

**Devon Communities Together  
COVID19 Community Local  
Outbreak & Recovery Helpline**  
Supporting Village Halls, Community  
Buildings, Parish and Town Councils.

## Monthly Report

April 2021



Covid-19 Community Local  
Outbreak & Recovery Helpline  
From Devon Communities  
Together

Supporting Village Halls, Community  
Buildings, Parish and Town Councils  
into the recovery phase

Call 0808 1963390



Helping Communities Help  
Themselves for 60 Years

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## 1.0 Phase 5 – Summary of Covid 19 activities April 2021

In April 2021, the tenor of queries to the DCT Covid 19 Helpline has changed markedly from compliance issues – making sense of government regulations on lockdown activities and meeting (or not meeting) others, to what halls, community buildings and communities *can* do to prepare for unlocking and when and how they can re-open. There is a continued interest in getting funding information – compensation grants via District Councils and Recovery grants from grant giving bodies.

Following the Covid 19 bulletin sent out by DCT in April publicising the Community Renewal Fund (CRF) there were a number of enquiries from halls, to see if they would be eligible. These requests came mainly from those seeking capital funds for hall maintenance or refurbishment. They are therefore not eligible ‘asks’ from the CRF, indeed many grant funders are now wishing to attract applications for Covid 19 Recovery – most of these being a replacement for funds lost from bookings or to fund ideas to re-purpose parts of their building or equipment

As we move out of lockdown, halls and community buildings are keen to have the correct insurance, policies and equipment in place so that their users and trustees have a clear idea of what is expected in order to keep them Covid 19 safe. Help with templates and wording for Covid 19 policies and procedures formed a large part of the requests under ‘Organisational Management’ later in the report. Helpline queries and information/advice given are detailed in Section 2.

The report this month also tracks the general trends across the months Jan – April 21, showing that whilst requests for information on government regulations restrictions on activities in halls has continued these have been fewer whilst, the requests in March and April for information on re-opening and how to do this safely has increased.

In this quarter, at the request of Devon County Council, we begin to delve further into the potential for a volunteering legacy in Devon to follow the excellent support that volunteers and volunteer – led mutual aid groups have given to their communities over the last year. More information on this can be found in Section 4.

Our engagement with Devon’s strategic partnerships working to support the Covid 19 recovery process has continued, including:

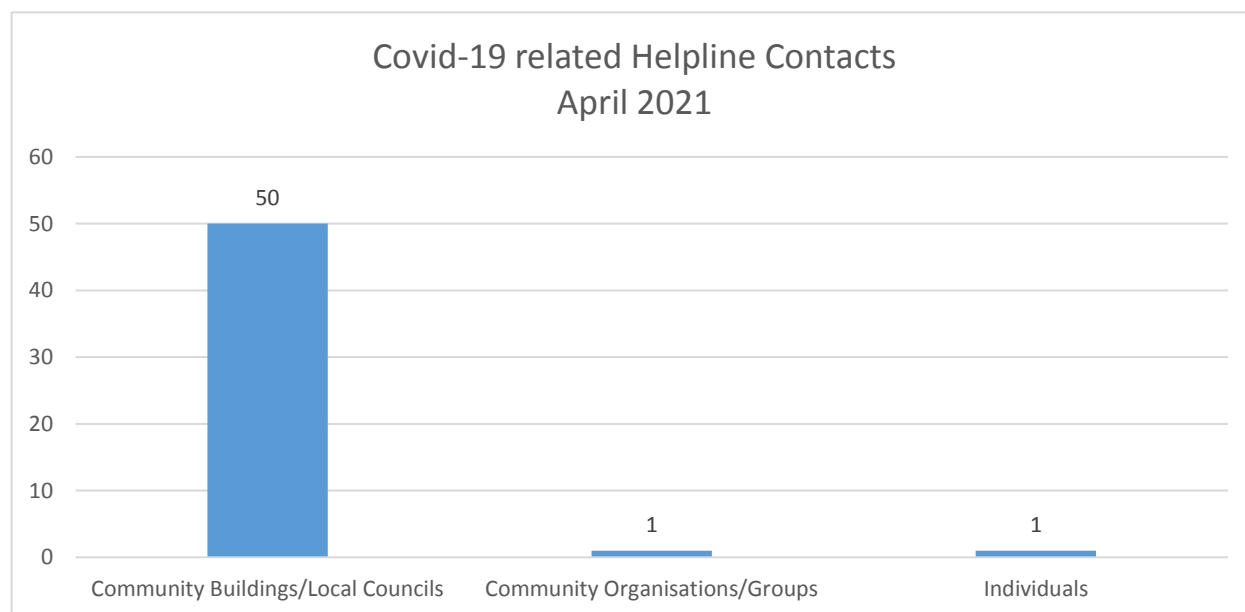
- Devon Local Outbreak Engagement Board – attended April meeting. DCT sent out in summary of meeting notes as e-bulletin
- Team Devon Recovery Co-ordination Group (DRCG)
- DRCG sub groups including VCSE Recovery (co-Chairing fortnightly meetings); Data and Impact Assessment; Employability, Skills and Business
- Meetings with ACRE & NHS Devon re Rural Health Inequalities
- Meeting with ACRE/ Partners focusing on Rural Deprivation Indicators
- Heart of the South West Rural Productivity Group consultation response
- Local Resilience Forum (Vaccination) Volunteer Cell meetings

We have also contributed to national intelligence gathering to inform the recovery process, through providing fortnightly intelligence reports as a registered Devon Local Infrastructure Organisation (LIO) for the NAVCA National VCSE Emergency Partnership.

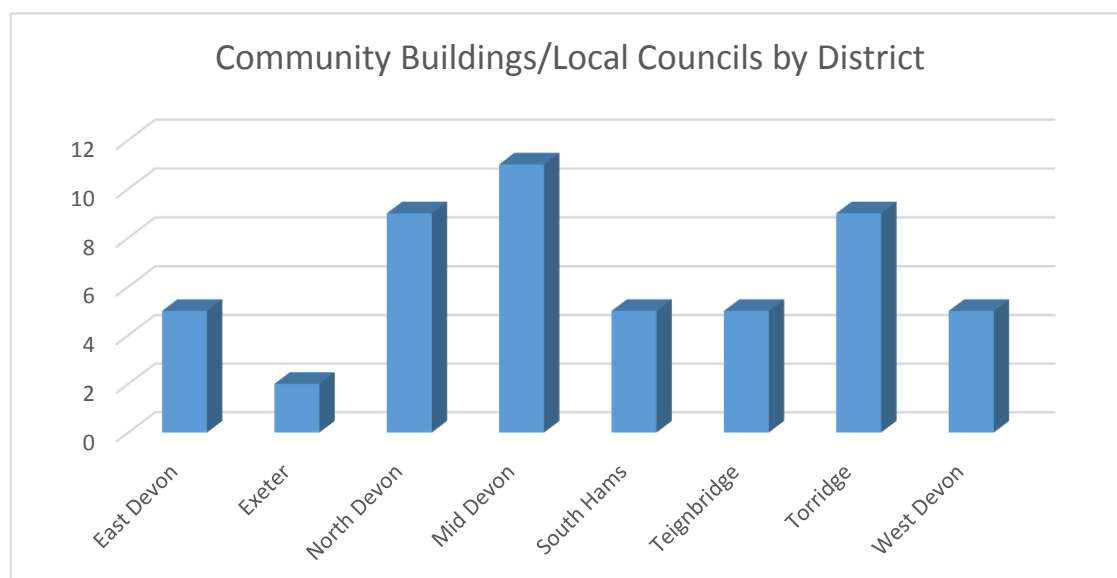
## 2.0 Covid-19 Local Outbreak and Recovery Helpline Activities

### 2.1 Group Type

There was a **total number of 52 helpline contacts** in April mostly from community buildings and local councils, with others from community organisations, and individuals. The majority were contacts from village halls and parish councils spread across the county.



**Figure 1: Bar chart illustrating total number of helpline contacts for April 2021.**



**Figure 2: Bar chart illustrating contacts from community buildings and local councils in April 2021 by District area**

## 2.2 Key Issues Identified April 2021

The majority of key issues identified on the helpline for March were on Organisation and Management, Finance, and Health & Social Care. Table 1 below provides further details on this.

KEY ISSUES			
General Category	Frequency	Specific Issues	Details and Support Provided
<b>Organisation and Management</b>	45	Management of operations and community buildings, community organisations, and community groups.	<p>The majority of enquiries were centred on village halls and community buildings seeking further clarification on national guidelines on what activities permitted to happen inside buildings during lockdown and the route map to unlocking.</p> <p>30 requests related to what changes should be made to terms and conditions of hall use to take account of Covid 19 safety. Advice and information was given on the wording of Covid 19 safety policies and guidance to hall users about safe hall use.</p>

			<p>10 requests for advice and information related to the resumption of specific activities in the halls. These related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dance activities (2)</li> <li>• Parent and Toddler Groups (2)</li> <li>• Young People (2)</li> <li>• Food service in the hall (1)</li> <li>• Outdoor activities (3)</li> </ul> <p>Enquirers were generally keen to know about how hall capacities (actual and published) should be changed to reflect the new post Covid 19 arrangements at re-opening.</p> <p>As in March there were queries about proof of vaccination for visitors to halls – should the hall or the organising group require evidence of vaccination?</p> <p>One village hall requested information about when its use for a community market could resume. Another asked for information and guidance on whether the hall could be used as a temporary pub.</p> <p>DCT helpline staff provided assistance to all contacts. This included dissemination of key information such as the ACRE guidance for Village halls, since this often provides clarity on guidelines specifically for village halls and community buildings. DCT also forwarded CCG guidance on Covid 19 arrangements and information, as well as selected information from published minutes of meeting such as Local Outbreak Engagement Board.</p>
<b>Finance</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>Financial Support</b>	<p>All 7 queries in April were from community buildings or village halls in respect of obtaining or using Covid 19 restart or recovery grants.</p> <p>One hall also asked for information on whether PRS/PPL (Performing Rights) payment was reclaimable since the hall had been closed during lockdown.</p> <p>One hall was advised that Covid 19 recovery funds should not be used for capital works unless specifically advised by the funder that this was eligible.</p>

			<p>5 of the seven requests for advice and assistance were from groups seeking help to apply for additional grant aid for community projects or capital works to their halls.</p> <p>All enquirers were given bespoke advice and information on where and how to apply for funds. As per March report, the assistance re applications for re-start grants and other funds took time to a) listen to the specific issues, b) ask questions c) provide bespoke advice – average 30 mins per request for help.</p>
<b>Health and Social Care</b>	0	Access to Health Care	<p>Interestingly, there were no specific requests for information or advice on access to health care from individuals. This shows a downward trend since Jan 21.</p>

**Table 1: Table showing and providing details on specific issues identified in April 21**

## 3.0 Trends Jan 21 to April 21 on types of DCT Helpline calls

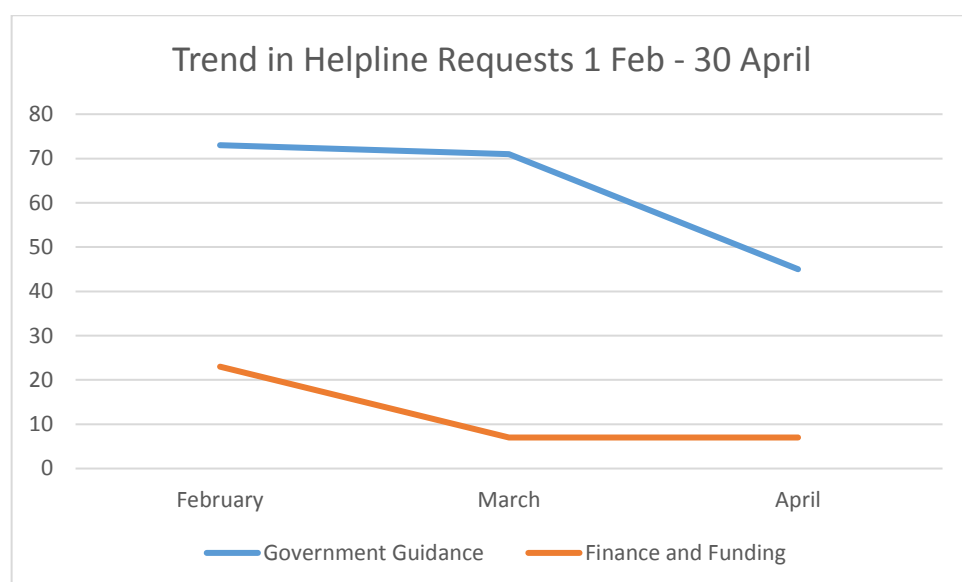
### 3.1 Numbers of Helpline calls

The number of calls to the Helpline has reduced from 101 in January and February 21, to 81 in March 21, to 53 in April 21. This reflects the reach of the DCT Helpline, social media and email bulletins. It also may reflect the increasing clarity of information coming out from central govt sources and NHS.

The types of organisations requesting information on the two most requested types of support, Organisational Management or Finance, has come mainly from village halls, community buildings (urban Exeter as well as rural District Councils) as well as parish councils. These are the DCT's core audiences for information although for the last year there has been a steady stream of requests for information from individuals and community groups.

In January and February 21 requests for Organisational Management have centred around getting clarity on government information which people have often found either confusing or changing constantly. Enquirers' feedback to us at DCT is that they were bemused at the fast changing government information on Covid 19 restrictions. They welcomed being able to talk with a real person to try and iron out some of these confusions. In March and April the requests to the Helpline have come from those asking for help with the specifics of providing their services during lockdown or needing help with local authority Covid 19 compensation grants or where to find funding sources for Covid Recovery.

Regulations that require parish councils to now meet in person from May has proved challenging for some village hall managers and parish clerks, occasioning calls to our Helpline. During lockdown a number of pre-school groups and schools have had exclusive use of their local hall, which has made implementing Covid controls relatively straightforward. Now that they will have to share the building, albeit at different times of the day, new protocols and cleaning regimes have had to be devised. Clerks have asked for guidance from DCT in April in making meetings secure and managing public access.



**Fig 3: Trend graph for requests for information Government Guidance and Finance and Funding**

## 4.0 The Legacy of Covid 19 Volunteering

### 4.1 Survey 2021 to volunteers and local voluntary groups.

In Phase 5 April 21 – 30 June 21, DCT will take further our work of the previous quarter to research the needs of community mutual aid groups (see DCT Covid 19 Report March 21).

During Covid-19, community-based volunteers have provided critical face-to-face, socially distanced support across Devon in key areas such as food distribution, alleviating isolation & loneliness etc. Building on our work in earlier phases, we will gather insights and evidence from both COVID-19 mutual aid groups and volunteers to understand the best way to support harnessing the energy of community volunteers as a positive legacy.



We have found, in our work in previous phases to sample community mutual aid groups experiences during lockdown, that many mutual aid groups face particular challenges around addressing safeguarding, GDPR, and equipping volunteers to positively support those with poor mental health. These challenges of Devon groups are echoed in other geographic areas (see CNN report March 21 by Newcastle University ‘Mutual Aid Groups in England their Relationships with Local Government’) and it is suggested that they might be mitigated by appropriate systems and structures to support small, mutual aid groups and the volunteers that would volunteer with them.

Questions re volunteers’ experiences and challenges in providing local services during lockdown will be posed first in a widely publicised **online survey for volunteers** who volunteered during the last year for small mutual aid groups. The results from this survey will be further discussed in a focus group of volunteers to explore the survey themes in depth, focussing on the needs of volunteers themselves, their community volunteering awareness and interests, and what will enable and support them to continue to offer volunteering time.

Survey questions we will be asking individual volunteers relate to:

- Their motivations for volunteering in the pandemic
- How they found the processes of recruitment, management and support of volunteers in the group
- Whether they are still volunteering
- The potential for them to volunteer in the future.

A **second survey is targeted at the co-ordinators of mutual aid groups** to find out, in more depth than we were able to carry out in March 21, what systems and structures they would find it helpful to have in place to help with the organisation and management of community tasks and volunteers.

We will follow the survey with a focus group for mutual aid group representatives to explore the themes that emerge in the survey in more detail

Survey questions we will be asking the co-ordinators of mutual aid groups are:

- How did the group form – in existence already, or in response to pandemic?
- Where did support to form and run the group come from e.g. local authorities or other voluntary groups?
- How many volunteers in the group at peak?
- Status now – active, dormant, disbanded?
- People and processes that helped or hindered the group function?
- How tasks were managed?
- Communications and referrals?
- Dealing with complaints, concerns from volunteers?
- Challenges faced?
- What areas of community activity might the group, if still active, like to get involved with?

We are particularly interested to see what structures/systems would encourage them to volunteer and what would make their volunteering experience more satisfying and easier to fit into their post-pandemic lifestyles. For example – would they find useful to have more portability and flexibility in their volunteering – e.g. picking a one –

off tasks from a database of volunteering tasks, rather than volunteering for one group or agency. Or holding a volunteer passport to enable them to volunteer in any time they have available for any group without the 'on-boarding' procedures (DBS checks, training log, certificates) required for current volunteering activity.

Both the groups and individual volunteer surveys are live from 4 May and being widely publicised through ebulletins and social media. They will be live until the end of May 21 with focus groups planned for June.

#### Help create a post COVID-19 volunteer legacy

During the pandemic many people came forward to volunteer and many local mutual aid and other volunteer groups rapidly formed. There are lessons to learn about volunteer structures and possibilities to help shape the future of local volunteering. DCT are collecting information to report to Devon County Council to help shape this future.

If you ran a group that organised volunteers during the pandemic take the survey here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/6JZ8KDK>

and sign up to our follow up event here:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/volunteer-structures-and-support-a-session-for-covid-19-mutual-aid-groups-tickets-151085708421>

If you were a volunteer during the pandemic, take the survey here –

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/6XCMKHM>

and sign up to our follow up event here - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/volunteer-structures-and-support-a-session-for-covid-19-volunteers-tickets-151082683373>

*Fig 4: copy of ebulletin text advertising volunteer groups and volunteering survey 4 May 21*

## 5.0 Website and Social Media Communications – April 2021

### 5.1 Revisions to DCT Website Pages

During April, DCT created a dedicated CV19 icon that runs throughout our website and takes people straight to the CV19 landing page. This is to give people a clearer navigation route and to shortcut the dropdown menus for some of our key pages. We also streamlined some of the information that was spread on other pages, so that everything is sat behind this icon. The information is also still accessible via the menu items.



## TWEETS

Starting a business is not easy. New Start Devon aims to assist people with their start-ups. New Start Devon brings...  
[t.co/TeJGXbd1g4](https://t.co/TeJGXbd1g4)

12th May, 2021 @DevComsTogether

Tweet to @DevComsTogether

# WELCOME

*Above: the CV19 helpline icon on the home page (also replicated throughout the site)*

## 5.2 Website Page Views – Google Analytics

During April 2021, the DCT website pages received the following number of total views:

- Welcome/home page (which features 5 links to the coronavirus information page and helpline information): **1,684 views**
- Coronavirus information page (which features helpline information and multiple subpages): **242 views, which was the third most viewed page in the site**
- **Listening Ear project** (supporting businesses during CV19): **41 views**
- Re-opening Village Halls guidance: **87 views**
- Devon Community Resilience Forum project page: **89 views**
- Small registered charity grants information: **40 views**
- Advice for Community Buildings: **54 views**
- The Devon Community Resilience Forum resources page: **33 views**

Of the above pages, the page with the highest viewing time over the last month was the Devon Community Resilience Forum resources project. This received a viewing time of **5 minutes and 1 second**.

## 5.3 E-bulletins

During April 21, a total number of **2 e-bulletins** featuring covid-19 resources, advice and updates have been sent to our Village Halls, Community Buildings and Town & Parish council contacts, as well as our social enterprise contacts where appropriate. Examples of content include:

### Latest Covid-19 Updates and Resources from Devon Communities Together - 26th April 2021

This bulletin contained information on Community Buildings re-opening and QR codes. It was sent to 2,609 recipients and was opened 723 times. There were 68 clicks through for further information.


### Latest Covid-19 Updates and Resources from Devon Communities Together - 26th April 2021

This bulletin contained information on Devon County Council's latest guidance and advice. It was sent to 2,613 recipients and was opened 677 times. There were 91 clicks through for further information.

## 5.4 Social Media Activity Table


In April, we have posted content about our information page, helpline, resources and events across our three main social media channels. (Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn).

### Example content from each network:



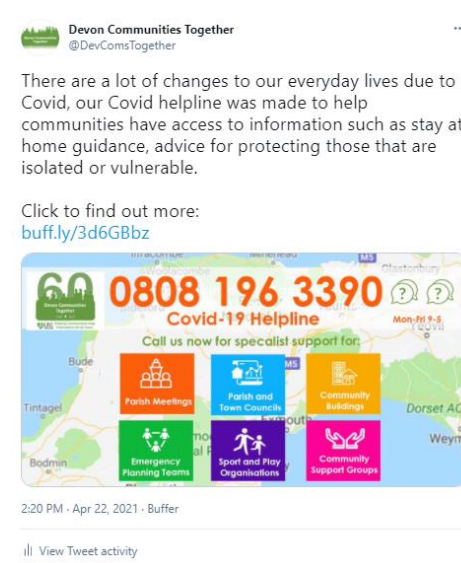
**Devon Communities Together**  
Published by Buffer • 10 April •

With the lockdown slowly being relaxed we understand that there may be some uncertainties.  
Maybe you run a community group and you're not sure on the guidance, or you're trying to get your village hall up and running you may want advice.  
If you have a Covid-19 question for us you can always contact our helpline:



DEVONCOMMUNITIES.ORG.UK  
**Coronavirus Information | Devon Communities Together**  
Secondary navigation Covid-19 People in later life Young people C...


121 People reached 6 Engagements [Boost post](#)



**Devon Communities Together**  
@DevComsTogether


There are a lot of changes to our everyday lives due to Covid, our Covid helpline was made to help communities have access to information such as stay at home guidance, advice for protecting those that are isolated or vulnerable.

Click to find out more:  
[buff.ly/3d6GBbz](https://buff.ly/3d6GBbz)



2:20 PM • Apr 22, 2021 • Buffer


[View Tweet activity](#)



**Devon Communities Together**  
274 followers  
1mo •

Our Covid-19 helpline was made to help those in the community who are struggling. We offer a wide variety of support ranging from how to prepare for a lockdown to GDPR and safeguarding.

Find out more by clicking the link below:  
<https://buff.ly/3IPfLJC>



**0808 196 3390**  
Covid-19 Helpline  
Mon-Fri 9-5

**Need advice on community emergency support in your village?**

Call us now for specialist advice for Parish and Town Councils, Parish Meetings, Community Buildings, Sport and Play Organisations, Community Support Groups, Emergency Planning Teams

Coronavirus Information | Devon Communities Together  
[devoncommunities.org.uk](https://devoncommunities.org.uk) • 2 min read

1

**Facebook: 10th April**

**Twitter: 22th April**

**LinkedIn: 5th April**

Below is a table of engagements for all related social media content in April 2021

22/04/21	Twitter, Facebook linkedIN	Have you visited the Plug in Devon website before? Plug in Devon allows people in recovery (of any sort) to keep connected with people and services during COVID-19. Become part of our community. To find out more, click the link below: <a href="https://buff.ly/2JOAUVJ">https://buff.ly/2JOAUVJ</a>	Reach (fb): 572 Impressions (t/Li): 147 Retweets: 0 Likes: 2 Shares: 1 Clicks: 3
10/04/21	Twitter, Facebook linkedIN	With lockdown being relaxed we know there may be uncertainties. Run a community group and you're not sure on the guidance, or maybe you're trying to get your village hall up and running you may want advice. Have a CV19 question? Contact our helpline: <a href="https://buff.ly/3d6GBbz">https://buff.ly/3d6GBbz</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/Bb9SuDXNWD">pic.twitter.com/Bb9SuDXNWD</a>	Reach (fb): 121 Impressions (t/Li): 174 Retweets: 0 Likes: 3 Shares: 3 Clicks: 3
05/04/21	Twitter, Facebook linkedIN	Our Covid-19 helpline was made to help those in the community who are struggling. We offer a wide variety of support ranging from how to prepare for a lockdown to GDPR and safeguarding. Find out more by clicking the link below: <a href="https://buff.ly/3IPfLJC">https://buff.ly/3IPfLJC</a>	Reach (fb): 149 Impressions (t/Li): 297 Retweets: 1 Likes: 6 Shares: 4 Clicks: 4