Minutes of the Redbridge Voluntary Sector Network – 5 August 2020

# Present

Andrea Thorogood, Haven House Children’s Hospice

John Cooke, Redbridge Council

Alan Jaye, [Ilford & District Indoor Bowls Club](https://beta.companieshouse.gov.uk/company/01793193)

Karen Kent, Redbridge Faith Forum

Sharon Grundy, One Place East

Jan Scott, Saint Francis Hospice

Jo Stuckey, Imagine Independence

Linval Walker, POhWER

Andrew Viggers, Woodford and Wanstead Migrant Support

Cathy O'Keeffe, Redbridge Carers Support Service

Sue Grant, Redbridge Carers Support Service

Diana Neslen, Redbridge Equalities and Community Council

[Rani Bhamrah, ASNet London](https://www.arthritis-selfhelp.org/rani-bhumra/)

Hameeda Saeed, Children Centre LBR

Luljeta Nuzi, Shpresa rogramme

Marion Dodgson, Action On Hearing Loss - The Sensory Services Centre

Carol Ellison, Learning and Development LBR

Clare Walters, Out of School Settings LBR

Jenny Ellis, RedbridgeCVS

Shaweb Ahmed, RedbridgeCVS

Colin Wilson, RedbridgeCVS

Binal Patel, RedbridgeCVS

Apologies

Ann Garrard, RedbridgeCVS/Ilford Shopmobility

# Voluntary and Community Groups

Attendees of the meeting introduce themselves to the group and briefly explain how their organisation is currently doing with technology.

Luljeta Nuzi, Chief Executive Officer, Shpresa Programme

Luljeta provides the group with background information on Shpresa Programme. They work with asylum seekers, refugees and migrants who come from Albania, Kosova, Macedonia, Italy, Greece and Bulgaria.

They engage with the Albanian community to provide a number of different services to promote heritage and culture, women’s support group/parenting and volunteering projects which encourage and gives tools to people to find employment.

Luljeta explained Shpresa Programme’s work revolves around building relationships and helping people to feel less lonely and isolated, getting people out of the house and in to the centre where they can feel part of something. They work with a lot of Albanian speaking people who have a number of difficulties such as language barriers and lack of finances. This means they would have limited access to phones or data during the pandemic making them feel further isolated.

Luljeta went on to share Shpresa Programme journey on digitalisation and mentioned what they did in order to adapt to Covid-19:

* They raised funding through a Justgiving page to provide 120 people with unlimited data. This enabled them to access support through applications like Zoom, such the English classes and mental health support.
* The staff had no facility to work on the move or from home, so they made sure each member of staff had access to computer, phone and data from home.
* They already had Office 365 this meant all the documents on the computer at the office could be accessed through Onedrive from home.
* They built relationships quickly within teams by setting up WhatsApp groups for teams and a separate one for the Board of Trustees and for each service they provided.
* They asked their current funders if any of them could cover the cost of Zoom licences. They bought 10, one for each project. They found this simplified coordinating Zoom activities.
* To help users that couldn’t access Zoom they have befriender volunteers who communicate what is happening via WhatsApp.
* They recruited English speaking befrienders to have daily phone calls in English especially with young people, having everyday conversations to help them not to forget what they have learnt in schools.
* They were able to move QuickBooks online, which meant their Finance Worker could access all their files at home.

Luljeta explained they have seen benefits despite being forced to digitalise because of Covid-19. Putting their services online has meant people from Bradford, Liverpool and Glasgow can access their women’s support group, English classes and volunteering and training opportunities. They have decided to make accessing their services online a permanent feature to continue reaching people outside of London. To help support this they have set up a steering group made up of users from different walks of life, from people who can’t speak English to people who do not have access to the internet.

They consulted with 250 users, partners, businesses and Albanian businesses to look at how they can develop an app to help give Albanian speaking people access to more information. They are in the stage of looking for a partner to develop an app with. Luljeta mentioned that their Board of Trustees saw the benefits and agreed to look at their business plan to see how they can implement this as part of their core services.

Colin Wilson, Information Officer, RedbridgeCVS

Colin ran through a PowerPoint presentation with the group to share information on Microsoft 365 which was previously known as Office 365. He mentioned it is one of the useful tools when working on line or “in the cloud”.

Colin explained that voluntary and community organisations work in a variety of different locations such as offices, homes, coffee shops and in the community providing outreach. This means that an organisation’s data needs to be kept in various different places depending on where they are based. The two kinds of computer networks that are commonly used to share information and resources within an organisation are:

**Peer to peer network** - this is where you have a number of computers in the office that share information between them.

**Client/Server network** - is where you have a server, (a big powerful computer) which centralises everything and where your data is kept. The server also manages things such as who can log on and what they can access.

Colin explains that RedbridgeCVS and many other organisations are moving to the alternative solutions such as of having data in the cloud. Reasons for this include:

* With a peer to peer network there is no central control, so it’s harder to manage passwords or close an account when a member of staff leaves. Also data can be stored on all of the different computers meaning you may not know where anything is.
* With a client/server network having a server is expensive and you will need technical support.
* Both of these computer networks require you to do backups – often these get forgotten.
* Accessing information from outside the office can be quite difficult - solutions like Remote Desktop can be cumbersome.

Storing data in the cloud allows you to access and manage your documents from outside the office via the internet. With the cloud you can manage who can log on to the system, manage security and set up automated backups where Internet-based systems back up your data.

Microsoft 365 is a way of getting access to Microsoft Office applications in the cloud. You can access Word, Excel, Powerpoint, Outlook, Publisher, Teams, Yammer, OneNote and Sway. The other benefit is, you can have emails that use your domain name for example in our case this is Redbridgecvs.net this would make it a lot more professional than having Hotmail or Gmail account. Also there is flexibility to pay per user per month or per user per year which means if you lose funding you can reduce the number of staff that have access to it. RedbridgeCVS pay £3.80 per user per month for Microsoft 365 from [Charity Digital](https://www.charitydigitalexchange.org/), an organisation which gets donated software from software companies and gives it out to charities at a discounted rate.

For smaller organisations without any or much income there is a free option of Microsoft 365 available from Charity Digital and it would allow you to do the following:

* Gives you access to web versions of Microsoft Office – however, this would not include apps to install on your computer.
* One terabyte of storage – which is a lot – as part of the subscription.
* You can set documents to synchronise back and forth from the cloud to your laptop or your phone this means you have got access to your most important documents from anywhere, even if you can’t get online.
* You can keep your data secure by setting up multi-factor authentication. This mean that to log on you need to enter your password and also a code that is sent to your mobile phone.
* The downside is, you require internet access and if your broadband goes down you may not be able to complete your work.

Colin confirmed with the group they would find it useful for him to create how to guides related to Microsoft 365 on different areas, such as how to allow your staff different levels of access to the organisation’s data.

Other Business

Carol Ellison wanted to let groups know the London Borough of Redbridge are relaunching their Redbridge Learning Collaborative. This is a platform for their stakeholders and volunteers within Redbridge. They are offering 6 month free training from September 2020 for organisations, staff and volunteers. If you are interested please email learning.development@redbridge.gov.uk, and in the subject type in - RLC Membership.