Covid-19 Weekly Update Survey 4

This survey was disseminated in May 2020 to all heads of VCSE sector member organisations in Northern Ireland. A total of n=174 participants responded to the survey, indicating a response rate of 17%.

1. How would you describe your current state of health?

Value	Percent	Count
Healthy	92.4%	145
Unwell, suspected Covid-19	0.6%	1
Unwell, illness other than Covid-19	7.0%	11
Total	100%	157

2. Please rank the top 3 most pressing issues facing your organisation at the moment?

Item	Overall Rank	Score	Total Respondents
Sustaining our organisation and activities	1	330	143
Finance/Cash flow	2	231	94
Well-being of staff/volunteers	3	169	94
Adapting my services to deliver online	4	129	74
Supporting the response to Covid-19	5	68	37
Availability of workforce/volunteers	6	48	33
IT/Digital capability	7	25	16
PPE supplies	8	16	10
Access to data to support the Covid-19 response	9	11	8

3. Please briefly indicate any other issues facing your organisation below.

Response
Understanding relaxation of lockdown measures
1) Ongoing concerns relating to the future as we cannot ensure social distancing whilst offering services to our members/the public. 2) Ongoing concerns about delivering against our charitable purpose at all in 2020/21. 3) Inability to access any support for the organisation to date due to its legal status/size etc.
Organising events in public areas
Adapting to change
Adapting services to online delivery, working with funders to adopt a flexible approach to grants to support this delivery
Lack of funding
Longer term economic outlook and impact on ways of working (office vs home) and possibility of redundancies
Addressing ever changing needs of client groups
Moving beyond lockdown. How it will work and responding to new or increased needs of mental health and well-being
There is a shortage of the provision of foodstuffs for those most in need and a lack of logistics to get food to those genuinely struggling
Lack of funding channels
The organisation is located in a rented building, the landlord is not providing any rent reductions or considerations during Covid-19
There is still no Covid-19 guidance around animal rescue, caring and especially rehoming. We are not receiving any information from the Government at all around this or restarting. There is still little or no co-ordination between the organisations set up to help with Covid-19 - work is being done in siloes
Due to the nature of our organisation, all activities have been suspended
Clear and reliable information in relation to human resource issues linked to CV19
Some services require face to face interaction and therefore cannot be delivered online
Sustaining our business once we get back. If we need to dramatically reduce numbers attending our childcare setting or receiving reduced number of school children for educational visits, we could not generate enough income to be viable
We are concerned that after a long break whether our people will want to get back together. Also, some of our people are afraid as being Chinese they may be subject to prejudice and discrimination
Our charity does not meet the criteria of approximately 99% of funding that has been made available as a result of Covid-19
As our centres take place in church hall, we cannot look at restarting our service until they become available again
Working online and at distance is extremely stressful
Planning for later in the year/next year without knowing what support might be available if restrictions are still in place
Increased workload for staff
Adverse weather conditions
Awareness of the service we can offer in response to covid-19
Replacing lost income streams
We work in school and we are on a rota, but now I have to shield for 12 weeks. If we open and the assistant manager is in school then we don't have a designated child protection officer in the premises
There is no funding out there for community/charitable organisations
How we are going to ensure social distancing with special needs young people once we return?

The long-term impact of CV-19 on mental health and the implications on services and staff
Finding financial support
It is a struggle keeping our project on track at this time. Many of our participants are older members of the community and many of them are finding this situation very difficult
We have been denied access to the small business grant and the tourism sector grant meaning this charity has received no support from government other than the HMRC furlough scheme
Due to ongoing lockdown, and that all but 2 of the committee are fit and able to continue, it is increasingly difficult to get anything done
I worry about the planning of returning to the workplace for staff and service users all our responsibilities, the availability of resources and information required policies, procedures, financial implications of the additional equipment needed and accessing PPE
Forward planning
Key support for social enterprise
Staff concerned about how to return to work with no childcare or school
The uncertainty of when and under what constraints we will be able to reopen; if of course we will be able to reopen
We have closed down our public facilities and have reduced our members rent. So, income is problem for us
As far as we can see, there will be no opportunity for face to face recruitment for the next year or community fundraising due to Covid-19 restrictions - social distancing which will have a significant impact on income
Inability to meet needs of beneficiaries
Cash flow sustainability and the lack of grants for social enterprise
Seasonal operation losing our income generating period. Winter will see staff reductions without ongoing support
Worry about ESF/Trust funding and the longer-term picture
Ongoing loss of income as funders tighten their own belts, including reversal of written decisions to fund
Internally: Big issue is loss of income, ability to deliver on committed services Externally: support for membership groups, advice, and guidance on how to move from face to face to online resources
Planning for recovery phase without guidance on timescales from the govt
Bringing staff back from furlough before resentment sets in
Whilst I am healthy, not all staff have escaped the Virus and I am really concerned if staff will have to come back to work too soon (although we are all working from home currently) and that to me will be the greater risk to them and to our service users
Doing well so far - Getting digital to carry on services was initially disconcerting but we are there now - health and safety of staff is main concern as we are a front line service - however no immediate issues with staff sick so far
Keeping our organisation go financially
Members do not seem to be contacting us which is a worry if they feel anxious or need someone to talk to
Mental health of our volunteers and staff. Some of the abuse that they are taking is unreal
Not being able to deal with issues face to face
Waiting on decisions from funders regarding 2020/21 projects
Accessing support through the Covid-19 grants scheme

IT capability, as with most Community and Voluntary organisations computers etc. are many years old
Support with clear information to assist future planning
Taking the decision to go back to work when and how to do it safely without putting anyone at risk
IT training for staff & volunteers e.g. to participate in zoom
Availability of staff/volunteers Guidelines on returning to work for staff with medical conditions or a member of household shielding
An increase of need for our service without adequate funding or support
We are currently closed with no activities or socialising. This has a detrimental effect on our group both the wellbeing, emotional and social interaction of our group and the beneficiaries in the area, missing out is of immense loss, in most cases this was their only socialising so it's tough, but safe. We are keeping in lockdown until it is safe to return. Keeping in contact by social media and telephone
How we can return to office working safely
Being able to achieve all we wanted to spend our budget - unfortunately, had to cancel a number of high-profile events
Ensuring our service users have adequate basic needs re food, heat, housing, safety, stress reduction support
How to deliver a safe service on return to work
A large proportion of our members are not online and do not have an email address
Beginning to think about planning a return to work for staff and try to create new opportunities for new ways of working in the future
Income generation and fundraising activities are on hold. We also applied for the two business grants but have not been successful with either
Lack of clear communication regarding the ability to reopen charity shops. Lack of government support for international development projects
Staff and volunteer well being

4.To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Not Applicable		Responses
	Count	Row %	Count	Row %	Count	Row %	Count	Row %	Count	Row %	Count
The places where my organisation operates are safe spaces for staff, volunteers, and service users	33	19.2%	81	47.1%	33	19.2%	8	4.7%	17	9.9%	172
My organisation has the equipment it needs to operate safely and effectively	17	9.9%	92	53.5%	44	25.6%	3	1.7%	16	9.3%	172
I feel well informed and have confidence in the guidance provided by my local Council	12	7.0%	86	50.0%	46	26.7%	13	7.6%	15	8.7%	172
I feel well informed and have confidence in the guidance provided by the NI Executive and NI Government Departments/Agencies	12	7.0%	102	59.3%	47	27.3%	9	5.2%	2	1.2%	172
I feel well informed and have confidence in the guidance provided by UK Government	8	4.7%	45	26.2%	62	36.0%	54	31.4%	3	1.7%	172
I am being supported flexibly my current government funder	19	11.0%	75	43.6%	21	12.2%	8	4.7%	49	28.5%	172
I am being supported flexibly by my current non-government funder	34	19.8%	68	39.5%	12	7.0%	5	2.9%	53	30.8%	172

I am receiving adequate support from new government funding sources to sustain my organisation and its activities	9	5.2%	32	18.6%	48	27.9%	33	19.2%	50	29.1%	172
I am receiving adequate support from new non-government funding sources to sustain my organisation and its activities	15	8.7%	38	22.1%	36	20.9%	20	11.6%	63	36.6%	172
Government is putting the right measures in place to manage Covid-19	9	5.2%	86	50.0%	54	31.4%	21	12.2%	2	1.2%	172
Government is putting the right measures in place to support the economy	7	4.1%	88	51.2%	56	32.6%	17	9.9%	4	2.3%	172

5.What more can the government do for you?

Response
Fulfil the promise of a call-back from the small grants team. Start planning now to ensure clear guidance is available on what to do if social distancing is not possible for your services. Re the answers to the previous questions - I agree the workplace is very safe for staff, just not for service users as cannot ensure distancing
Rent relief, government funding for charities
Treat Ireland as one island. Same rules
Advice and support for community based organisations providing specific support to those who are most vulnerable. e.g. day care
Clarify the support for charities scheme
Keep the public informed and provided clear and consistent messaging. In the absence of clear guidance people will begin to make up their own rules
Give proper guidance asap
Give me funding
Support for charities criteria too narrow. Larger charities suffering just as much as smaller ones but not eligible for support
Messages need to be clearer. Funding for charities not yet available
Be transparent
Need more cohesion between UK Government and NI Assembly
The message from PM is causing me confusion and will cause confusion generally. A road map is needed
They can provide financial assistance to voluntary organisations who are not draining the system
Provide adequate funding the charity sector
The government needs to provide an outline strategy that gives clarity on how they intend to move forward
Provide urgent and clear advice on measures to reopen from lock up. Provide information around animal charity activities
Support for charities who have overseas remit as well as those locally who are responding to COVID-19
Issue clear guidance about return to workplaces
Give clearer information, increase transparency, improve their IT systems, enable their staff to use appropriate IT platforms e.g. Zoom and MST
Extend £10k funding scheme to all social enterprises (not just those with 9 staff or less)
More lead in time for the plans to reduce lockdown in order to plan our response
Let us get involved in the process to help advise how best to bet out of this
Lockdown easing plan with timeframes
Testing
Cleared guidance and advice on emerging from the lockdown including a timetable for events. Additional support of the arts and not for profit sectors
Nothing under the present circumstances
Criteria that will allow the likes of assistance dogs organisations to apply for funding..
A more pragmatic approach that allows areas where the risk is lower to start to return to normal. In Northern Ireland, the majority of the at-risk areas are those highly populated, Belfast and Derry
Ensure sustainability of our project which is funded yearly. Longer funding required
Provide financial support - simple. Not some long winded competitive application process
Get cash disbursed - it is taking a long time
Provide more platforms to deliver services remotely, especially in rural areas

Put in place support for organisations who cannot operate while social distancing measures are in place
More staff to answer helplines
Requirement to offer meaningful support to sport and to keep the Job Retention Scheme open beyond the end of June
Provide funding
Straight answers, not like Mr. Johnsons
Provide funding for community organizations
Release expected timeframe in association with exit strategy
Do not relax the restrictions until this disease has been eradicated
Make Grant's available to smaller charities who do not pay rates but rent for other organisations. Also make it clearer when we and how we will return to our new normal with the young people we work with
We need a commitment and swift follow through of additional funds to help manage the impact of CV-19 on our services
We were new business having ploughed all turnover and taken out loans to get business going - this was first year to make a profit and we are not getting any help from government
There needs to be more community testing and tracing of the virus within the wider community. Screening and testing of people arriving into the country from abroad
As indicated previously in this survey, some small organisations are falling through the net. We have been denied access to the grants, meaning we have received no financial support other than the HMRC furlough scheme for staff
Small grant for charities for infrastructure
Parity and equity for small charities and social enterprises (not eligible for £10/25k grants)
Get the statistics right
Increase testing
More detail about timeline for moving from lockdown and more flexibility for organisations who can operate safely within guidelines. So, response/reopening should be based on safety rather than general types of service
Engagement is limited and the voices of the most vulnerable are not being heard in terms of longer-term impact. Immediate response involving local communities excellent but it is time to start planning for exit and the implications for mental health of our service users and our workforce, our ability to sustain jobs and the inequalities that will be exasperated in our education system
Nothing other than keep monitoring the situation and having the courage to adapt to how the virus is developing
Issue clear guidance to all sectors
Provide funding opportunities for key deliverables and match for other funding sources which would help to create jobs and deliver key outcomes for NI
Be clear in their messages to the nation
Support staff advised to self-isolate but who do not meet shielding criteria
Support social enterprise
Ongoing support over winter for seasonal business who have lost their income generating period
Security of funding going forward. They are currently rotating their own staff and there is no question of redundancies, yet we are working as best we can to maintain services with threat of potential funding cuts hanging over our heads
UK Government is more focused on business and the economy than on the health and well-being of members of the public and front-line workers. Messages they are putting out are very confusing. If we worked in London, we would be extremely frightened

UK government needs to realise it is a whole country issue not an England only issue. They need to take a look at health inequalities and counteract the universal credit hardship they have created. They need to give clear leadership on the issue of covid-19
Provide a realistic time frame for phased return to work for staff
Clarity
Less bureaucracy where funding and reports are concerned
Bring forward the charity support package as soon as possible
Accelerate DfC and dormant accounts funding programmes for charities
Nothing - we are being well supported by Trusts and Supporting People over this period
Extend and expand the access to interest free loans
Have a better network of support for community based organisation
We would welcome more detailed guidance about activities like childcare in terms of plans to phase in activity, as this would allow us to begin planning how we might re-open, but more importantly get a clearer sense when that might be, so that we can better gauge the potential impact of closure, and plan more effectively
The NI government could give a better indication of dates for the 5-step plan for Covid-19 is going to be put in place
A bit more information on how the community and voluntary sector can get by
Release funding from C&V mainstream projects
Reasonably satisfied with government response
Provide more clarity on financial support for registered charities
Be clearer in terms of planning for future
Consistent approach across the UK & ROI
Release the funds allocated to charities in NI
Less mixed messages, string clear leadership
Work together e.g. UK /Ireland wide
Provide testing for all
It needs to be clearer. The UK government message is now totally unclear. The NI announcement this week is also less clear than what it was
Be more specific about the measures as they tend to be vague and can be interpreted in different ways. Keep it simple and easy to follow
Some advice & guidelines for orgs returning to workplace
Clarification needed from UK. Good to now have sight of NI plan
England, Scotland, and Wales all received additional and much needed funding to support agencies who work with Domestic Violence and abuse. Charities in NI received nothing although we are under extreme pressure
We need more financial assistance for the self-employed who do not qualify for non-income based JSA because they pay class 2 NI contributions!!! This benefit is assessed on class 1 NI contributions. This is discrimination against the self-employed in the vol and comm sector and is causing severe hardship. Can NICVA take this forward? This benefit should be open to those who are self-employed. This cohort did not decide not to pay class 1 contributions - the government made this decision and now we are being penalised for it
More emphasis on dealing with aftermath and how this can be funded
We are a support group and our concern is that new people are not coming forward to be checked out and therefore, if positive, are receiving treatment at a late stage, often too late. We would like a concerted campaign to raise awareness of cancer symptoms and the importance of early access to treatment
We have remained unable to receive any financial support from the government beyond the furlough scheme
Quicker & better financial support for charities & arts sector
Protect people. Simple

Provide support for charities working overseas. Make the business support grant available for charity shops with rates exemption
More test and tracing including testing of all residents and staff in care homes. More interim financial support for social enterprise day nurseries to enable them to build up business coming out of lock down and to offset impact of social distancing measures
Further funding to help self-employed artists. Better guidelines on operation and support with increased costs incurred. Promise of ongoing support and not short-term solutions

6. Has your organisation experienced a drop in the number of staff and volunteers available to work/volunteer?

Value	Percent	Count
Yes	56.2%	95
No	43.8%	74
Total	100%	169