**Minutes of the Redbridge Voluntary Sector Network – 27th May 2020**

**Present**:

Chris Merritt, Redbridge Forum

Kate Harrison, One Place East

Andrea Thorogood, Haven House Children’s Hospice

Jon Pushkin, Redbridge Music Lounge

Edith Galliers, Redbridge Council

Jo Stuckey, Imagine Independence

Cathy O'Keeffe, Redbridge Carers Support Service

Andrew Viggers, Woodford and Wanstead Migrant Support

John Cooke, Redbridge Council

Colin Wilson, RedbridgeCVS

Binal Patel, RedbridgeCVS

**Voluntary and Community Groups Updates**

All attendees give a short update on what their organisation experiences are and the support they are providing their members during the coronavirus pandemic.

**Colin Wilson, Information Officer, RedbridgeCVS**

Colin goes through some of the possible options of technology groups could use below to adapt their service and help them communicate with their members during the pandemic:

**Telephone trees** is a basic technique that can help groups to keep in touch with their members quickly and efficiently. For example, the first person calls three people to deliver a message. Those people then each call a further three people. This is then repeated by those people and so on until the message spreads to everyone who needs to know.

**Conference calls** - these calls can be arranged through your computer or smartphone and could be a good option for groups where not all service users have a smart phone. People can easily join a conference call by ringing in and entering a pin to join the call where you are charged at your standard call rate for. Also many systems are available and can be found by typing “Free conference calls” into your bowser or you can use the system PowWowNow.

**Applications -** some of the most regularly used applications on smartphones are:

* **Facebook-** allows you to share photos and videos from your smartphone. Within Facebook there is a feature called Facebook Groups where private or secret group can be set up to allow for privacy. As well you can broadcast meetings from Facebook Live.
* **WhatsApp -** can be used to keep in touch with multiple people at once where you can send messages, images and video to one another.

**Video Call Systems -** Both Zoom and Microsoft Teams are commonly used free systems that can be accessed through a computer or a smartphone. Within your call you can take advantage of some system features such as text chat, present materials and share documents for example.

**Gathering Information -** when collecting information from residents or from your members you can use tools such as SurveyMonkey, Google Forums or Microsoft Forms – part of Office365. However groups should be mindful of data protection when collecting this information.

Some additional technology tips and information can be found [here](https://www.redbridgecvs.net/news/keeping-touch-some-simple-technology-tips.) for groups to take a look at.

Colin would like to hear feedback from groups on how useful this information on technology was to make a guidance document for groups who are new to technology. Email Colin if you have suggestions on what else could be useful for inclusion or any feedback to Colin@redbridgecvs.net.

**RedbridgeCVS - Updates**

Colin gives the group a brief overview and a reminder of how RedbridgeCVS are able to support groups at present and what support is available:

* We are continuing to provide information on our website and send out eNews weekly. If you want to share any news or information with other groups or residents please email Colin on Colin@redbridgecvs.net.
* Shaweb Ahmed the Funding and Development Officer is available to assist groups with their funding applications. As well support groups in how they function and give assistance to negotiate with their current funders. To get in touch with Shaweb to receive guidance and support to raise funds email shaweb@redbridgecvs.net.

**John Cooke, Policy Project Lead, Equalities and Communities, Redbridge Council**

John mentioned three areas of work being done around the pandemic:

**Redbridge Social Action Fund -** this new grant was launched on Friday by the council. Not for profit groups working with those affected by the Covid-19 Crisis in Redbridge can apply for small grants of up to £1,000. The first round of assessments will take place on the 5th of June and after this initial deadline further opportunities are available to bid every two weeks. Fortnight assessments will be completed till the end of July till the funding runs out. Further information about the fund is available on their [website.](https://engagement.redbridge.gov.uk/strategy/redbridge-social-action-fund)

**Looking into peoples lived experiences** - Work is being done through volunteer researchers to find out peoples lived experience during the Covid-19 Crisis by asking local people in their neighbourhood. Secondly through an [online survey](https://engagement.redbridge.gov.uk/strategy/covid-19-redbridge-resident-survey) groups and Individuals experiences will be captured. The results will be used to inform response efforts and identify ways in which we can all work together to make things better for people in Redbridge.

**Walking and Cycling-** within the borough there has been a large increase in the amount of people walking and cycling during the pandemic. The council see the potential to continue and incorporate this long term. They will be doing work around this area by collecting further data down the line. John would like to hear from groups that are currently doing work or want to talk about the issues around this subject. To contact John email him on john.cooke@redbridge.gov.uk

**Funding:** Chris Merritt from Redbridge Forum asked whether this fund would be available to new groups? John responded that the minimum they would need to distribute any funding is a bank account with two signatures that is not a personal bank account. He suggested for new groups to apply with their idea as the Council and RedbridgeCVS can help look into getting that governance in if their idea gets accepted.

**Other Business**

Andrew Viggers from Woodford and Wanstead Migrant Support mention they do NRPF applications – these are applications to lift the restrictions for access on public funds as many vulnerable migrants have this condition on their visa. If you want to refer someone for these applications please email contact@wwms.org.uk.

Cathy O'Keeffe from Redbridge Carers Support Service mentions it is Carers Week between 8th June – 14th June. They have put together a programme with events to raise awareness of carers to professionals and to offer support and advice to carers in Redbridge.

* Online Wellbeing Workshop - on maintaining your wellbeing under stress and developing practical coping skills on Tuesday 9th June between 11am–12 noon.
* Remote Advice Surgery for Carers on Tuesday 9th June & Thursday 11th June, 10 am–3 pm.
* Carers Awareness Training for Professionals - a session for professionals on best practice in identifying and supporting carers on Friday 12th June between 10 am–11.30 am.

If you are carer or a staff member who work with carers and are interested in taking part please email office@rcss.org.uk or Cathy on c.okeeffe@rcss.org.uk.