



How a Community Organisation Adapted During the COVID-19 Crisis

July 2020

By working with our colleagues in the Voluntary and Community sector, we have a series of reports on our website that capture the experiences and issues from the point of view of services and groups that support local people in the community.

This is an independent case study showing an example of one community organisation's story of adapting and what the future holds.

About the organisation



Sussex Clubs for Young People are celebrating 80 years since their foundation, they are committed to developing vibrant grassroots led voluntary and community youth sector, which involves, empowers and meets the needs of young people in Sussex.



We currently support over 130 youth clubs in Sussex. We respond to the challenges of delivering meaningful youth work and we constantly strive to provide fresh, fun and rewarding activities for the young people of Sussex. There is no annual membership fee, so even small or start-up clubs can access our benefits which allows us to reach as many groups as possible.

Jo Bell, Horsham District Team Manager, Sussex Clubs for Young People Ltd



What were the immediate challenges?

Sussex Clubs for Young People face-to-face operation stopped and most staff were furloughed for about 4 weeks, and some staff had to 'shield'. This gave time to see what the Government legislation was and how they could provide services that were safe.



Staff checked in (wellbeing checks) with young people and their parents to ensure they were alright. They set up virtual Youth sessions, running three times a week and supported schoolwork and 1-2-1 virtual sessions on Facebook or Zoom. This was in the Horsham and Mid Sussex areas and *some things were received better than others.*

The main challenge was knowing what do young people need us for and what could be offered.

Tentative steps - new ways of working

Sussex Clubs for Young People has begun delivering face-to-face sessions in the Horsham area at the beginning of August. These sessions are small groups limited to six people and are an opportunity to talk with young people and provide advice and support.

Their Purple Bus has been deep cleaned and risk assessed in line with Government guidance and advice. The aim is for the bus to visit an area and then the staff can meet young people outside. They have tables that are 2 meters in length and will be able to sit, work and talk safely, an [Outside Youth club](#) on a smaller scale.



Young people have been going bonkers under Lockdown!

We understand the issues and going back to education is a worry as is domestic violence - maybe not something one noticed in the family prior to Lockdown. Mental health issues are a concern such as anxiety; as we cannot see Covid-19 and young people are concerned. Also concerned about the many opinions on social media and mis-information.



Sussex Clubs for Young People also have a therapeutic team as part of their resources and good links with West Sussex County Council Children's and Family Center and members of their team will be joining the Outside Youth Club during the summer.



Covid-19 has been a great learning curve and we cannot wait to get back out there in the community.



How have they begun to Forward Plan?

Sussex Clubs for Young People rely heavily on contracts and have agreed an extra month extension to contracts because of COVID-19. *We are happy with this.* They have accessed various grants and tenders during the crisis.

Their IT ambition has advanced by 12-18 months because of COVID-19 and they need more funding to fully equip staff.

The organisation has begun forward planning and are planning for the summer, they have engaged with Parish Councils to inform what they can offer for the next 9 weeks. The aim is for the Purple Bus to be in two locations each day. As *there is only so much that can be done virtually, our Youth Leaders have been amazing.*

They still have some furloughed staff and some that need to shield and will continue to provide the virtual offering. Youth Club Leaders shielding, ends on the 1st August so will look at services again after this date. There will be a blended offering virtual and face-to-face going forwards.

By September they hope to be able to go back into the buildings, but this will be reviewed, and risk assessed to ensure compliance with Government guidance. Some of the buildings are in school sites and may be used as school rooms. If this does not work out, they will continue with the Purple Bus offer and do as much as they can.

“ Young people have lost schooling and friendships they just want to get back to some form of normal. ”

Looking forwards the Billingshurst unit has now had the building works agreed and a local builder appointed to make the building a safe space. It is hoped that by Christmas they will have access to the unit. They have funding in place for this project.

What are the concerns for the future, post COVID-19?

COVID-19 has intensified inequalities, such as young people having no access to support, *for example in North Chapple there is no bus service.*

Low income families tend to live in a smaller space and do not have access to IT, laptops, mobile phones and need food packages. They have been passed onto the local Community Hubs for extra support. The Lockdown has also taken it toll on parents too.



Many families are and will be affected by job loss and are not sure how they will cope. This can make the young person feel shame, as it may be *the first time, they have found themselves in this situation*. They may also feel they cannot discuss this with anyone, and this will impact in different ways.

They are hearing more mental health issues, especially as young people have not been able to go to school as for some, *this can be a relief from the home situation, which may be turbulent at best has been magnified by the Lockdown*. Previously, the young person would have spoken with a friend to *get things off their chest* but have been unable to do this. Self-harm is one area that has increased as the stress and anxiety increase and being in a negative environment.

Not going to school has also meant young people have no interaction with peers, friends, teachers, to support them and some are really struggling because of the lockdown.



We would really like to think that there will be an increase in partnership working between voluntary and community services/sector, statutory and local authority with better communication links and people not being overlooked and do more to support our young people.



Contact details

To learn more about Sussex Clubs for Young People, call **01273 443563**

Out of hours: 01273 420855

Email admin@sussexcyp.org.uk

Or visit their webpage <https://sussexcyp.org.uk/>



Horsham Voluntary Sector Support

The Voluntary Sector Support team works with charities, volunteers and community groups.

They:

- help new volunteers find opportunities
- make it easy for groups to find volunteers
- help new groups to get started
- offer mentoring and peer support
- run [events and training courses](#)
- help keep you up to date with our fortnightly newsletter. [Subscribe to newsletter here.](#)

Email volunteering@horsham.gov.uk or call 01403 215191 to speak to a member of the team.

We have a simple ambition at Healthwatch West Sussex...
to make local health and social care services better for
people that use them.



We are here to listen, take action and influence positive change for local people living in West Sussex.

We record what people tell us and share this anonymously with those who make decisions about our health and care services.

You can contact us in several ways:



Telephone - 0300 012 0122



Email - helpdesk@healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk



Website - www.healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk

You can also follow our social media channels to always be updated with the latest in health and social care news across West Sussex: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#).

If you have questions about the content of this update, please either call 0300 012 0122 or email cheryl.berry@healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk

