



# How a Community Organisation Adapted During the COVID-19 Crisis

August 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



The Olive Tree Cancer Support Centre is an independent charity providing a range of support services to cancer patients, their carers and families.



*Receiving a diagnosis of cancer is a difficult, stressful and emotional time for both the patient and those around them. We provide a range of services to support you from the point of diagnosis, through your treatment and beyond; in fact, for as long as you need us. You are not on your own, we can help.*

Marilyn Drury, The Olive Tree Centre



## What were the immediate challenges?

The Olive Tree Centre in Horsham open in September 2019, so is not well established. The team moved quickly to provide certain services virtually telephone and via Zoom. They also provided information and support to people who had been recently discharged by telephone and linked with local community support. However, *this was tricky as many had to close temporarily and it was difficult to know which ones remained open.*



They have a staff team of three and the office closed and staff moved to working from home. Their fundraiser continued to fundraise and one person was furloughed. They provided telephone calls to clients to offer support but found that so much of the work could not be done. They could not use their volunteers, as they needed to shield themselves or were not so good with IT.

Wellbeing contact was set up by email, newsletter, telephone conversations to encourage people to cook and eat, participate in online mindfulness and yoga etc. It has been very challenging as contact by telephone and then follow up with partners and other local organisations.



It has been hard for service users as not being able to support as we would have liked, so the social aspects were lost, but did point in direction of other services.



## How has COVID-19 affected their finances?

As The Olive Tree Horsham Centre is new, they are being funded by the Crawley Centre until able to be self-sufficient with own fund raising. They need to fundraise for IT, Personal Protective Equipment and other things not budgeted for prior to COVID-19. Macmillan have also been struggling with loss of funding as people are not donating as they use to.

Sussex Community Foundation have provided two grants, *which has been really amazing*. Applications have been submitted to Tesco Bags for Life, the Langley Trust and Crawley Borough Council. They had hoped to be able to *set up in Horsham over two years, but this will need three years to become self-sufficient*.



We are just keeping their heads above the water line.



## How have they begun to Forward Plan?

The Olive Tree Centre have begun to pick up on the threads they were working on prior to COVID-19 working with GP surgeries and carer organisations to support people.

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

The Olive Tree has a number of concerns as during Lockdown the NHS *closed*, and people have not been diagnosed with cancer in a timely way. They have seen an increase in demand especially for emotional support due to late diagnoses.

People have been told that they have secondary cancers, or they are at stage 4, because the NHS stopped all appointments.

Mental health issues across the board due to Lockdown and being more anxious, stressed and frustrated and *really need support and The Olive Tree cannot provide it* which makes it extra stressful for staff.

People are also scared to *go out of their homes*. People are social and being asked to shield for some 20+ weeks is contrary to that. This is also affecting younger people.



Staff need a break - you feel energetic and then realise how tired you are. Physically and emotionally it is a strain. Maybe we just need to smile at people more or just not lose that sense of humour. But it is hard.



## Contact details

To learn more about The Olive Tree, call **01293 534465**

Email [office@olivetreecancersupport.org.uk](mailto:office@olivetreecancersupport.org.uk)

Or visit their webpage <https://www.olivetreecancersupport.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](mailto: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](mailto:helpdesk@healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk)



Website - [www.healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk](http://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](mailto:cheryl.berry@healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk)

