

POP+ June 2020 Survey report

These are the results from the second survey POP+ has carried out with the Plymouth Voluntary, Community and Social enterprise sector. Some other complementary findings:



1. [Locality report “We Were Built for This”](#)
2. [Devon Community Foundation’s report “Roads to Renewal”](#)
3. [New Local Government Network’s report “Communities vs. Coronavirus: The Rise of Mutual Aid”](#)

All this early intelligence spells out one very clear message:

“Communities, charities, social enterprises have not only innovated and adapted through some very tough times, they have been VITAL to the crisis response to the coronavirus outbreak”

And yet, in POP+’s opinion, they have not been given the recognition, financially or through other support by our national government.

“We need to recognise and accept the importance of this amazing capacity we have to enhance the social, health and economic foundation upon which our society is dependent. To recognise and accept, we need to support and build. And to do that we must look at how power and control are exerted, because to unlock the power of community, we need to #LoseControl.”

Ultimately someone somewhere must relinquish the control they hold. Recognising that this does not come easily, POP+’s is working on how we build a collaborative ecosystem where behaviours such as listening, generous leadership, facilitation, collective and participative decision making abound. POP+ believes the way we use finance creates the structures, constraints and incentives within which we operate so if we want to see a shift we only have to examine and redesign how money is used. At all levels:

Social economy. At the macro level we must ‘socialise’ our economic engine houses. We must expect to see social enterprise, cooperative structures by default.

- POP+ is in full support of the work of Plymouth City Council, Plymouth Social Enterprise Network and RIO to move Plymouth in this direction.

Grant funding. The model of grant giving has barely changed for decades. We need to create a collaborative-by-default system.

- POP+ is experimenting with participatory mechanisms of decision making to test whether this creates a collaborative, not competitive system of grant giving.

Community infrastructure. We need to fund high quality support, participatory forms of community infrastructure and crucially community development/catalysing to be able to grow community strength. How we fund this cannot solely be based on ‘tenders’, ‘applications’ or formalised groups.

- POP+ has started to build an innovative neighbourhood infrastructure, Plymouth Neighbourhood Care Networks with digital technology at the centre and participation at the heart.
- POP+ is experimenting with a form of finance, Street-to-Scale, that builds and cascades trust throughout groups of citizens.
- POP+ also provides a high quality capacity building service to maximise finance flowing into the Plymouth VCSE sector.

Plymouth survey results

About the sector: The sector is diverse. Organisations with turnovers under £10k are most likely going to rely on traded income. Medium sized organisations are more likely to have a more diverse income base.

Survey results: The short to medium term is the most financially worrying period for all organisations. Organisations with turnovers under £10k are most likely going to be most worried about income and not have benefited from government support. Organisations under £100,000 have benefited from the largest range of government support.

From the written responses there is a clear narrative emerging:

- There is a strong sense of the benefit of togetherness. Together we have responded. Together we have supported people to adapt. And together we have supported one another.
- We have highly valued and capable staff, volunteers and leaders who have shown adaptability to changing circumstances.
- We are seeing a negative impact on mental health, isolation and loneliness.
- We have seen many benefits in working more flexibly and using digital tools, but we also miss face to face contact.
- We are worried about funding and finance.
- We need support to think through how to get back to 'normal' safely.

POP+ response

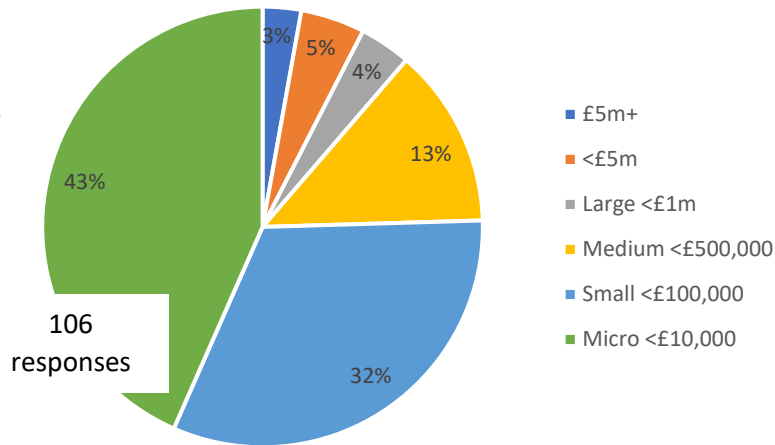
- Re-opening safely sessions
- £30k collaborative funding process & pot
- Continue to provide 1:1 support & enabling accessing government and funders support
- Seeking further recognition for the small organisations
- Scheduling regular tech upskilling sessions

The questions arising for the future:

- What enabled the flexibility? How do we retain and learn from this?
- How can funding be used to promote this flexibility?
- How can we get much better at supporting organisations with under £10k turnover?

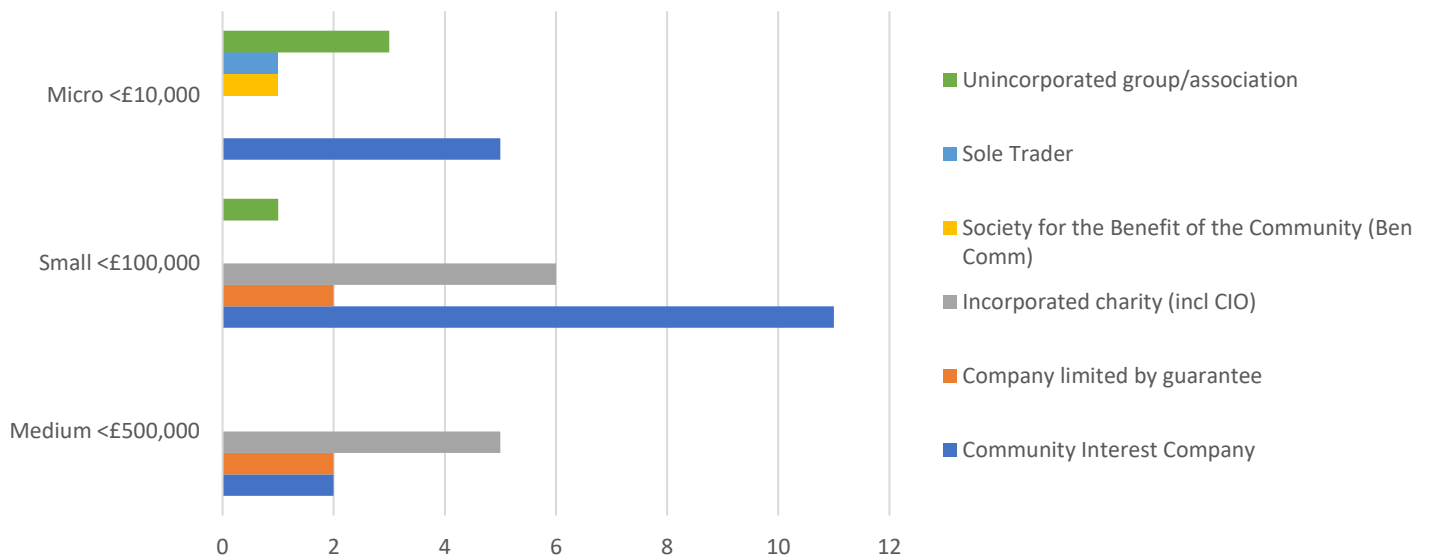
Organisation size

Respondents



This report focuses on responses under £500k

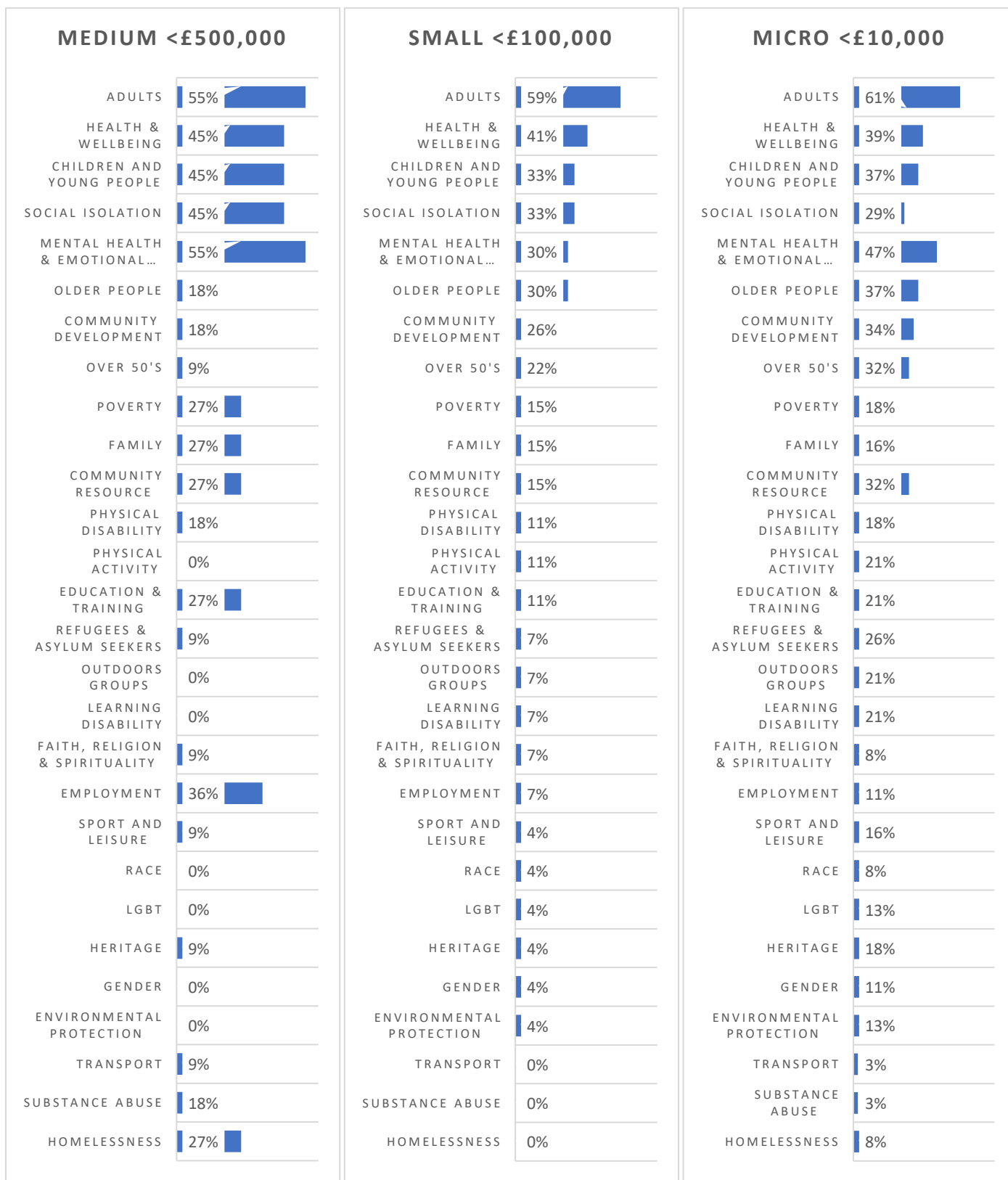
Legal structures



Observations

- Many of the micro organisations are CICs and unincorporated, small organisations are CICs and charities, medium organisations are generally charities.

Beneficiaries and impact areas

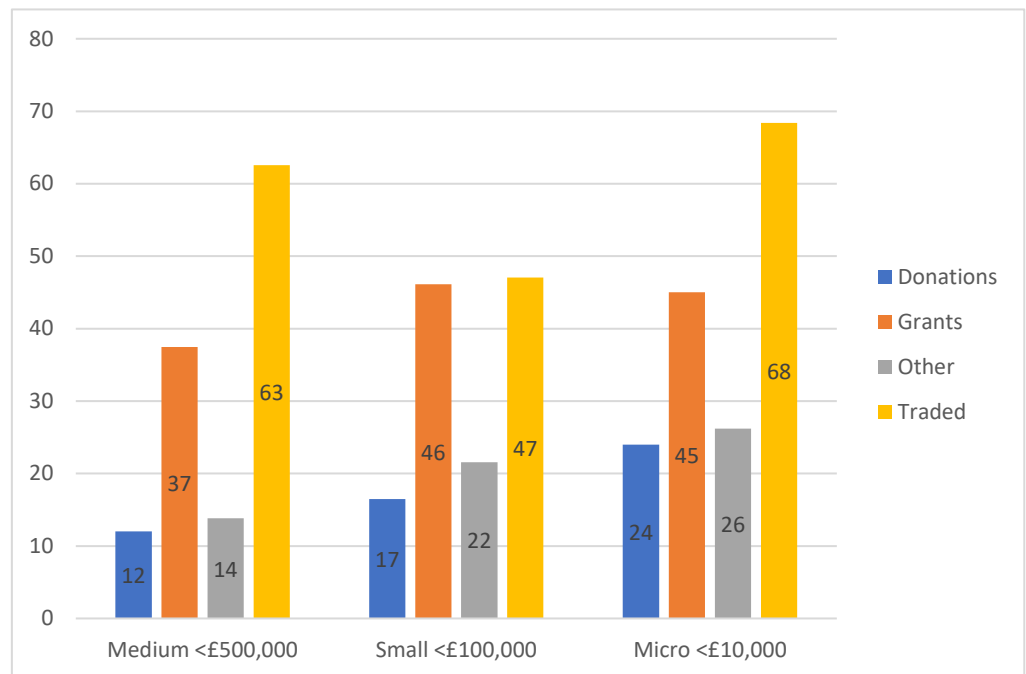


Observations

- Micro level is most diverse and equally distributed in beneficiary group
- Across all sizes of organisations:
 - Adults are the most common broad beneficiary group
 - Health & Wellbeing is the most common broad impact area
- Employment & homelessness is a more common focus for medium sized organisations

Income data

Percentage coming from stated source



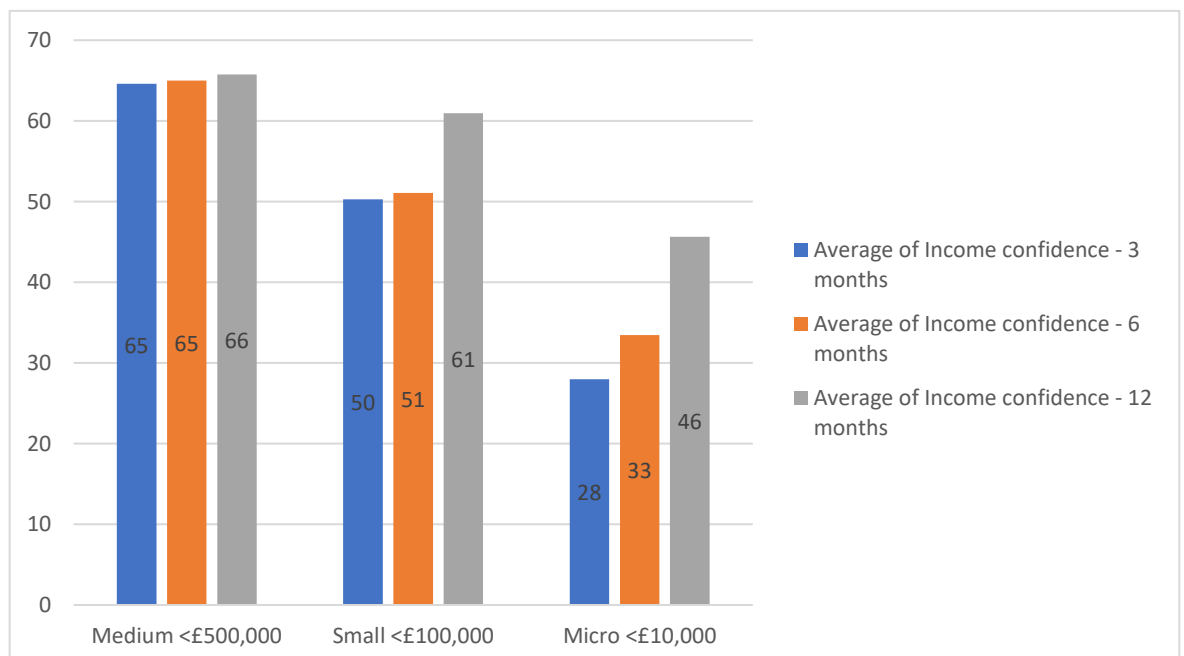
Average number of income sources per organisation

Medium <£500,000	3.0
Small <£100,000	2.6
Micro <£10,000	2.2

Observations

- Medium level has most diverse in income, micro the least diverse.
- Traded income significant for all. Most significant for micro.

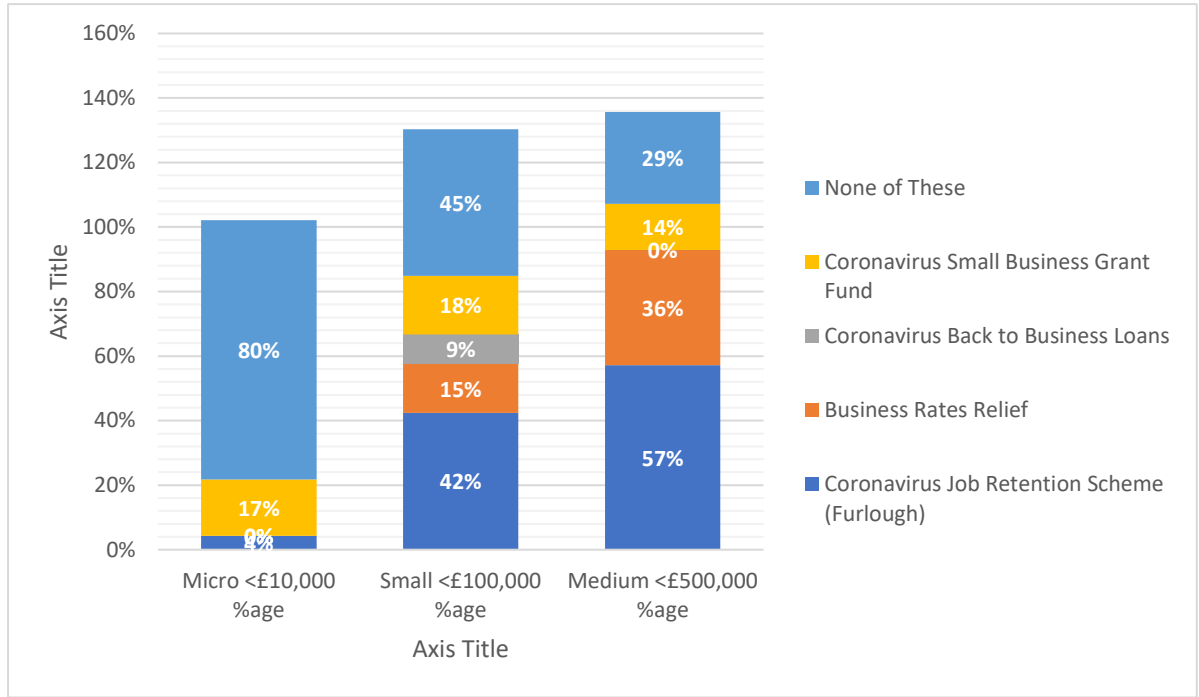
Income confidence



Observations

- General increase in confidence over the 12 month period
- Micro organisations least confident

Organisations benefiting from Government support



Observations

- Micro benefited least from government support
- Medium benefited from most government support
- Small benefited from most diverse government support

What has changed or stayed the same?

Everything!! The majority of comments focussed on the changes needed to delivery, postponed or ceasing of activity.

What are you most proud of?

- **Being able to continue support, adapt and change to the circumstances**

"We as an organisation are most proud of the way in which we have adapted to support our followers and vulnerable volunteers. We've kept good communication with clients who've had to reschedule. We have all turned our hand to paperwork, fundraising and new ideas to generate income which has enabled us to continue to push forward and plan for the 'new' future."

- **Togetherness – staff, leaders, volunteers & community coming together**

"The speed and commitment to changing how we deliver support and help to clients; how innovative we have been, the flexibility of staff and volunteers and clients. The rapid change in organising paperwork to accommodate the differing activities whilst keeping a record of activities and accepting new clients very quickly Also the humour and support among staff and volunteers during this time, which has transferred itself to clients."

What support do you need to get back?

- **Funding and financial support**

"Funding that is easy to access and apply for that doesn't require reams and reams of questions"

"We need financing because of the loss of revenue. All of the projects we had planned for this year are having to be cancelled which is devastating as they were community led projects."

- **Going back safely**

"Safety advice re Covid; some digital environment expertise, especially re accessibility; research into how others are adapting and best practice we can emulate."

"We will need some support when allowed to open, to think about how we recover once we know what the public mood is. Support to potential adapt our building to alternative use if room hire is no longer required"

Impact on staff/volunteers/trustees

- **Largest impact highlighted was on the ways of working**

"We have regular weekly team catch ups using zoom as well as individual one to ones to ensure that everyone's wellbeing is good. we have tried to be relaxed with regards to rigid working hours too. Our trustees have been more visible and have appointed one of them to look after staff wellbeing and regularly check in with everyone."

Other impacts centred on services and activities stopping or being postponed with the resultant impact being financial or staff being furloughed. Reduction in volunteers was also recognised along with the impact on staff with health conditions and/or caring responsibilities.

"All staff were furloughed, volunteers were asked not to come in. Some staff and volunteers have mental health issues so it's been hard on those people. Obviously having a cut in salary has also had an impact especially those with children at home. Others with partners that have been furloughed with 2 salaries at 80% it is stressful. Two staff have special needs children that are not at school so that creates additional stress having to care 24/7."

Impact on beneficiaries/clients

- **Mental health, isolation, fear and anxiety was by far the greatest impact seen on beneficiaries and communities.**

“Many groups that attend training sessions are adults and children, several suffer from learning, mental and emotional difficulties, plus, a large amount of members live in the most deprived area in Plymouth, Devonport. These members find attending our training sessions, a lifeline that helps them cope and manage their depression, anxiety and stress levels. We constantly hear from our members that they are desperate to start training. Many have used the training to help motivate themselves, as well as their emotional well being. Our members and athletes have been able to compete this year. All will struggle with fitness on their return.”

“Clients escalated anxieties when an already isolated group. Key role for us to coordinate contacts with community based services. Welfare conversations required. Easier to contact most clients as they have been moving around rather less. Excellent interaction with partner agencies with flexible and creative working across frontline services. Some statutory services less responsive but recognise their increased and disrupted workloads. Support to victims has rocketed during this period - DA and neighbourhood issues. Excellent networking through Zoom meetings.”

- **Although linked, others talked about people missing the contact**

“Very sad. they are missing it very much. Some, more than others are really feeling it as a loss. They are stuck indoors, many on their own, and missing the company it gives them.”

- **Other comments focussed on the reduced service**

“Clients are struggling to learn without our service and parents have asked for solution for this issue, they told us that their children have started to forget what they have already achieved through our service and that is necessary to find a way to help them to catch up with the lessons”

Changes you want to keep

- **Almost all the comments focussed on a newfound flexibility, trying new things and the value of digital platforms to do this through.**

“Flexible working has been good. Workers stepping out of their comfort zones and doing something different and finding that they were good at it. I would like to encourage more of this. Moving my role away from Office Management to more of a CEO role to look at more strategic management. Stopping doing things that we have always done just because we have always done it. E.g. running a coffee lounge. It makes hardly any money, it puts an extra burden on the staff and we would rather the money went to small businesses in Plymouth who can do this better than us.”

“Our new flexible trading opportunities Zoom conferencing as needed (limiting use though, not becoming dependent eg every third meeting could be face to face, saving time and travel for busy people!) More time to tell stories and think through how best to do things, as well as adapt in creative ways.”

“We had already begun piloting digital support for parents with poor mental health and we will continue to develop this offer. We will also continue to offer volunteer training digitally (as well as face-to-face) giving greater access. We cover not only Plymouth, but Torbay and 800 square miles of rural communities. Our trustees and staff live across the area and we will continue to conduct some meetings digitally as this has save time and money and enabled us to have more frequent meeting.”

- **A large minority also observed the environmental changes experienced in the early weeks of lockdown.**

“Less cars. More wildlife. Cycling. Local jobs, collaboration, co-operation less noxious red-tape. Less fear of change in itself, more possibilities for building resilience in communities.”