

## Appendix 2

### Headlines from Voluntary and Community Sector fortnightly meeting held on 28 February 2023

#### Intel/insights:

- Demand on services is increasing and potentially peaking, this was reported across all areas including carers, money/debt, energy bills, access to food
- Also, the complexity of issues seems to be increasing with more people presenting with multiple needs and issues
- Alongside this some concerns that community organisations are really struggling to pay their bills and keep their buildings open and heated
- Recruiting and retaining volunteers was already difficult but it is becoming more difficult as more people are returning to work and the costs associated with volunteering (e.g. mileage)
- Foodbanks are struggling with demand during this peak
- Above seasonal expectations, increasing concerns about anxiety and mental health at all ages

#### Comms and information sharing opps:

- Carers Trust about to do their newsletter if there are any items people want to promote to carers - [michellestoddard@solihullcarers.org](mailto:michellestoddard@solihullcarers.org)
- Holiday Activity and Food programme newsletter and webpage opportunity for messages to families, particularly with children in receipt of free school meals - [emma.mckay@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:emma.mckay@solihull.gov.uk)
- Cyber security events for VCSE orgs being promoted by CAVA - [aline@wcava.org.uk](mailto:aline@wcava.org.uk)

#### Relevant actions already in progress/agreed yesterday:

- **VCSE Resilience Fund** is open for grant applications, which will help with volunteer expenses, building costs. First panel is in a couple of weeks and then there will be further funding in April(ish). CAVA will push a message around volunteer expenses being relevant to this Fund.
- **Emergency foodbank meeting**, being organised after yesterday to look at the messaging to professionals, emergency driver cover and access to satellite sites. The intention is to try and ride through this peak during February and then reassess in March

#### Suggested actions for SMBC Cost of Living Lead Officers Group to consider – with feedback:

- **Damp and mould webinar for VCSE orgs** involved in home visits (or otherwise interested in the subject). This is being planned.
- **Comms focus on volunteer recruitment and reminder about foodbanks** being for emergencies, not being an entitlement. Comms team picking this up with Sara Rooney.
- **Professional curiosity** - we are nearly at the end of winter, there has been extensive local, national and international coverage of the cost of living, Here2Help is the first thing people

should see on the SMBC website, but people are still saying they are not aware that help is available for people. We have reached the point where this is about professionals/practitioners taking more personal responsibility for finding out what's happening and what help is available. Comms team looking at comms for workforces.

- **Warm Hubs branding** - feedback seems to be that where these are being successful, people are going along because they are a social thing, rather than to stay warm. Is there scope to change the branding and comms around this, maintain the hubs brand during the summer to then ensure they are well recognised for next winter. Current branding is Warm Welcome but will be looked at to strengthen this and maintain some visibility on a social basis during the summer.