

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

September 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



Local Independent Centre for older people in Hassocks and surrounding villages...

“ We are a Local Independent Charity helping older people in this area for over 30 years. Our aim is to improve the lives of older people in Hassocks and the surrounding villages by providing a caring and friendly environment for all.  
*John Rose Chair* ”

## What were the immediate challenges?

Many of the members of Age Concern Hassocks are in their mid to late 80's, who come into the centre most days for socialising and dining. Initially they followed Government guidance, washing hands etc to ensure they kept staff and members safe.

Lockdown and subsequent closure of bus services meant the centre and charity shop also closed. Many of their volunteers have been keeping in touch with members by telephone.

“ Currently we have a lot of volunteers not doing anything. ”



## How has COVID affected their finances?

The organisation had to furlough staff and has been paying the requisite 20 % *but it may become more difficult to pay this once the Government changes the rules*. From August the Government will pay 60% of salary and the organisation *cannot afford* 40% and will ask staff to take the furloughed rate of pay.

They do have a legacy which is locked in corporate bonds and shares, which have crashed due to COVID-19, and if sold would have been at a loss. The good news is that the rates have begun to improve quite significantly. The closure of the charity shop is a big loss of revenue, as is a loss of people coming into the centre.

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The charity shop normally brings in around £18k annually.

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One thing the organisation is considering is to take out a Government loan from the HSBC as it is interest-free for a year.

Age Concern Hassocks has not been eligible for COVID-19 grants as they are “*not supporting people face-to-face but virtually and by phone to offer welfare checks*. We have received a retail shop grant.”

## How have they begun to forward plan?

The organisation has a small board and need to reevaluate if their model is right for the future. Getting younger board volunteers with managerial skills is difficult. *It would be good to get some new ideas*.

They have been working on a project to extend the shop area and entrances. Work has continued during lockdown, which will make it a little easier for staff and volunteers in the shop to social distance. They are working on ways to restart transport, and have volunteers and members return to the dining room.

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

Following social distancing rules is the main concern for the centre, particularly in the dining area as people come for a meal and to socialise. Normally the dining area sits 60-80 people and they tend to have 25-40 daily higher numbers if they are providing a roast dinner. People like to sit at the large tables so they can socialise, and social distancing may stop this.

## Contact details

To learn more about Age Concern Hassock: <https://www.achassocks.co.uk/>



*Supporting community action across Mid Sussex*

During this time of uncertainty, we have undertaken a range of different activities to support our members.

**General Enquiries:** 01444 258102

**Learn more from our website:** <http://www.msva.org.uk/>

**Admin Hub:** Delmon House, 36-38 Church Road, Burgess Hill, RH15 9AE

**Registered charity number:** 1158780

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)

