



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 Phoenix Stroke Club
Supporting Stroke Survivors

The Phoenix Stroke Club is a club in Horsham for people who have suffered a stroke or other neurological disorder.



The Club supports stroke survivors by providing a range of stimulating activities that aim to restore confidence and improve communication and mobility. We meet four times a week in a safe environment, stroke survivors can receive both physical and mental exercise while getting support from others in a similar situation.

Mandy Jones, Manager Phoenix Stroke Club



What were the immediate challenges?

The Phoenix Stroke Club shut down in March, as many volunteers and members were part of the '*shielding*' group. They are not planning to re-open until November. This is due to a large building project taking place for the next 17 weeks.

No one has been furloughed, as there are only two members of staff, who have provided welfare calls to members. Initially, these *telephone calls were short but can now take up to an hour depending on needs*. The club has continued to support members, families and carers, as it is really important.



There has also been fortnightly member Zoom sessions and the *Thursday* Regular letters and cards are posted. The *Communication Group* has their own fortnightly Zoom meeting. Letters and cards are sent out regularly, especially for those with communication problems that struggle to speak on a telephone, as this helps to reduce isolation and people remain part of their community.

“ Our telephone calls have provided structure as the calls are on the same day they would have come in to the club. Members are extremely thankful for these calls, describing them as a life line. ”

How has COVID-19 affected their finances?

The main loss to income has been from the sessions, hire of hall and fees etc. This is a huge chunk of their annual income. A significant amount of their finance is ring-fenced for the much-needed building works. These building works will create an opportunity in the future to increase membership and provide a building that will be more fit for purpose.

They were successful in securing funding from Sussex Community Foundation and have a further six applications - *for day to day running costs* and to purchase new and furnishings and equipment they are waiting to hear about.

“ Our fundraising has been impacted and our first Zoom fundraiser raised £200. ”

As all of the grants for general grants closed and became COVID-19 ones, they could not apply for these as were not providing food shopping or collection of prescriptions. It would have been duplicated work as Age UK Horsham District were providing these types of services and all Phoenix Club members are over 50 years so could be supported by Age UK Horsham District.

They are not at a critical financial stage yet but do need to get some income coming in and be able to fundraise again.

Building works

The building works will increase the main room and provide a therapist room, hoist, toilets and more space for wheelchairs. This will make it more fit for purpose and more people will be able to join.

How have they begun to Forward Plan?

The impact of 'social distancing' will need to be managed within the Government guidance and risk assessed initially for current members and to be able to increase membership. They are fortunate that the building work are going ahead as this will enable them to increase membership in the longer term.

The investment made during the closure of the club by 1-2-1 engagement with members is reaping rewards - as the club and the relationship its new staff has with members has improved.



Been told *this is the only thing I look forward to and means the world to me.*



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

Apart for day to day financial concerns.

They do need Government COVID-19 guidance for '*day care provision*', to be able to open up again. Also, how to feedback concerns.

Mental health issues have increased. People are struggling many *feel positive* but missing children or grandchildren but have a positive overview of the world.

Stress and fear about what's happening, as some people did not know about COVID-19 and did become addicted to watching the news all of the time. This has increased the worry for some people as has the letters received from GP's about needing to *shield*. It would have been much better as a conversation and they could then be able to put appropriate coping mechanism and strategies in place.

Many people are struggling as life has gone one way and theirs stood still, they need a more rounded view of the world. Some feel fed-up generally, but the good weather has helped as all but four members have gardens, and this has been really positive.

The club has now been able to offer *one to one* garden visits to members as well as hosting a *coffee and chat* meet up at a local café area, for those who feel able to come out once a week for a couple of hours

Contact details

To learn more about The Phoenix Stroke Club, call 07446932068 or email manager.phoenix@btinternet.com

Or visit their webpage <https://www.phoenixstrokeclub.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



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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



How a voluntary organisation has adapted during COVID-19 - Case Study

