

Paperweight Perspective

How we've adapted to Covid-19



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TRUSTEE PAPERWEIGHT
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Charities have been at the sharp end of the Covid-19 crisis. From NHS charities working hard to support

burnt-out hospital workers, to domestic abuse hotlines experiencing spikes in call rates, to food banks supporting millions of families through the worst recession on record. And they have been doing all this while shifting face-to-face support services online, with little to no preparation time, at the same time as thousands of fundraising events have been scrapped and charity shops have closed across the UK.

COVID-19 compromised the health, mental health and livelihoods of individuals and families, causing more people than ever to reach out to charities for help and support. Many are still relying on this help as they navigate their way back to normal. Coupled with this, is the increased financial pressure that third sector organisations

are facing and it's no surprise that many charities are struggling to meet this increased demand for their services.

According to the Charity Commission research, 90% of charities experienced some form of negative impact as a result of the pandemic and 60% of charities saw a loss of income. Of those surveyed 62% anticipated some level of threat to their charity's financial viability in the next 12 months.

Despite this, charities witnessed overwhelming demand for their services, and many adapted the ways in which they worked and raised funds; many expect this to continue as society and the economy work to recover.

Paperweight, as a communal advice service, has seen demand explode even further as furlough was withdrawn and the cost of living surges. Not only were we trying to respond to clients seeking advice regarding redundancy and universal credit, but these challenges have been exacerbated by the significant social upheaval faced by many individuals contacting or referred to our charity, including domestic abuse and mental health challenges, as well as isolation from their regular social networks and support.

Additionally, much of Paperweight's work moved online or via the telephone and clients and trained volunteer advisors, caseworkers, were concerned this

would have an adverse effect. It didn't!

In the course of its rapid development since inception 10 years ago, Paperweight is constantly breaking new ground, with its focus on the provision of community support for the disenfranchised, to those lost "in the system" and to those at their wits' end. We offer free and confidential pro-active solutions utilising 160 trained caseworkers to provide guidance and assistance with debt issue, benefit applications and appeals, family law matters, LPAs, probate, advocacy and tackling all manner of bureaucratic obstacles and administrative pitfalls.

Paperweight helps people when they are at their most vulnerable – after a bereavement, in the middle of a family breakdown or perhaps a person who is disabled and is struggling to get the benefits they're entitled to.

As this year progresses, there will be new, additional needs related to the long-term effects of the pandemic – everything from poverty to isolation, educational inequalities and mental health, as well as people living with 'long-Covid'. We at Paperweight are ready to help.

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Debt-negotiating, court-attending, benefits-advising, law-guiding, tribunal-accompanying, hand-holding, rights-advocating, landlord-challenging and people-empowering.

Your situation may involve any of these tasks, and more. Whatever your administrative, legal or financial problems, our 200 caseworkers, based in London, Manchester and Gateshead, have the expertise to help. And it's all free of charge.

To access our services or to make a donation to support our work, call 0330 174 4300 or visit paperweight.org.uk

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Don't get overwhelmed, get help.

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