

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

November 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 Lithuanian Community of the South Coast is a non-profit organisation based in Portsmouth and Bognor Regis. Their aim is to keep and cherish Lithuanian traditions in the UK through the collective efforts of all community members and sponsors.

## What were the immediate challenges?

During COVID-19 all of the Lithuanian communities around the United Kingdom connected to translate the COVID-19 information from the Government website and continue to do this.

The Lithuanian Communities of the South Coast heard from many members some of the problems they were experiencing because of the nature of their work - mainly construction, hospitality, farms, and factories. As many members do not speak English well, COVID-19 presented a very challenging situation. They worked with members providing advice and signposting.

The Zoom platform opened up a *connection and an opportunity to meet and feel part of something*. The Zoom sessions ensured that members did not feel so *isolated and alone*, these online community meetings included parties and board games.

They supported with reading books online for children, *very much read for 40 minutes*. The virtual tours and excursions had over 100 adults attending. The tours covered Lithuania, Jewish museum and the genocide and holocaust museum and key people in Lithuania who fought for freedom. These have been very successful and has *given members a chance to join in* and these will continue.



Nothing really bad happened to the community we just missed each other.



## How has Covid-19 affected their finances?

As the Lithuanian Community of the South Coast do not have to pay premises rents etc. the financial effect of COVID-19 has been small. However, they lost the opportunity to fundraise.

One two-day family event was being planned for March 21<sup>st</sup> for around 1,000 people from all over the United Kingdom. The event was a commemoration, art exhibition and a concert, to mark 30 years of independence from the Soviet Union. This event had to be cancelled. However, in mid-July, a smaller event occurred with open air theatre with historic speeches, children's paintings in the woods and an open-air art gallery. Local Lithuanian artists performed in an outdoor concert; the audience were socially distancing on big comfy chairs. This was a *reduced event but amazing*.

They are hoping to be able to go ahead with the annual summer camps during the summer again socially distancing following the rules. They have not applied for any of the COVID-19 grants.



We have not applied for any of the Covid-19 grants as we fundraise within our community.



## How have they begun to Forward Plan?

The Lithuanian Communities of the South Coast are not in a hurry to open the language community schools until September in Portsmouth and Bognor. As COVID-19 means a few challenges need to be considered and overcome. They will ensure that they promote the main messages, keeping the areas clean, washing hands, and disinfect the toys. *This is not new, and part of their culture so normally do this anyhow.*

One thing that is unknown is how many people will come back to the centre, but this has to be an *individual decision*. Some Lithuanians have decided to go back to Lithuania to be close to family members and may not return. They do not believe their numbers will have a huge drop unless the COVID-19 situation gets worse.

## What support is needed?

They are unsure how many of their volunteers will return. They have found the support provided by Voluntary Action Arun and Chichester for volunteer training and risk assessments *very helpful and much appreciated*. All volunteers have been trained to complete the risk assessment and this means that people feel more responsible.

The Lithuanian Communities of the South Coast need qualified teachers to support their work on a self-employed basis. They also need volunteers to support with funding applications, policies, and form completion. As they would like to grow the organisation, they need *business planning and design* support, maybe a business mentor.



Our work during COVID-19 has been shown on national TV in Lithuania.



## Contact details

To learn more visit [www.gintareliai.co.uk](http://www.gintareliai.co.uk)

<https://www.facebook.com/lithuaniancommunityofsouthcoast/>

# Voluntary Action Arun and Chichester

Our role is to enable, support and promote VCS groups across Arun and Chichester.

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- We provide a Funding monthly e-newsletter, and our funding surgeries via zoom.
- We provide regular Networking and Training Events, see our e-bulletins and website for details.
- Our e-bulletin provides the latest information for the VCS.
- Volunteers - if you would like to advertise for volunteers please get in touch with [Jenny.holmes@vaac.org.uk](mailto:Jenny.holmes@vaac.org.uk) or go to our website to upload your information. <https://www.vaac.org.uk/volunteering>

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**You can contact us in several ways:**



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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](#).

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