



West Midlands
Combined Authority



**Covid Keeps
Lessons Learnt from Lockdown**

“ Leadership exists when people are no longer victims of circumstance but participate in creating new circumstances ”

Peter Senge

Society for Organizational Learning

The Covid-19 pandemic gave us the opportunity to create new circumstances. And we did.

As we approach the second anniversary of lockdown, a time when the West Midlands, the UK and the world faced a challenge like none before, the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent national lockdowns. Some households were together 24/7, some individuals were isolated and alone, trying to work, learn, exercise and stay safe.

The pandemic has been extremely tough for all of us, whether we've personally suffered ill health from the virus, other physical or mental health issues, lost someone special, experienced financial hardship, disrupted learning or qualifications, or from the changes we have all had to make to our social lives to keep one another safe.

What emerged in lockdown were all kinds of everyday heroes. Heroes who developed vaccines; many who worked tirelessly in our critical care departments of hospitals and faced unprecedented demand and risks; key workers who had no option of 'working from home' to keep our essential services going, public services who innovated to keep operational;

and the grassroots groups which very quickly responded to the crisis averting catastrophe for many people. Truly, the innovation, collaboration and enterprise in the West Midlands in 2020 and 2021 was shown by every sector and every community.

As our communities and the services that serve them were adapting and innovating, the WMCA, and the Homelessness Taskforce was proactive in listening and learning. We provided space to capture the learning, but also to acknowledge and reflect on the enormity of the challenge.

This report summarises that learning and experience, and provides clear recommendations of how we harness and embed 'covid keeps', so that we can refocus, collectively, our service delivery and investment on the outcomes that matter most to local people.



Claire Dhami
Head of Public
Service Reform
and Prevention

A common reflection across the learning was how refreshing it was to focus on people's needs without being burdened by processes that simply couldn't meet the demands of the crisis. From individuals and grassroots groups through to public institutions, the value in remaking services to focus on collaboration and responsiveness was clear.

This doesn't mean that process is unimportant – far from it – but it gave everyone pause for thought on how to make space in 'normal' times for this way of working, on how to ensure that process serves outcome (and not the other way around).

The learning was predominantly taken from three pieces of research, commissioned by WMCA and the Homelessness Taskforce.

However, WMCA also collaborated with Greater Manchester Combined Authority, West Midlands Women's Voice and the Fawcett Society early on in the pandemic to explore the impact on women, and this learning was embedded in how the specific research was commissioned, as well as in other data and insight-driven work such as Health of the Region.

We know that at every level, from personal to global, the impact and legacy from the pandemic will impact on us for years, if not decades, to come. This report summarises the 'covid keeps'.

The best bits of transformation, innovation and creativity we want to harness and develop for our future recovery and 'new normal' in the West Midlands. The rest of this report will summarise and consolidate insight from:

- 1. Research into innovation and enterprise across the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sectors**
- 2. Research understanding the public service response and next steps**
- 3. Homelessness and Covid-19: Changes in perceptions and practice**

The Active Wellbeing Society (TAES), Birmingham

Rapid Funding of TAWS built a business plan for BCC, resulting in a £600,000 contract with Fareshare, with food to be distributed by TAWS and the network of #BrumTogether partnership, from early April. The Birmingham depot reached over 21,000 people every week, with unprecedented level of coordination between faith, voluntary and community organisations in the city.



Learning from lockdown:

Innovation and enterprise across the Social economy in recovery from Covid-19 in the West Midlands (October 2020)

We wanted to develop a deeper understanding of the response from mutual aid, faith and community groups, neighbourhood groups and the social economy to ensure that the value of that response can be harnessed for the long term. We had heard and experienced countless examples of innovation and enterprise and wanted to understand if there was commonality in the approaches each place or organisation had taken and if so, which could be replicated outside of a crisis. **Working in partnership with the University of Wolverhampton, Coventry University and Birmingham Voluntary Sector Council (BVSC) this research was undertaken in four phases:**

1

A rapid evidence review (of briefings, reports, guidance and publications).

2

Evidence gathering and identification of case studies of 'innovation, enterprise and flexibility' (over 30 interviews with 12 exemplar case studies identified).

3

Surfacing and co-produced synthesis of ideas for reconfiguration and rebuilding (a thematic analysis of the evidence, allowing for a rapid, emerging understanding of key trends and promising ideas and practice).

4

Learning, recommendations and short to medium term recovery (a working group of over 30 cross sector representatives shared, tested, and refined the key learning and co-developed the recommendations).

The standout finding from the research was the importance of rapid collaboration on mutual terms between community-focused civil society and social economy organisations and public agencies. The recommendations fall into three main themes: (1) The way we work - collaboration and beyond, with a key focus on rebalancing the relationship the public sector has with the social economy. (2) The way we deliver in a Covid-19 world focusing on opportunities, investment and inclusion. (3) The way we prepare supporting the proposal in the Comprehensive Spending review for a resilience fund to support the sector, capacity building and development of the social economy.



Learning from lockdown:

Learning from the system level Covid-19 response across the West Midlands Combined Authority (November 2020)

In the Spring of 2020, we saw, quickly, the types of transformation at a system level which public services have been striving for in many parts for decades. Many of those working practices we now take for granted. The ability to undertake meetings, lessons, board decisions, Court hearings and medical appointments virtually; becoming paperless overnight; prioritising sharing data and risks; cross agency, cross services collaboration with a shared focus; co-creation with communities.

We wanted to distil the system learning and implications arising from this practice, so that we could build on it thereafter, and use it to inform our priorities.

Collaborate CIC led this work which initially began with a listening exercise with interviews with over 20 regional partners, followed by a series of in-depth diagnostic and learning sessions and a series of co-production events. The research is underpinned by other learning and thinking undertaken by Collaborate CIC.

The report acknowledged the positives from the pandemic response in public services, including better use of technology and home working, widening relationships and stakeholders, less bureaucracy and reinforcing the reconnection to ‘purpose’;

It addresses shared understanding of system challenges such as a recognition of the ‘wicked’ issues which require systemic, regional and collaborative responses and talks to some of the challenges including the role of the WMCA, the geographies and scales at which these challenges are addressed, and system understanding.

It draws out activity which was helpful during Covid-19 but we don’t need to take forward, or have stopped doing and don’t want to restart, such as: bureaucracy or paternalistic relationships, areas to strengthen and grow, including citizen engagement, hyperlocal level delivery and regular and good quality communications; areas to restart, for example focusing on root causes and how we use technology; and issues we see in new ways for example reframing of digital inclusion and local care markets.

The report then addresses the role of the WMCA and its partners as well as some key challenges. Of the six key strands of community recovery, the authors perceived the WMCA were only seen by its partners as legitimate in Jobs & Training and Local Businesses and High Streets. The report concludes, by looking at the added value the WMCA could bring with some practical suggestions in terms of role, building system conditions and collaboration.



Learning from lockdown:

Homelessness and Covid -19:
Changes in perception and practice

Our ambition in the West Midlands is to ‘design out homelessness’. In lockdown, nationally, we have been able to make a significant impact on the numbers of rough sleepers with over 90% accommodated. The incredible efforts to get ‘everyone in’, and the system innovations which have been implemented, effectively ‘fast forwarded’ the provision. Support to our most excluded community gave us a platform to reimagine and redesign the landscape for systemic homelessness prevention in the region.

In May 2020, the WMCA Homelessness Taskforce submitted a position paper to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), which described the response to Covid-19 and the taskforce’s view on what should come next. This first paper was an attempt to capture, quickly, the efforts that had been put in place to get people safely off the streets.

BrowseAloud, Coventry

Adoption of innovative ‘BrowseAloud’ technology by the Building Bridges app to share and make accessible crucial health advice about COVID-19 for asylum seekers, refugees, migrants and communities with limited English language. Helping keep excluded communities safer.

Wear and Share project

A good example of identifying new needs, here food deliverers noticed that individuals and families lacked sufficient clothing: resulting in a collaboration between TAWS and various partners to provide clothing to vulnerable people. Aston Villa FC helped store clothes ready for delivery.

To follow on, ‘Homelessness and Covid-19: Changes in Perception and Practice’ was commissioned to capture any learning which would have implications in the long term – mostly focused on rough sleeping rather than homelessness more broadly.

To collect the data and insight, the WMCA Homelessness Taskforce carried out 20 semi-structured interviews with organisations and service providers across the region.

The report highlights how the pandemic radically altered priorities and created a shared ‘problem’. There are two main categories of learning: how partners worked together and how they engaged with citizens.

Recommendations include: reviewing data sharing agreements; learning from and further developing effective partnership working; co-location, cross agency client centred working; and delegated, swift and effective decision making.

Learning from Lockdown: Summary of Learning and Recommendations

We have grouped the recommendations from the learning undertaken into eight main categories:



Collaborative Leadership



**Policy, Process and Regulation
Serving Outcomes**



Nurturing Relationships



Space for Learning



Plan and Deliver in Partnership



Inclusive Services and Economy



**Collective Memory, Community
Voice and Citizen Power**



Funding and Investment



A key theme which emerged very early on in the pandemic was the ability to work across systems, collaboratively. Each partner being more attuned to the impacts of their actions on one another and more trusting in delegations to one another. **The specific recommendations are:**

- **Leadership:** The determination not to return to ‘command and control’ leadership; facilitate and enhance the work of the social economy, rather than control. From Innovation and Enterprise across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19 in the West Midlands (October 2020)
- **Collaboration and partnership working:** An assumption that the civil society and social economy sector is an equal partner. From Innovation and Enterprise across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19 in the West Midlands (October 2020)
- **The way we deliver in a COVID-19 world:** Creating opportunities for VCSFE groups, both formal and informal to build on recent experiences and energy and identify how organisations can continue to work together and support one another. From Innovation and Enterprise across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19 in the West Midlands (October 2020)
- **Work with and accept the geographical messiness of the region:** The WMCA area might not be the most important regional geography for the system actors you are working with.
- **Don’t waste energy on trying to simplify this, work with and accept it.** From Learning from the system level COVID-19 response across the West Midlands Combined Authority (November 2020)
- **Work with and accept the geographical messiness of the region:** Continue to build – and emphasise through both comms and practical action – the extent to which the WM is seen as a coherent system in which system actors play a role. From Learning from the system level COVID-19 response across the West Midlands Combined Authority (November 2020)

Many of these recommendations are for system actors as well as the WMCA directly. As an organisation we have hosted a number of roundtable discussions with partners in the VCFSE and are developing a proposal for a VCFSE resilience fund through our community recovery programme. A number of more recently launched initiatives on behalf of the WMCA are focusing on ‘going where the energy is’, and accepting the geographical messiness.



As the pandemic hit, communities saw an influx of volunteers and good will, with fewer 'strings' attached to report on impact and the flexibility to work with statutory and public services in a way not seen in the post-war era. Whilst the community engagement and level of volunteering locally we saw at the start of the pandemic has reduced, there remains clear evidence and a need for our commissioning processing and relationships with communities to enter a different mutual arrangement. **The specific recommendations are:**

- Getting the bureaucracy right: A clearer focus on determining the 'right level' of bureaucracy for a given situation. From Innovation and Enterprise across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19 in the West Midlands (October 2020)
 - Resourceful and resilient: Promotion of employment policy and practice that supports flexible working and actively encourages working-age people to volunteer. From Innovation and Enterprise across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19 in the West Midlands (October 2020)
 - Retain the best of the operational response to COVID: Continue to work at pace, streamline all bureaucracy. Ensure that all WMCA organised groups are focussed on getting stuff done rather than signing papers off. From Learning from the system level COVID-19 response across the West Midlands Combined Authority (November 2020)
 - Continue to build and invest in relationships: Continue to invest in and protect the progress that has been made in the pandemic relating to ways of working, deeper and wider relationships with new system actors, a more mature approach to risk, governance and bureaucracy. From Learning from the system level COVID-19 response across the West Midlands Combined Authority (November 2020)
 - Review and redevelopment of data sharing agreements between partners and service systems in line with the learning from the pandemic and in the context of GDPR from Homelessness and Covid -19: Changes in Perception and Practice.
 - Local partnerships and service systems to review and take relevant actions that maximise the potential for embedding delegation of decision making to frontline staff where it promoted better outcomes and innovation. From Homelessness and Covid -19: Changes in Perception and Practice.
- With our partners the WMCA are undertaking a governance review to ensure we operate lawfully but streamline our bureaucracy.





Nurturing Relationships

Investing in collaboration and nurturing relationships has been at the heart of the WMCA since its inception. The pandemic has highlighted the need for us to continue to step into the enabling and influencing space across the region, where we can, adding value to the excellent work already in place within localities. **Specific recommendations are:**

- Leadership: That the WMCA plays a role in supporting opportunities for leaders from within civil society and the social economy to meet, discuss and share information in a spirit of collaboration. From Innovation and Enterprise across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19 in the West Midlands (October 2020)
- Leadership: That the WMCA plays a role in supporting trust in civil society leaders; listen to their views, build in mechanisms to engage with them and trust that they will 'do the right thing' (as demonstrated throughout the crisis). From Innovation and Enterprise across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19 in the West Midlands (October 2020)
- Collaboration and Partnership working: The WMCA and its partners can play a significant role in this, building trust and confidence through promoting across the public service system and regular communication. From Innovation and Enterprise across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19 in the West Midlands (October 2020)
- The way we deliver in a covid world: That the WMCA and its partners could support the sector to do better by recognising and valuing the input of 'all voices' within the sector – including faith-based organisations - and ensure that they reach out to the less visible grass-roots organisations (acknowledging that many of these organisations are run entirely by volunteers and do not have the resource or capacity to engage in traditional ways). From Innovation and Enterprise across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19 in the West Midlands (October 2020)
- Staff wellbeing and resilience: The WMCA to develop a strategic relationship with well-being providers, such as the on-line tool HeadSpace or equivalent that can then be offered to staff in the sector at discounted rates. From Innovation and Enterprise across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19 in the West Midlands (October 2020)



Nurturing Relationships

- Retain the best of the operational response to COVID. Keep open the doors that COVID has forced open - but be flexible and guided by stakeholders. From Learning from the system level COVID-19 response across the West Midlands Combined Authority (November 2020)
- Keep communication open and regular: Not everyone is aware of the role of the WMCA but irrespective of this the Mayor's weekly communications are well received. It will be important to consider how communications and relationships can be maintained outside the immediate emergency and regular meetings associated with the height of the pandemic. From Learning from the system level COVID-19 response across the West Midlands Combined Authority (November 2020)
- Continue to Build and Invest in Relationships: Focus energy on bringing groups together so that they can focus on practical delivery. From Learning from the system level COVID-19 response across the West Midlands Combined Authority (November 2020)
- Continue to build and invest in relationships: The role of the WMCA isn't seen to be in this practical delivery, but in the convening, creation of a shared narrative and evidence base, lobbying and providing the space for system actors to come together. From Learning from the system level COVID-19 response across the West Midlands Combined Authority (November 2020)

As an organisation we have focused on our own wellbeing, through our business transformation programmes and our ways of working (return to Summer Lane) programmes we have, and will continue to focus on staff wellbeing. Within the 'Fairer, Greener, Healthier' workstream we are also piloting a wellbeing app.

Lockdown Lunches and Grow Your Own At Home, Wolverhampton

A rapid response by Hope Community, Heath Town, in the immediate weeks of the crisis, providing hot meals for the elderly, and ethnically diverse community, as well as a social connection and wellbeing check-in and support. In partnership with WMBC and WVSC.



Space for Learning

How we collectively move forward will depend on our ability to trust one another, reflect and learn. The unique ability of the WMCA to create space for shared learning and reflection was acknowledged through the research.

Specific recommendations are:

- Leadership: Affordable and accessible opportunities for leaders from across civil society and the social economy to further develop their skills. From Innovation and Enterprise across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19 in the West Midlands (October 2020)
- Staff well-being and resilience: WMCA commission training and capacity building for volunteers and small organisations who would struggle to fund this themselves. From Innovation and Enterprise across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19 in the West Midlands (October 2020)
- Staff well-being and resilience: WMCA to work with the sector to facilitate shared learning, training and capacity building amongst organisations, drawing on the expertise in areas including Adverse Childhood Experience (ACEs) and Psychologically Informed Environments (PIE) and other trauma-informed practice. From Innovation and Enterprise across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19 in the West Midlands (October 2020)
- Build time for shared reflection: System actors were keen to share their reflections and learning, it will be important to build these opportunities in going forward. From Learning from the system level COVID-19 response across the West Midlands Combined Authority (November 2020)

Together with a wide range of partners from both the public sector and the voluntary and community sectors, we have been successful in developing a new approach to system leadership across the region with our partners Koreo and Futuregov, The Young Foundation, LGIU, and New Local.

Faithful Friends network, Sandwell

A church-established multi-faith network using social media, YouTube etc. to provide a space for faith community engagement. This pre-existing work and, crucially, good relationships, facilitated rapid mobilisation in response to COVID-19 and excellent partnership with Sandwell Public Health to share key messages.





The way we work in partnership, for and on behalf of our citizens is critical to the success of the region. The complexity of the region and the intersectionality of issues experienced by our communities relies on our ability to unravel the complex nature of services and support.

Specific recommendations are:

- Collaboration and partnership working: Continued transparency and information sharing. From Innovation and Enterprise across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19 in the West Midlands (October 2020)
- Collaboration and partnership working: Developing and advocating commissioning frameworks (at a national, regional and local level) that encourage collaboration, rather than drive competition; recognising that those most vulnerable in our society often have multiple and complex needs that are best served by organisations working together. From Innovation and Enterprise across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19 in the West Midlands (October 2020)
- Hearing the voices – from communities and from those with lived experience: Incorporate this learning in a further development of the Faith Action Plan as a strategic framework for engagement between the faith communities, WMCA and the Mayor through the newly planned faith strategic partnership group. From Innovation and Enterprise across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19 in the West Midlands (October 2020)
- Matching demand and supply – a strategy for volunteering and social action: Exploring the development of a strategy for volunteering and social action, bringing VCS infrastructure organisations into a dialogue about how this can best be developed and supported. From Innovation and Enterprise across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19 in the West Midlands (October 2020)
- Mental health, wellbeing, skills and employment – and the disproportionate impact on those already facing inequality: Develop and facilitate proven Thematic Partnerships (as employed as part of the C19 Support Brum Partnership in Birmingham) that brings together leaders from across the civil society with particular areas of expertise (e.g. domestic violence, mental health, disabilities, homelessness) to support policy development. From Innovation and Enterprise across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19 in the West Midlands (October 2020)



- Co-create your future focus: If the WMCA has ambitions to convene and influence beyond the remit of the economy it will be important to prioritise where it focuses and to build legitimacy in these areas. From Learning from the system level COVID-19 response across the West Midlands Combined Authority (November 2020)
- Continue to pursue a shared agenda: Much of the success of the WM pandemic response has been due to a shared agenda with all partners pulling in the same direction. It will be critical to build on this sense of shared endeavour in relation to the WMCA's wider PSR ambition. From Learning from the system level COVID-19 response across the West Midlands Combined Authority (November 2020)
- Local partnerships and service systems to undertake reviews and take relevant actions that will maximise shared working, shared outcomes and cross boundary risk sharing. From Homelessness and Covid -19: Changes in Perception and Practice
- Local partnerships and service systems to review and take relevant actions that maximise the opportunities for embedding co-location and similar options that promote cross agency client centred working. From Homelessness and Covid -19: Changes in Perception and Practice.

We have revised our PSR ambitions and produced an impact report on how we have, and want to continue, to achieve a Fairer, Greener, Healthier West Midlands. We are increasingly seeing our role in some of the region's knottiest challenges, best delivered through growing our skills and competencies as a 'social innovation agency' at the heart of the region; building a 'social innovation offer' for local authorities, other public bodies, and the voluntary and community sector.

Food Justice Network

A result of TAWS' various activities, and renewed appreciation of underlying inequalities. The network aims to secure better food supply, bringing together food banks and other partners in #Brum Together, working together to identify lasting solutions to food poverty.

In the West Midlands almost half of our population either don't access the internet at all, or infrequently. Our digital divide was highlighted by the pandemic on a scale we had not known before.

Specific recommendations are:

- Digital is important, but it is not the panacea – face to face matters: Link the region to national digital inclusion strategies and initiatives; for example the DevicesDotNow initiative. From Innovation and Enterprise across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19 in the West Midlands (October 2020)
- Digital is important, but it is not the panacea – face to face matters: A regional digital inclusion strategy, which draws from the evidence from this research about the complexity of digital inclusion for marginalised communities. From Innovation and Enterprise across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19 in the West Midlands (October 2020)
- Digital is important, but it is not the panacea – face to face matters: Explore the opportunity for the WMCA to provide data packages to those experiencing data exclusion, in the same way that they provide the scratch off day travel passes to homeless people. From Innovation and Enterprise across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19 in the West Midlands (October 2020)
- Digital is important, but it is not the panacea – face to face matters: Developing comprehensive advice and guidance to organisations and employers on developing appropriate risk, health and safety measures - delivering services face to face in the safest way possible. From Innovation and Enterprise across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19 in the West Midlands (October 2020)

One example of how we have enabled inclusive services and economy is through our community recovery work. We have established a Coalition for Digital Inclusion, this is a genuine partnership space for sharing best practice and working together to achieve a shared goal. Through collaborative conversations across the region's we have been able to secure funding to enhance our regions capacity to improve digital inclusion.





Our community recovery work was initiated by a Citizen's Panel. This instigated an analysis of the region's work to recover from Covid-19 and identified 41 examples of good practice, 27 shared ambitions for recovery, 29 asks of government, 14 initial areas for future collaboration. Of the asks of government, over £2bn of these were set out in the WMCA Recharge the West Midlands prospectus for transport, affordable housing and skills programmes. A further £203m was requested for programmes of work directly associated with community recovery on issues such as digital inclusion, radical health prevention and access to green spaces.

Specific recommendations are:

- The way we deliver in a COVID-19 world: Recognise that not all parts of the response will need to be sustained indefinitely, but could be reactivated quickly if needed (for instance mutual aid groups); supporting other kinds of organisations to work with them productively in future. Maintain a 'collective memory' of how this response could be co-ordinated. From Innovation and Enterprise across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19 in the West Midlands (October 2020)
- Hearing the voices – from communities and from those with lived experience: Agreeing and promoting minimum levels of participatory practice. From Innovation and Enterprise across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19 in the West Midlands (October 2020)
- Hearing the voices – from communities and from those with lived experience: Further development and expansion of the Citizen's Panel to ensure voices of those from marginalised groups are included; using the sector who already engage regularly as a conduit to accessing appropriately supported individuals with lived experience. From Innovation and Enterprise across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19 in the West Midlands (October 2020)

Everyone In, Birmingham

Unprecedented collaboration between MHCLG funding, Birmingham City Council and homelessness charities to bring rough sleepers off the streets – over 70 people had been placed in temporary accommodation by April. Based on very strong existing relationships but also “everyone just dropped their own boundaries and just focused on the need.”



- Retain the best of the operational response to COVID: People are tired but it will be important that the WMCA is prepared to energetically stand regional and systems back up in the face of a second wave. From Learning from the system level COVID-19 response across the West Midlands Combined Authority (November 2020).
- Sustain citizen focus: Through the pandemic there are significant examples of the system being better able to focus on the needs of residents, and some examples of a shift to community power. It will be important that these are sustained. From Learning from the system level COVID-19 response across the West Midlands Combined Authority (November 2020)

We are continuing to enhance our approach to collective memory, community voice and citizen power. We have a number of existing approaches to ‘listening’ to communities, and we are working to develop a community of practice to offer a framework for us to operate within. Examples of how we have learnt from this research and implemented change can be evidence through the Young Combined Authority, our Include Me Citizen’s Panel and our developing work on the Race Equalities Taskforce.

Boost My Happy grants for digital inclusion

As part of their effort to shift their work to online, St Basil’s secured funding from Land Aid to encourage Young People engaged with their service to ‘Boost their Happy’ through purchases of laptops or tablets, enabling the service to work more digitally and creatively.

Erdington Neighbourhood Network Scheme – Mutual Aid collaboration:

Erdington NNS liaised with local churches and community organisations able to support individuals with bereavement, including discussing ways to continue providing services remotely. Some of Erdington NNS-funded assets have provided support services such as bereavement counselling, and the creation of a ‘Bereavement Café’. They also created an Emergency Asset Register, a directory of support organisations for front-line workers, and identified service gaps.



Funding and Investment

The WMCA launched a Social Economy Taskforce which set its ambition in 2019 to double the size of the social economy in £'s by 2029. The way we shape our investments is a key element of our Inclusive growth programme.

Specific recommendations are:

- The way we deliver in a COVID-19 world: Invest in strengthening infrastructure support for the sector, perhaps particularly in its traditional but much neglected role in promoting and supporting volunteering. From Innovation and Enterprise across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19 in the West Midlands (October 2020)
- The way we deliver in a COVID-19 world: Investment in community development that builds on the learning from COVID-19 – creating stronger, more connected communities that are then well placed to respond to future crisis. From Innovation and Enterprise across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19 in the West Midlands (October 2020)
- The way we deliver in a COVID-19 world: Introducing a Regional Stabilisation Fund for civil society and the social economy to support recovery and ensure work can continue. From Innovation and Enterprise across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19 in the West Midlands (October 2020)
- The way we prepare: Consider developing a more accessible funding mechanism for very small grass roots organisations and social enterprises to support local level activity. From Innovation and Enterprise across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19 in the West Midlands (October 2020)

One example of current activity is that we are currently developing Social Economy Clusters, based around anchor institutions in localities. We will make small investments for them to develop place-based investment plans with other local organisations to secure investment, procurement opportunities and access to other market opportunities.

Auriga, West Midlands

Adapted rapidly to both the requirements of working online and maintaining service continuity, while addressing new needs including immediate financial assistance, and particularly the complexities facing particular groups such as young carers and health conditions.



For further information about this report, please contact:
Claire Dhami, Head of Public Service Reform and Prevention
claire.dhami@wmca.org.uk



West Midlands
Combined Authority