

A statement to the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector –

**on behalf of Birmingham City Council,
Birmingham Children’s Trust and NHS
Birmingham and Solihull Clinical Commissioning
Group public service commissioners in the
light of the Covid-19 outbreak.**

1. This statement is issued by Birmingham City Council, Birmingham Children’s Trust and NHS Birmingham and Solihull Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) with the support of Birmingham Voluntary Service Council, and covers work with the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector that is funded by the three organisations.
2. The City Council, Children’s Trust and CCG are extremely thankful for all the extremely valuable work the VCSE sector is doing to help people across Birmingham to support each other during these difficult and unprecedented times. We know that the skill, energy and compassion of the VCSE sector is proving vital in keeping our communities strong and safe. We also recognise the huge pressure that this is putting on the sector’s staff, volunteers & budgets.
3. We recognise that the Covid-19 outbreak is an emergency that will have a profound impact on the VCSE sector both immediately and in the future. We know that the sector is facing significant operational and financial challenges as a result of the outbreak, and that these challenges have arrived alongside a spike in demand for services, and a potential reduction in staffing levels and fundraising capacity.
4. We want to reassure those of you in the VCSE sector that we stand with you during this period and beyond, and we are committed to working in partnership with you to find a way through the crisis. In addition to the progress we have already made by jointly founding the C19SupportBrum Partnership with your umbrella body Birmingham Voluntary Service Council, we want to explore a range of ways to support you to focus on your vital work of supporting some of the most vulnerable people in our communities.

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5. To support you in the coming months, we will therefore:

- Do everything in our power to protect your financial security – for example, by providing more regular or up-front payments of existing grants; and by ‘rolling over’ recurrent grants for next year without the need for formal applications;
- Aim, wherever possible, to extend contracts that are due for expiry over the next six months and we will continue to review this should the situation continue for longer;
- Extend recommissioning time lines for any existing services and work with the sector to agree appropriate time scales for future recommissioning;
- Continue to lobby central government about the vital work the VCSE sector is undertaking with all our communities, and about the support you need to do this, both in terms of funding and practical supplies such as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE);
- Be flexible in terms of our reporting and monitoring requirements, so that your time is freed up to focus on your frontline support efforts;
- Wherever we can, enable you to use your funding where it will have the most impact, whilst not tying you unnecessarily to previously agreed delivery targets or outcomes where these will get in the way of that flexibility. (Where this is not possible – because it is outside our control – we will tell you about this, and work with you to agree a sensible way forward);
- Maintain an open, honest and regular dialogue with you about the challenges you’re facing and invite you in return to be honest with us about the ways that we can help you. You can do this both directly and via your umbrella body (BVSC);
- Reconvene the Homelessness Partnership Board (and other relevant partnership structures) to include a focus on Covid-19 emergency response and recovery;
- Promote the work you’re doing to the wider public through our core channels to help garner additional support, recognition, and resources.

6. In return, we ask that you:

- Use your networks, your relationships with your communities, your expertise and your experience to provide us with good advice about what needs to happen to best support Birmingham’s communities in the wake of Covid-19;
- Keep us informed about any changes you make to your activity;
- Understand we are also facing severe pressures, with many similar demands on our finances and our time;
- Understand that we will get things wrong in these unprecedented times – but that we will act as quickly as we can to rectify any mistakes, and that we will welcome your support in doing so.

We want to finish by offering our sincere thanks again to everyone across the VCSE sector for everything you are doing. We couldn’t do it without you. We are standing shoulder-to-shoulder with you, and with the communities we all serve – and we know that together, we will get through this.



Dr Graeme Betts
Chief Executive (Acting) and
Director Adult Social Care –
Birmingham City Council



Andy Couldrick
Chief Executive –
Birmingham
Children’s Trust



Paul Jennings
Chief Executive –
NHS Birmingham and Solihull
Clinical Commissioning Group