



Supporting your communities during COVID-19 outbreak

Context

This factsheet outlines steps to mitigate the impact of coronavirus on communities with a specific focus on those that may be considered vulnerable.

The potential consequences and disruption of COVID-19 on our communities is a growing concern and businesses are acting to mitigate the negative impact. Income to the voluntary sector will be severely challenged by this crisis, caused by postponed events and cancelled meetings with prospective funders alongside disruption to previously planned fundraising activity.

NCVO data shows that for example the London Marathon alone generated £66m for hundreds of charities last year, with the majority of this being raised in the weeks immediately before and after the event. With mass fundraising activities now on hold for the foreseeable future, many organisations will be in need of help. It will be important to support your partners, not just their beneficiaries

What government support is available?

The Treasury has confirmed at the time of writing that the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme will be open to applications from charities if they make half of their income from trading activity. Unfortunately, this will exclude lots of charities who rely on a mix of income including fundraising, grants, and investments¹.

If any of your charity partners are worried about the impact that coronavirus will have on their cashflow, some useful [guidance has been produced by the Charity Finance Group](#).

If your business wants to support other members of the voluntary and community sector, we encourage them to [support the National Emergencies Trust \(NET\) fundraising appeal](#). NET was set up in direct response to the number of emergencies in 2017, such as the tragic Grenfell Tower fire and terrorist attacks in London and Manchester to quickly and efficiently raise funds for those who need it most, and they distribute funds fairly across the country to local charities who need it most.

Supporting your communities

Ways in which the business community can support their communities:

- **Check in with community partners** – what are the needs of the schools, charities and community groups you are currently engaged with - both for their beneficiaries and the organisation.

¹ Civil Society News, 2020, *Not all charities will be able to access coronavirus loan scheme*, viewed 18 March 2020 <<https://www.civilsociety.co.uk/news/not-all-charities-will-be-able-to-access-coronavirus-loan-scheme.html>>





Adapt methods for volunteering – with traditional volunteering being cancelled business needs to deliver ongoing support differently or respond to the community need flexibly.

- **Donations** – support the voluntary and community sector across the country by donating to the NET fundraising appeal [here](#)
- **Reviewing products and services** – to provide additional support for those that are particularly vulnerable at this time

Business can provide valuable flexibility in responding to the needs of vulnerable communities, Sainsbury's, [Iceland](#) and [Nationwide](#) for example have opened stores one hour earlier to provide a safe space for elderly customers, Aviva are getting in touch with their vulnerable customers to ask what support they need, and [United Utilities](#) are promoting their existing payment holiday scheme to support those financially affected.

The power of the BITC network

BITC is a member of the Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership (VCSEP). It is made up of a range of organisations within the voluntary and community sector with the shared aim of improving coordination at national and local levels before, during and after emergencies. BITC is working to understand and inform Responsible Businesses' response to the pandemic. We are:

- Connecting with the VCSEP and local partners to work out the most effective response to the crisis and how corporate volunteers can have the greatest impact.
 - [Supporting the NET fundraising appeal](#).
 - Reaching out to emergency responders to gather information on how business can best lend support
- Encouraging members to [support SMEs in their networks – our guidance is available here](#).

If you would like to become involved with the above or signal your interest, please reach out to your Business in the Community relationship manager.

We are also sharing stories of what our members are doing and how. If you have any great examples of how your business has supported voluntary and community sector partners, please do let us know.

