

WAB

Time for flexibility

Covid-19 support for VCSE leaders

28 July 2020



It's a different thought process: 'Are they competent? Are they telling me the truth? Are they able to deliver this?'

In 2018, we published *The possible, not the perfect* with London Funders.



Every day in a community is an emergency. They don't have to have a tragedy or emergency to give money that way.

What funders did differently

- Commitment to speed
- Managing risk through relationships
- Collaborative delivery and delegated decision-making
- Light-touch application and monitoring
- Flexible funding

Between March and June 2020,
we've worked with and heard from:

45

Statutory
bodies

50

Trusts and
foundations

385

VCSE
organisations



Sources include...

- Online peer support sessions for VCSE leaders
- Community of Practice for learning leads in trusts/foundations
- Building Health Partnerships work supporting collaboration between commissioners and the voluntary sector

Six challenges leaders face

1. Welfare of workforce
2. Welfare of their service users
3. Continuity of service delivery
4. The organisation's survival
5. Funding landscape
6. Long-term impact of the crisis

Six ways they are adapting

1. Actively managing staff and volunteer welfare
2. Setting boundaries
3. Scenario planning
4. Working together
5. Listening
6. Talking to funders

Funders' emergency responses

- Appreciation of the flexibility shown by most (but not all): unrestricted income; reporting; reassurance
- Routine fundraising has ground to a halt; reserves being eaten away; hiatus with new applications
- Reliance on funders to weather crisis and adjust to whatever is needed for the future; worried about changes in funder's long-term priorities

From emergency into recovery and renewal: sustaining progressive practice

- Support for leaders
- Unrestricted funding and light-touch reporting
- Relationships: trust and risk
- Priorities and plans: clear; grounded; joined up; decisive; letting go of certainty
- Process: straightforward; flexible; sensible
- Expectations: realistic; proportionate
- Engagement with bigger questions, e.g. diversity, equality and inclusion; voice and advocacy
- Thinking about who you haven't heard from

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Learning review

- To capture and distil the key features and aspects of funder responses to the Covid-19 crisis
- To identify opportunities and practical options for longer-term adaptations and innovations to funding behaviours and processes



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