Minutes of the Redbridge Voluntary Sector Network – 8 July 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)

Bob Hayter, [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

Sandra, Grace Organisation

Tania Nogueira

Clare Walters, Out of School Settings

Wendy Taylor, Ilford Sunday Drop In

Jenny Ellis, RedbridgeCVS

Colin Wilson, RedbridgeCVS

Binal Patel, RedbridgeCVS

# Voluntary and Community Groups

Attendees of the meeting one after another introduced themselves to the group and briefly explained where and how things are with their organisation at the moment.

Colin mentionedminutes and materials from previous meetings are available on the RedbridgeCVS website, this includes the draft guidance on reopening work premises and PowerPoint slides presented by Ian from Public Health in the last meeting. To view these go onto our website and select “What we do” from the menu bar then “Network and partnerships” and lastly select “Voluntary sector network” or click [here](https://www.redbridgecvs.net/what-we-do/networks/voluntary-sector-network) to view these.

Colin Wilson, Information Officer, RedbridgeCVS

Colin has attended different forums and networks on whether to go back to the office and how this would be possible, he shared this guidance and advice with the group below:

**Stakeholders**

Colin explained there is a need to balance various interests and stakeholders. To incorporate this many organisations are doing staff surveys to find out how staff are finding working from home, whether they are keen to come back to the work premises or perhaps nervous to return. He mentioned it is important to discuss with staff who manage projects to see if they are able to meet targets set by funders while they are working from home. Many funders have become more flexible therefore it may be worth speaking with funders to negotiate on how you could deliver your projects. Shaweb from RedbridgeCVS could also help your organisation speak with your funder about this.

**Looking at going back**

Organisations would need to think about who would be going back and how they can make this work.One starting point would be by surveying staff and volunteers and in smaller organisations this could be done informally. In larger organisations, the approach could be asking staff to voluntarily come back to the office, as there are varied opinions amongst employees on returning. Much of the advice and suggestions have pointed towards going back to the work premises slowly, in stages and in a blended return. For example in the London Plus meeting a community based architect suggested to start off with 10 percent of your staff and then build up till you have a third and then to continue from there and reassess the situation at each stage.

**Working From Home**

There arepracticalities you need to address as an employer – these are important as organisations have a responsibility to their staff, and this includes staff who work from home. If you decide to surveystaff you can include questions to see how working from home has been for your employees. Make sure staff working from home who have a laptop are working safely by looking at factors such as the position of the keyboard and screen for example. A checklist can be found on the [Health and Safety Executive website](https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ck1.pdf) to assess your employees’ workstations. If staff are working from home It is important to keep communicating effectively with them and keep them involved in any changes within your organisation. Some organisations have started doing virtual coffee mornings for staff to socialise together.

**Equalities**

Equalities in terms of staff, volunteers and service users need to be considered. There are groups of people that are more vulnerable to the virus and also have more serious outcomes. These include the following:

* BAME people
* Older people
* Carers and people living in multigenerational households

**Assess Risk**

The guidance from the government still says you should work from home if possible and be two metres apart if possible. The change to the rule is, if you cannot be two metres plus you need to be at least one metre while taking mitigation measures seriously, such as putting screens up in the workplace or wearing masks.

You must do a risk assessment before going back to your work premises. Think how infection might take place and what you could do to stop this happening. Once the assessment is complete it is important to share this plan with trustees and staff and have everyone agree to the measures put in place.

**In the office**

An approach to start with when you are first returning to the office is to look at maximum occupancy to see how many people the office could hold if you are sitting two metres apart. The other things you can do are; put up signs on walls and floors, do regular cleaning especially in high touch areas such as door handles, remind staff they should be regularly handwashing and try to keep doors and windows open as much as possible (fire doors must remain closed).

**Visitors**

It is important to think about people coming to visit the office as this could increase the chances of infection. You could prioritise who can visit your premise and whether people need to ring in advance. Gradually the number of visitors can increase if things go well. Keep records for 21 days for anyone who visits your premises for the purpose of track and trace – if someone who has visited becomes ill, you can work out who they have come into contact with.

**Getting to the office**

Many people use public transport to get to work and travel during rush hour when it is extremely busy. Consider other possibilities, such as staggering your employees working hours.

If your office is in a building with other offices you will have to think about shared space for example how often would the stairs need to be cleaned and how many people can use the lift? These issues should be agreed with the people that run the building.

There is lots of guidance available on the following websites:

* [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)
* [London Plus](https://londonplus.org/guides/covid-19-resources-for-londons-charity-sector)
* [RedbridgeCVS](https://www.redbridgecvs.net)

RedbridgeCVS will be sending out a surveys in the next few days to hear what your organisation is doing. The results of the survey will be published on our website.

Other Business

Redbridge Faith Forum can help promote your group’s local community event both through their website and in their monthly eNews bulletin. Email [faith.forum@redbridge.gov.uk](mailto:faith.forum@redbridge.gov.uk) to send them your event information or if you would like to be added to their mailing list.

John Cooke from Redbridge Council highlighted that the council have started a campaign and petition under the banner of Stronger Together. They want to get the government to keep their promise of repaying the funds that the council have used during the Coronavirus pandemic to keep communities safe. After calculating the total amount spent In Redbridge, this comes to over £60.5m of which the government have only repaid just £15.7m, leaving a gap of £45m. For more about the campaign and to sign the petition click [here](https://www.redbridge.gov.uk/about-the-council/stronger-together/).