities adapt faster than others. This is likely to create new gaps in provision, at a time when demand is at its highest and is likely to continue to rise.

1) **Mismatch between needs and skills**. There is a mismatch between the skills required to meet changing needs, and the existing skillsets across charities and other local groups. Skills gaps are likely to be felt the most in specialist services such as acute mental health services and services for children and young people. The digital skills gap—already a major issue in the sector before the pandemic—is also likely to have an even stronger influence on which charities survive the crisis and which ones do not.

2) **A narrowing of the pool of organisations serving communities**. Participants shared concerns that the pool of charities able to adapt to the circumstances, by continuing existing services online or by providing new emergency services, has narrowed over the crisis. We are told there are now fewer charities who are both equipped and have the relationships with councils to continue responding to needs. We also heard of the risk that councils will favour

those who were more present in the crisis, with new organisations or structures possibly being at a disadvantage during tendering processes.

3) **Increased demand**. In addition to fundraising challenges, there has been increased demand for voluntary sector services, which is likely to continue to increase as complex needs in communities come to the surface.

> *'For [name of organisation], their client base has tripled, and obviously the money hasn't tripled in line with that, and that's true of other organisations.'*
>
> **Sutton coordinator**

Difficulties in keeping up with changing need and provision

Across the country, keeping up with how needs are evolving throughout the pandemic continues to be a major challenge. At a local level, this is made harder by poor data sharing, and by a lack of clarity over how provision compares against needs and how funding is allocated and distributed.

1) **Poor data sharing**. Data sharing has helped charities better understand changing needs and consider relevant provision, yet data sharing is still uncomfortable for many. Although in some areas we heard of groups making concerted efforts to share information and resources, in others, information is still not being shared effectively across the system. This leads to duplication of efforts to collect data.

> *'Who's doing what, and why, and what relevance is it to the county of Buckinghamshire? Until we have that mapping exercise we are blundering about in the dark.'*
>
> **Buckinghamshire coordinator**

2) **Lack of clarity of the local 'system'**. Some participants referred to having a poor understanding of needs and how they vary between communities. Similarly, there is often not a strong understanding of how provision and funding are distributed to meet these needs. Participants spoke of efforts to map needs and services within the local area to understand where the gaps are and how to fill them, though they commented that these efforts take a lot of time and weren't always supported by local infrastructure bodies or the council.

3) **Poor understanding of complex / long-term needs**. Complex / long-term needs that haven't yet fully surfaced are a particular challenge. Although the response to the immediate, 'visible' needs of the community was in many cases well-coordinated, there has been less focus and understanding around complex needs, which makes more strategic decision-making difficult.

Early emerging solutions and opportunities

Some broad themes have emerged from our interviews around how we may collectively be able to address some of the threats identified in the previous section. These themes have emerged from early conversations with coordinators and we will be exploring them in more detail over the next three months.

Maintaining trust between councils and the voluntary sector

1) **Undertaking in depth work with councils to support the required changes in culture and processes**. Working with council staff at all levels of the organisation to support a cultural shift towards power sharing and transparency. Part of this work might include revisiting some policies, such as debt enforcement, that are likely to disproportionately affect more vulnerable groups, and exploring asset-based and co-produced structures to minimise the divide between commissioners and providers. Staff could be supported and given permission to make decisions based on developing needs, rather than reverting to previous patterns and processes.

2) **Providing advice on meaningful community involvement in a crisis**. Infrastructure bodies and consultants could support councils and charities to explore what proportionate and socially distanced community engagement looks like in practice, and how place-based partnerships can go about it together.

> *'There's a growing understanding that we would only make a big difference for our communities in Coventry if actually we did it in a different way and we did it through community participation.'*
>
> **Coventry coordinator**

3) **Supporting councils for voluntary service (CVS) and local councils to increase hyper-local working and meaningful community engagement**. The needs and strengths of communities varies hugely—there are opportunities for councils to build better relationships and to meet the needs of communities more effectively by co-developing solutions based on specific local contexts. This would involve working closely with those communities and empowering local leaders—particularly leaders from underrepresented communities—and

devolving decisions about solutions and spending to those on the ground. Local ward leaders would also need the right support from local councils and peers working in this way elsewhere.

4) **Creating shared spaces for reflective practice**. Enabling council and community leaders to explore the motivations behind decisions and to openly discuss fears and hopes in constructive ways.

5) **Facilitating 'how we work' discussions between councils and the community**. As above, this would strengthen understanding between councils and charities and would help identify what individuals need in order to be able to collaborate effectively in the longer term.

Continuing positive momentum

1) **Increasing programmes of work where organisations can unite around a common purpose**. The Black Lives Matter movement is one clear example of a shared immediate priority that has the potential to unite organisations spanning different missions and sectors. These programmes could be initiated by infrastructure bodies or influential individuals and organisations, such as VCSE leaders or local councillors.

2) **Creating more efficient cross-sectoral structures**. These structures could reduce the onus on individuals to carry the responsibility of coordination and information sharing.

3) **'Stretching out' and bringing new voices into public and third sector meetings**. This could enrich and broaden discussions and maintain the momentum that has been created.

4) **Increasing evidence and impact monitoring on place-based working**. This would include gathering evidence for how the shifts in ways of working are supporting greater momentum and efficiency. This would make the case for core funding that supports relationship building. With place-based working historically recognised as hard to measure, it is likely this needs to come with increased support from infrastructure bodies for doing this in a proportionate and actionable way in times of crisis.

5) **Building on agile working and benefits**. Organisations want to continue to work in a fast and flexible way and to maintain the elements of remote working that benefit staff. However, this needs to be balanced with discussions on how, and if, the current pace should be maintained, and of the steps required to reduce the risk of burnout.

Addressing skills and resource gaps

1) **Advocacy work**. Whilst the national picture on skills gaps is still unfolding, it will be vital to ensure local service providers, particularly specialist service providers, are prioritised in government plans for national adult skills programmes.

2) **Tackling digital exclusion**. Smaller organisations and many residents in our three local areas have struggled to engage with online ways of working. Finding ways to tackle exclusion through a combination of national digital literacy programmes and one-to-one volunteering support could help ensure organisations and vulnerable people are not left behind.

Keeping up with changes in need and provision

1) **Community needs analyses**. Councils should be supported to carry out detailed needs analyses that are focused on current needs as well as future medium and long-term scenarios in their local areas. This is key for enabling all providers—statutory bodies and charities—to lobby government for the support required and to change their own organisational models to support what is needed now and in future.

> *'Any social problem you would like to think of has already started to mushroom and I think will grow as we carry on in this very difficult situation and also get settled into the worst recession we've had for a long time.'*
>
> **Coventry VCS leader**

2) **Mapping service provision**. The areas that took part in this research identified that much of the collaboration taking place in the immediate response was within a small circle of community leaders, with a large number of charities not being a part of the conversation. Mapping what exactly is available and happening on the ground will help to ensure inclusivity in solution design and also reduce duplication and inefficiencies.

3) **Mapping funding allocation**. With a better understanding of how funds are distributed locally, funders and philanthropists would be in a stronger position to understand how their funding compares with other forms of funding, where the geographic and thematic gaps are, and what needs to be done to shift away from immediate emergency response towards funding for the long term.

> *'We need to get some strategic thinking behind funding so that we are really targeting the need effectively.'*
>
> **Buckinghamshire coordinator**

What's next

Over the coming months, we will explore how some of these emerging solutions are being developed in our three local areas. We will also focus on examples of good practice that the sector can learn from. We will be gathering opinions on what changes in policymaking, commissioning and funding practices would support the positive shifts that we have identified.

We would love to hear your opinions on this interim report. We are also exploring the possibility of further research into how to take some of these solutions forward, beyond the final report of this phase next year. If you or your area would like to be involved, or if you have any questions about the work we are undertaking, please get in touch with Nicola Pritchard at Nicola.Pritchard@thinkNPC.org.

Appendix

Below are three screenshots of exercises that we ran with the three local coordinators from each of our areas. The exercises summarise the key changes the coordinators identified in their areas, the key threats linked to those changes, the ways to overcome those threats and some potential next steps.

Buckinghamshire

Signs of change	What might threaten these in future?	How can we overcome these threats?	What next steps do you want to take to overcome these threats?
Trust and understanding, open and meaningful dialogue between council and VCS	Providers have limited capacity, risk of staff burnout / Managing expectations for coming months - LA have no money / If collaboration begins to feel less productive/ focused, people won't engage / Loss of momentum - how do we create sustained strategic and operational relationships?	Creating more efficient subgroups (within larger board) to increase capacity / Ensuring more effective information sharing - e.g. more concise documentation / 'Stretching out' and hearing from new voices to enrich/broaden conversation to keep momentum going	Establish strong, durable links with other key sectors like business and health - extend trusting relationship built with council to other bodies.
Greater appreciation of the voluntary sector	Little understanding of provision in given areas of need / Many charities likely to stagnate/go out of business due to funding / Charities and council leaders not using needs data to inform changes in provision / Behaviours only changing amongst few charities	Mapping the sector to understand provision and gaps / The council communicating the needs of the community effectively, to support charities to adapt to needs / Funders have buy into the data on needs - and be willing to support new provision / Charities make conscious decisions about changes to their mission, to address need	This will help the Third Sector have an automatic seat at the table and will provide the information needed to develop the most effective solutions to community-wide problems.
Fewer organisational barriers / Communities engaged in problem solving	Community boards very new - risk they will be yet another talking shop for usual suspects	Bringing diverse communities onto the board by engaging community leaders	

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Coventry

Signs of change

- Shared responsibility and power
- More honesty, acceptance and patience
- Partnership working strengthened
- Shared vision favoured over individual priorities
- Fewer organisational barriers
- Statutory sector much faster

What might threaten these in future?

- Lack of transparency over how council priorities are set and funds allocated
- Lack of understanding (from providers) of financial pressures within the council
- Feeling of unequal power and confrontation between VCSEs/council reinforces commissioner-provider split
- Difficulty of council remaining accountable for how funds are spent, whilst also devolving decisions to the community
- Difficulty challenging council approach from within, whilst needing to protect reputation
- Service directors in councils managing multiple competing priorities
- Difference in opinion over the role of the state
- Harder to build/maintain relationships online
- Difficulty for national providers to adapt to changes at a regional level
- How to activate community participation in a more genuine way
- Organisational behaviour change lagging behind those leading the charge in emergency response
- Working with limited capacity is only sustainable for limited period - risk of burn out
- Risk of mismatch between new skills required and existing skillsets and capacity
- Adrenaline that came with immediate crisis might wane
- Government support for that immediate response might lessen

How can we overcome these threats?

- 'Modelling the change we want to see'
- People feeling they can ask it
- Service director conversation?
- Having conversations between the sector about 'how we work together'
- Opening up direct communications channels between the CPO group and strategic group
- Having a shared space to explore all parties' motivations - not just the council's
- How can we preempt frustration at unanswered questions (re. bottom line)
- Building in reflective practice: 'what can we do about addressing your concerns?'
- Using impact measurement/user research so decisions based on need rather than organisational tenders
- How to do due diligence but in a way that enables a continued fasted pace of decision making?
- Should the pace achieved be maintained?
- Moving away from services being the answer to people's problems - building on role of the communities
- Surfacing different ideological differences? e.g. role of the state
- Strong voice in Coventry coming through around activating the community

What next steps do you want to take to overcome these threats?

- Leading a solution-focused discussion
- How do we learn from other people and begin to describe what good looks like?
- Bringing in different types of personalities - agitators as well as solutions-focused individuals
- Creating a safe enough place that everyone can put hands up and admit weaknesses
- Advice on how to do meaningful community participation, whilst social distancing, in an evidence-based way?
- Are we truly up for community participation? And if so, what examples are there of what that looks like?

Sutton

Signs of change

- More agile and flexible working
- Increased trust between organisations
- Shared leadership between organisations
- More open and honest conversations
- Better recognition of the work/value of the voluntary sector
- Greater willingness to try new things

What might threaten these in future?

- Providers feel trust is broken if council reverts back to lengthy tendering processes
- CCG not involving new/alternative organisations in the response
- Backlash if response not perceived to be good enough
- Funders misunderstanding how their practices are felt at a local level
- Reliance on single individual leaders in voluntary/public sector to make change while others don't
- Lack of core funding to respond to new needs
- Big idea fails to lead to change on the front line
- Reduced buy-in because extremes aren't as visible
- Lack of evidence of impact to prove new things have worked
- National funding puts pressure on LA

How can we overcome these threats?

- Removing commissioner-provider split. Awards and structures co-produced and asset-based
- Keeping communication channels open. Open up decision-making to new voices
- Finding new, non-threatening focus points
- More pilots to link big ideas to change on the front line
- Gathering evidence on how experiences have impacted wellbeing - any positives?

What next steps do you want to take to overcome these threats?

- Trying to keep focused on response despite procurement barriers
- Continuing 1-1 conversations
- Facilitate people to have conversations with each other
- Focusing on BLM as uniting focus for building new relationships
- Reinvigorate programme of non-covid related topics and events
- Bringing together leadership groups invested in sharing data and learning

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