



Supporting Your Community Partners Through Covid-19 Crisis

April 2020

Context

Charities and community organisations are playing a vital role in responding to the COVID-19 crisis, but many are facing serious challenges. [Leaders in the voluntary sector](#) have warned that UK charities and community organisations are facing imminent collapse as fundraising income runs out. The Government has recently announced a range of measures aimed at supporting charities through the funding shortfalls of COVID-19, these include:

- £750 million pot for frontline charities across the UK – including hospices and those supporting domestic abuse victims
- £360 million direct from government departments and £370 million for smaller charities, including through a grant to the National Lottery Community Fund
- matched donations to the National Emergencies Trust as part of the BBC's Big Night In fundraiser later this month – pledging a minimum of £20 million

Charities and community organisations in the rest of the UK will only be able to apply for government loans if more than half their income comes from trading activity. However, this is likely to exclude many of those that have a mix of different income sources such as those that rely on raising money from the public and those that deliver public services.

Businesses are stepping up to support in this time of crisis and it is those with established community partnerships that can create real impact to the people they support.

Here's how you can help.

Check in with your community partners

If you haven't already, contact your partners and find out what the specific needs are of the charities and community groups you are currently engaged with. As a business, there are many ways that you and your employees can support both the organisations you partner with and their beneficiaries during this time.

Support for beneficiaries

Think about how your charity partners support people in need and is there a way you can flex your business to support these beneficiaries? For example, [Intercontinental Hotels Group](#) are offering rooms as a safe space for homeless people to self-isolate, and [Morrisons](#) are distributing £10m worth of food to the UK's food banks.





Grant funding

Do you have an existing grant funding arrangement that could be flexed, and could you offer more? As we wait the outcome on whether government will extend emergency grant funding to all charitable organisations in the UK, many organisations face collapse within weeks, at a time they are needed most. Have you put restrictions on existing funding that could be relaxed?

The [Standard Life Foundation's](#) approach has included outlining support to current grant holders, proceeding with current applications and allowing any adjustments that organisations wish to make in light of coronavirus. They have also made work-related funding available as a result of the pandemic. [John Lewis Partnership](#) have set up a £1 million Community Support Fund to support vulnerable customers who are affected, and M&S are working with Neighbourly to link local [M&S stores](#) with needs from local community groups.

Fundraising

Undoubtedly many planned fundraising activities have unfortunately been cancelled, as the government's policies on social distancing are observed. This doesn't mean that fundraising should stop, particularly as your community partners who rely on fundraising income will need it more than ever.

Can your employees be mobilised into innovating your fundraising activities as they isolate at home? For example, the 'ice bucket challenge' is said to have raised over \$212,000 in additional income for the ALS association in the US. This was a challenge that was largely done in people's back gardens. From the Big Issue's '[donate your commute](#)' idea to sponsoring remote cycling challenges, innovative ideas are emerging.

BITC is also backing [National Emergencies Trust's fundraising appeal](#). If your business has the capability to support voluntary and community groups beyond your immediate partners, please consider donating to their appeal, as they are best placed to allocate resource based on the needs of community organisations around the country.

Mobilise your employees

When crisis hits, people step up – and we're seeing lots of that right now.

There are lots of ways that your charity partners may need volunteering support during this time that can utilise your employees' skills from their desk at home. For example, [Business in the Community's Ready for Work](#) programme is setting up a virtual Job Club. Not all employee volunteering will be cancelled. Your charity partners still need your help in adapting their volunteer provision to the current climate.





As a result of COVID-19, over 750,000 people signed up to the NHS volunteering initiative, to the point that sign-ups the scheme had to be paused. Can you support employees who have signed up for this scheme? A BITC member, [E. G. Lewis Group](#), has agreed to provide a company vehicle and cover all fuel costs to support one of their employees who has volunteered as a driver for this scheme.

Collaborate

Who are the other businesses supporting your charity partners? At a time when community organisations with a small number of staff might be inundated with requests to help, dealing with supporting employees and volunteers, businesses can step up to provide a coordinated response with our assistance.

Business in the Community's [National Business Response Network](#) provides a single and efficient way for businesses to see where and how they can quickly give the right support to communities.

BITC is currently looking for the best examples of responsible business practice in response to COVID-19.

If you have an example of how your business has supported a community partner, please share it with your relationship manager so we can share it and inspire other businesses to act.

