

HELP THROUGH CRISIS LEARNING, SUPPORT & EVALUATION TEAM

ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

December 2020



Delivered by



About the Help through Crisis programme

Help through Crisis (HtC) is a £33 million National Lottery funded programme set up by The National Lottery Community Fund (The Fund), the largest funder of community activity in the UK. Over the course of the programme HtC has supported 69 partnerships across England which help people who are experiencing or at risk of hardship crisis to overcome the difficulties they are facing to plan for their futures. The partnerships receiving National Lottery funding through the HtC programme bring together small voluntary groups and established charities to work together locally. Working together, they offer people advice, advocacy and support which matches their personal circumstances. The aim is to look at the issues people face, and the underlying causes, from their basic needs, to their physical and mental health, to skills and employment. People are supported to draw on their personal experiences to build on their skills and strengths so they are ready to seize the opportunities and challenges ahead.

The HtC learning, support and evaluation (LSE) team is a consortium of organisations commissioned by The National Lottery Community Fund to help build understanding and capture learning from the HtC programme. The team is made up of people from Ipsos MORI (Lead Contractor), Revolving Doors Agency and Hopkins Van Mil. The role of the consortium is to help the partnerships involved in the programme by:

- Empowering them to evaluate and measure their impact, and capture learning about what works in tackling hardship crisis.
- Supporting their co-production activities, ensuring the people they support have a voice in shaping local services.
- Identifying good practice and disseminating learning to build the evidence base and help partnerships to replicate or scale up approaches from elsewhere.

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Welcome to our 2020 end of year report!

This year has been a uniquely challenging one, and the Covid-19 pandemic has brought huge uncertainty for HtC partnerships and the people they work with. Partnerships have redesigned how they support people in crisis, working rapidly to adapt delivery models, look after their staff and continue to work in partnership with local organisations to enable person-centred support. This has required significant efforts, and partnerships can be proud of what they have achieved in 2020.

The LSE team have spoken to partnerships during this period about their experience of responding to the pandemic, as well as inviting all partnerships to complete a feedback survey. Thank you again to all of you who have shared your experiences with us during this busy time – it has been invaluable, allowing us to develop a series of Covid-related outputs and helping us shape our plans for support for the remainder of the programme.

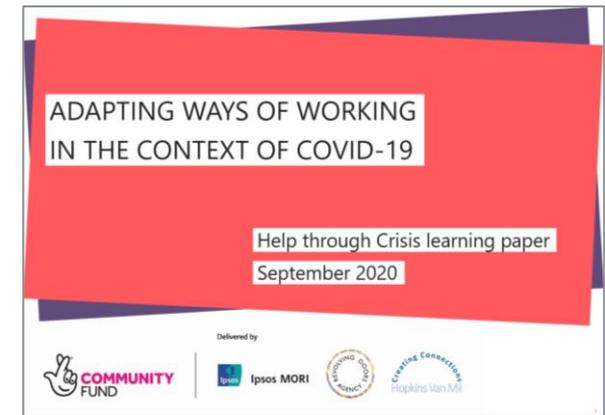
This annual report:

1. Summarises the **key learnings** from the factsheets and learning papers that we have produced over the summer
2. Summarises the **feedback you provided** us in the recent survey
3. Provides an **overview of our planned activities** for the remainder of the programme

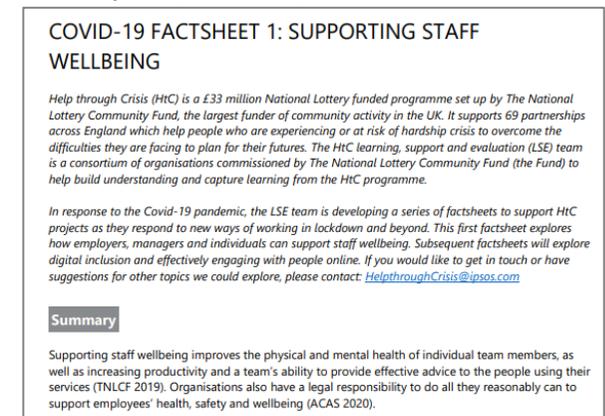
We look forward to seeing you at our next online event on Thursday 28th January 2021. We'd love to hear from you before then if you have any thoughts or comments on our work so far, or about our plans for next year. You can get in touch at: HelpThroughCrisis@ipsos.com

You can see our annual report from last year on the [HtC Google Drive](#).

Example of an LSE learning paper



Example of an LSE factsheet



OUR ACTIVITIES IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

33 Partnerships **had a call with the LSE team** in April to discuss the impact of Covid-19

20 Further **interviews** with partnerships completed online between July and September

57 Partnerships attended the **Covid-19 webinars** over the past few months



Help through Crisis webinar, July 2020

6 Webinars on relevant topics, with summary notes shared

3 Factsheets to support partnerships, drawing on secondary literature on a range of relevant topics

3 Learning papers, informed by partnerships' experiences in response to Covid-19

You said the webinars and written resources this year...

- Provided a space to **share experiences** of delivering services during the Covid-19 pandemic
- Created a **supportive environment** and showed that no-one is alone during these difficult times
- **Increased awareness** of different topics, such as digital inclusion



[It's] useful to have the support and opportunities for shared learning"

Partnership Feedback Survey



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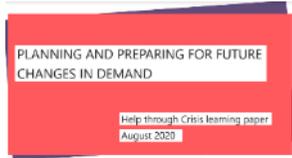


WE'VE BUILT A COMPREHENSIVE LIBRARY OF RESOURCES

You can find all of these documents (and many more) on the [HtC Google Drive](#) and The National Lottery Community Fund's [Knowledge and Learning Library](#)!

-  **About Help through Crisis**
-  **Co-production toolkit**
-  **Covid-19 resources** *NEW!*
-  **Evaluation toolkit**
-  **Learning and influencing**
-  **Managing a HtC project**

Staff wellbeing webinar



Digital inclusion webinar

Planning and preparing for change template

Managing changing demand webinar

Remote co-production webinar

Adapting ways of working learning paper

Working with partners during C-19 learning paper

Report on ways to do this	Presenting findings	How useful?	Link to resources
Report on working with others			
Report on project delivery			

Preparing and planning for changes in demand learning paper



Case study template

Supporting staff wellbeing factsheet

Digital inclusion factsheet

How to effectively engage with people online factsheet



Causes of crisis learning paper



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1

LOOKING BACK ON 2020:
SUPPORT AND LEARNING
DURING COVID-19

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The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly changed the way people work across different organisations and sectors. These changes to the workplace affect how staff wellbeing can be supported during the pandemic. There are a number of things for organisations and managers to consider when thinking about how to support teams working remotely and improve personal wellbeing.

Personal wellbeing

- **Establish a routine**, try to follow your normal patterns and set clear tasks for the day,
- **Stay connected** to others by scheduling video calls or picking up the phone. Don't forget to set boundaries so that you can switch off .
- Try to **avoid myths and gossip** as this may fuel anxiety. Stepping away from social media can help with this.

Supporting teams working remotely

- **Reassure teams by providing clear, supportive communication** that recognises the current situation and is transparent about decisions
- **Signpost to available advice and support** both within a work context such as Employee Assistance Schemes and outside of work such as Citizens Advice or Mind websites.
- **Show flexibility and empathy** to allow work tasks to fit in with someone's wider responsibilities

Applying a trauma informed approach

- **Ensuring a balance between work, rest and socialising** with family and friends.
- **Transforming negative experiences** associated with vicarious trauma by identifying ways to stay connected to meaning and hope in life or work.
- **Building in time and space for reflection** for example by keeping a journal, meditating or engaging in reflective practice using frameworks such as Gibbs' (1988) reflective practice cycle.



Further resources are provided in the ['Supporting Staff Wellbeing'](#) factsheet and the summary note from the ['Staff wellbeing' webinar](#).

There are particular challenges for HtC partnerships in providing holistic support to those who are digitally excluded during the Covid-19 pandemic. These can be broken down into challenges around (i) building motivation and (ii) developing new skills.

Building motivation

- ✓ **Finding a motivating factor or 'hook'** can help encourage people to engage with the online world and access the support they need
- ✓ Support should **focus on encouragement** rather than 'training'
- ✓ Encouraging individuals to **use the internet in a familiar setting for a short amount of time** each day can help build positive routines and slowly develop trust and motivation online

Offering alternative approaches

It is important to recognise that not everyone will be able to get online and receive support in this way. HtC partnerships may need to tailor their approach to individual support needs and adapt to the current circumstances, as well as being creative and consider different scenarios over the coming months to make the most of opportunities to support people.

Developing digital skills

- ✓ Aim to **improve both skills and understanding of devices and the internet**, using a person-centred approach
- ✓ **Avoid technical jargon**
- ✓ Allow space for **repetition and reflection** – give time to consolidate learning
- ✓ Provide **long-term/ongoing support**, structured in a way that learners can ask questions as they arise
- ✓ Consider pairing people with **digital buddies/volunteers** to provide long-term support

To explore these suggestions in more depth and find further resources, you can access the factsheet on ['Digital Inclusion'](#)

In response to Covid-19, HtC partnerships have had to re-design their services as they seek to continue to provide effective crisis support. Below is some guidance for setting up digital activities and selecting an appropriate platform, as well as considerations around how to deliver support for people online, from agreeing the 'ground rules' of a session to building rapport.

How to build rapport online

Key approaches for providing support online



- Use the **first online session for familiarising everyone** with the platform and approach, and getting everyone signed in/holding basic check-ins
- Try to **keep group sessions on a small scale** so everyone can engage and share
- Do **not fear silence** – it may enable richer, creative thoughts
- Use **deep listening techniques**
- **Equal airtime** (in peer support or mutual aid groups)
- Use **gestures**
- Make sure your **laptop captures you at eye level**
- **Hide your self-view** to limit distractions
- Consider using a **shared background**

For groups, consider agreeing in advance parameters around:

Anonymity

People should be told in advance whether an activity will be anonymous and how they can protect their information.

Session length

Be clear about how long a session is going to last so people can prepare and set aside protected time.

Focus/format of activity

Set boundaries in advance and inform people about what will be discussed.

Who's involved

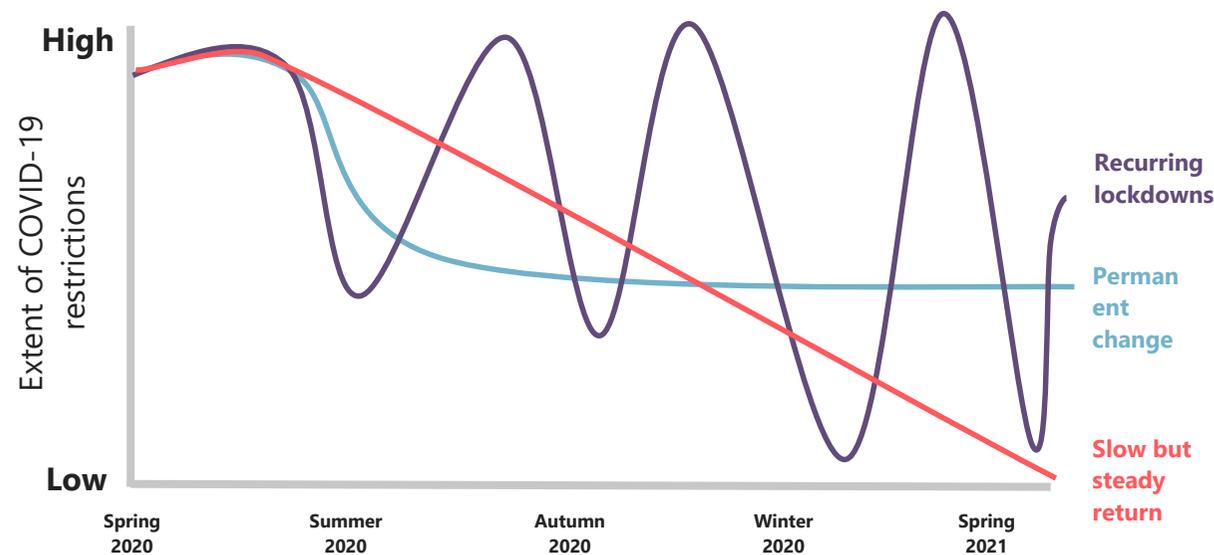
People should be aware of who else is joining a session in advance, and whether they might know them.

To explore these approaches in more depth, you can read through the factsheet '[How to effectively engage with people online](#)'.

WAYS TO HELP PLAN FOR CHANGES IN DEMAND

Learning paper #1

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought huge uncertainty to HtC partnerships. Although this can make it difficult to plan for the future, it is important to continue thinking about what might happen as a way of supporting the planning process. One way of doing this is to think about different future scenarios. The chart and table below which we have developed can help you to do this and provide some pointers as to what things you might want to consider in each scenario.



What we learnt in the beginning of the pandemic is having no framework, having no idea what's going to happen and not being able to plan for it initially, is what causes the most distress [to staff]."

Lead partner staff

	Recurring lockdowns	"New normal"	Slow but steady return
Impact on people in crisis <i>You might want to think about the impact on: access to services, differences between groups of people, the types of advice/ support required</i>			
Impact on teams and partnerships <i>You might want to think about the impact on: supporting staff and teams within an organisation, as well as partnership working including referrals</i>			
Impact on project delivery <i>You might want to think about the impact on: the project delivery model, practical measures, the resources/ funding required, how a project captures learning</i>			



See more in the ['Planning and preparing for future changes in demand'](#) learning paper

Partnerships have had to rapidly re-design services to continue to support people in crisis during the Covid-19 pandemic, whilst maintaining a person-centred approach and ensuring that different people in communities are receiving support.

Maintaining a person-centred approach

Despite the challenges associated with adapting how they work partnerships continue to recognise the importance of offering person-centred approaches as they support people facing crisis.

To maintain a person-centred approach during the pandemic, partnerships are:

- **Being flexible** when offering remote support by providing different ways of staying in contact
- **Providing help to get online** for people who feel uncomfortable accessing or using different online platforms
- **Embracing the benefits of online working** both for staff and people using services



Not being able to bump into people at conferences or workshops, certainly on my part, has made me more conscious about contacting other agencies and making sure they are more aware that the project is out there and delivering services."

Lead partner staff

Reaching people in new ways

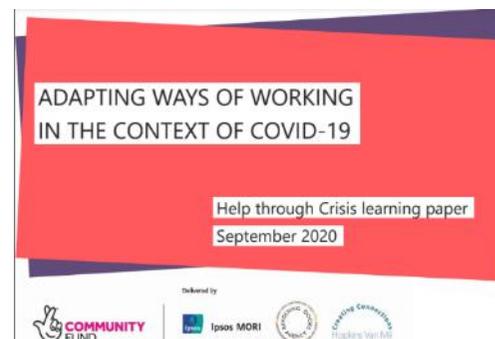
HtC partnerships have explored new ways of reaching out to people using both online and offline approaches.

Raising awareness of services through

- **Social media**
- Sharing information on **local websites** or in newsletters
- Placing information, contact details or leaflets in services with **physical spaces that are still open**, like GPs or foodbanks

Developing new referral pathways by

- Connecting with **new partners**, either because organisations which partnerships usually work with have experienced changing levels of demand, or due to staff changes
- Encouraging **self-referrals** in new ways



See more in the ['Adapting ways of working'](#) learning paper

The disruption caused by Covid-19 has highlighted the value of strong partnership working. Some of the changes to partnership working as a result of the pandemic have been positive. It is important to take stock of these positive changes and think how these can be maintained in the future.

Key ingredients to partnership working:

1

Cooperation

- Benefit from the capacity and expertise offered by a range of different organisations working in crisis support.
- Integrate services and reduce gaps in local provision to help ensure joined-up support.

2

Communication

- Increased communication to avoid unnecessary duplication and reduce costs overall.
- Gain insights by sharing information. This could be about peoples' circumstances beyond their contact with an individual service, or about the wider context in an area.

3

Flexibility

- Tailor services to an individual by signposting them to services being offered by other members of the partnership.
- Play to each organisations' strengths, improving the overall service and experience people receive.
- Bring in new partners to meet the changing needs of people in crisis.



In some respects this whole Covid-19 crisis has really had some very, very positive effects on partnership working...People have realised 'I can't work on my own here, I have got to get in touch with somebody who might know about this'."

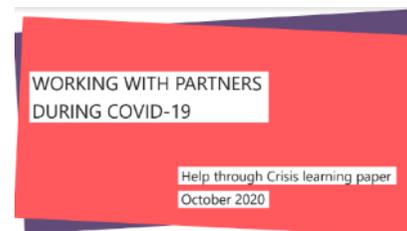
Lead partner staff

Changes in partnership working resulting from Covid-19 pandemic:

Changes to the organisations involved in HtC partnership

Changes to how partners communicate

Changes to the services delivered by partner organisations



The '[Working with partners during Covid-19](#)' learning paper explores these themes

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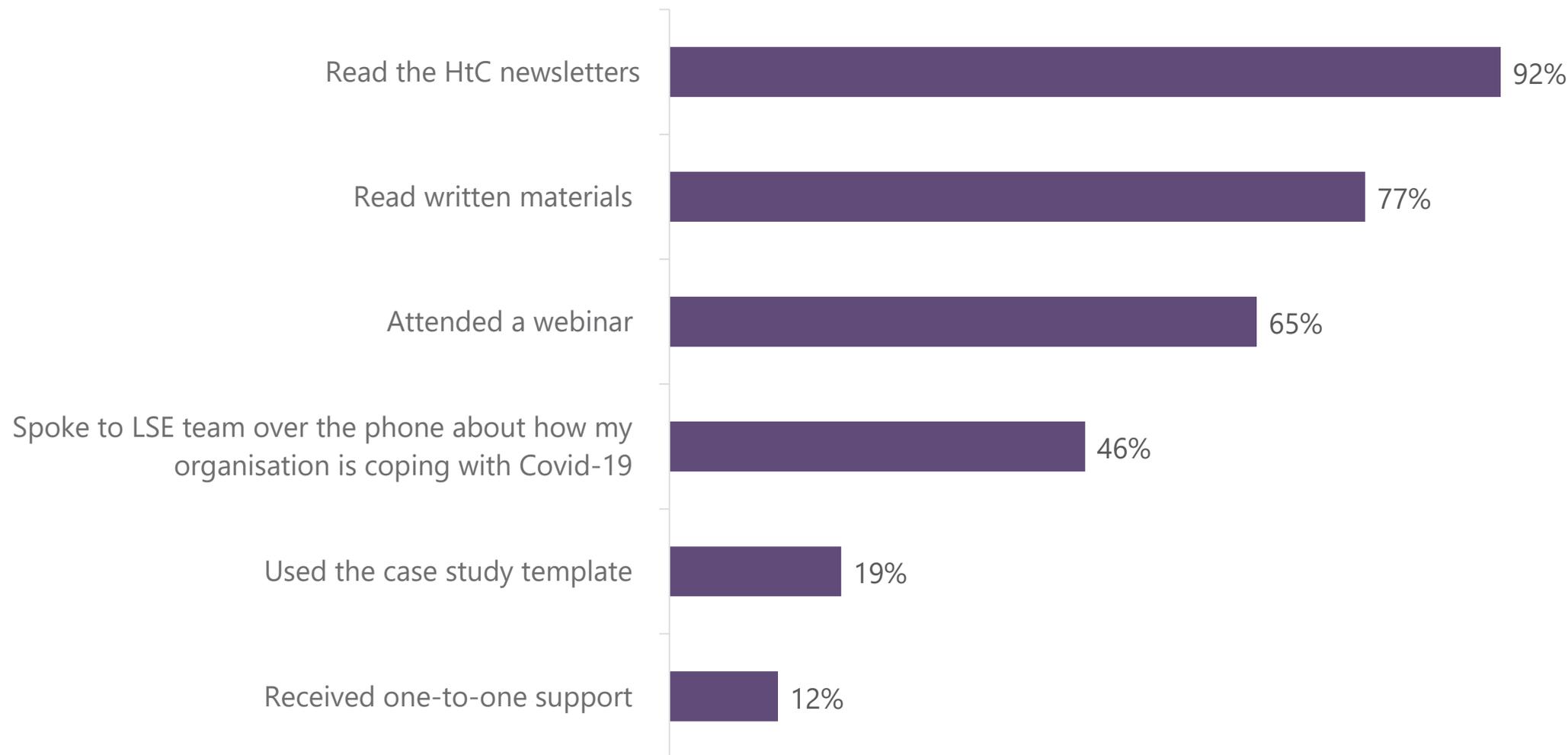
PARTNERSHIP FEEDBACK SURVEY FINDINGS

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YOU HAVE ENGAGED WITH DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF LSE SUPPORT

We asked you to tell us which aspects of the learning, support and evaluation activities you have engaged with since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.



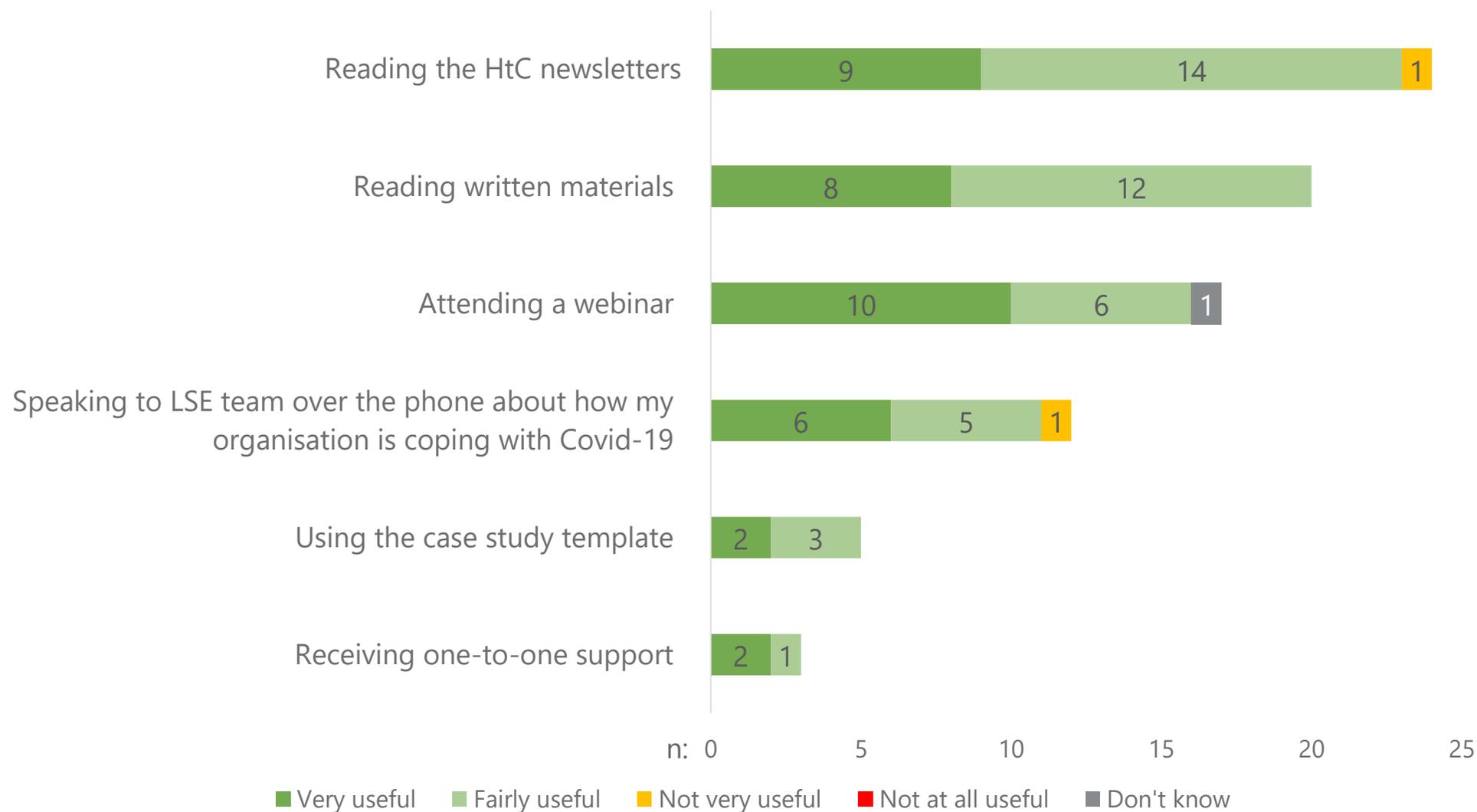
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Source: Partnership feedback survey 2020. Base: all (26).

YOU TOLD US THE SUPPORT HAS BEEN USEFUL

We asked you to tell us how useful, if at all, the following learning, support and evaluation activities have been to your organisation since the Covid-19 pandemic began in March.



Source: Partnership feedback survey 2020. Base: all (26).

Note due to the small number of responses the results are shown by the *number* of partnerships rather than the *percentage* of partnerships.

WHAT YOU FOUND USEFUL

Covid-19 webinars: an opportunity for sharing

Overall, you told us these were **engaging, and motivating**, and valued the **networking opportunities** offered by these sessions.

You also thought it was helpful **to hear about the work** that others were doing on these topics during lockdown and how **the issues** faced were experienced by many others.

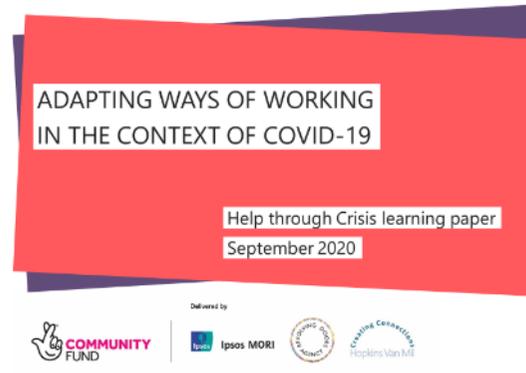


The webinar opened our eyes and showed us that we were not on our own and this was comforting. It reflected that other workers were feeling down, depressed about the situation. The discussion and ideas and proposed solutions gave us heart.”

Lead partner staff

Written materials: raising awareness around key topics

You told us the written materials helped **increase awareness** of the topic and the work that other partnerships were doing, and **helped you develop and implement plans** within your own organisation.



The learning paper on preparing and planning for changes in demand and adapting ways of working has enabled our partnership to cope with the changes and constraints placed on us by the national lockdown and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on all our lives.”

Lead partner staff

Newsletter & 1:1 support: keeping you up to date

You told us that you found the newsletter **concise and timely**, and its **content insightful**, providing a good overview of HtC developments and a way to keep partnerships connected to each other.

Those of you who received 1-2-1 support liked the opportunity **to ask specific questions**.



I like the newsletter’s conciseness and they are presented in a way that allows you to flick through quickly and pick out the bits of interest.”

Lead partner staff

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Covid-19 webinars: opportunities to network



Some of you reported **logistical problems** with the sessions, while others thought it was **difficult to find the time to attend**.

Despite being easy to access and less resource intensive, some partnerships felt webinars **do not offer the same networking experience and sense of shared purpose** possible during face to face events.

LSE response

The LSE team has planned **more networking events** for 2021 to give partnerships more opportunities to discuss and reflect on their experiences. **Advance notice** for upcoming webinars and events will be given to help partnerships plan their participation ahead of time.



I think the increased use of webinars will make training more accessible (less time out of the office, cost free - no travel costs). However, the face to face networking and sense of team is lost and needs to be provided for in another way."

Lead partner staff

Written materials: more specific examples



Some of you felt that you would have **liked more content that told you something new** and included more specific examples.

Keeping outputs relevant and up to date with the changing environment and Covid-19 guidance was also seen as a challenge.

The LSE team will **conduct more case study interviews** with partnerships in 2021 and look to include more specific examples in written materials, and focus on ensuring upcoming written materials are relevant and insightful.

Newsletter & one-to-one support: more examples!



You told us you'd like to see **more examples of partnerships' work** in the newsletter and including more detail on **the content of featured resources**.

Those of you who did receive 1-2-1 support expressed a **desire for more of this type of contact**.

Please consider **completing the case study template** so we can feature more examples from partnerships in our newsletter. We are also offering ongoing 1:1 support with beneficiary voice and evaluation. Please get in touch with the **LSE team** for 1:1 support – our contact details can be found on the final page of this report.

Source: Partnership feedback survey 2020. Base: those who attended a webinar (17), those who read written materials (20), those who read the HtC newsletter (24), those who received one-to-one support (3).

YOU HAD LOTS OF IDEAS FOR SUPPORT GOING FORWARDS

Activities including:

- Working with you to identify emerging themes which could be the focus of **written materials**.
- Advice on how to **conduct evaluations digitally** and suggestions for extra evaluation activities in light of Covid-19
- Support with **future funding opportunities**
- **Networking** and bringing partnerships together

More learning topics on:

- **Sustaining services** and the legacy of your HtC project
- **Demonstrating the benefits** of what you have achieved
- **Supporting staff** through change
- **Digital inclusion** and **co-production**

More support with local influencing:

- Sharing examples and **good practice** on this topic
- Providing **one-to-one** support
- **Bringing partnerships** together to share learnings and exchange ideas on how to facilitate policy influencing work

...and with involving beneficiaries

- Support with **virtual events and drop-ins**
- Opportunities to **showcase** what you have achieved, and hear from others what works well
- Advice on how to **record beneficiaries' feedback** and how to use this feedback effectively.



You could help us hone key messages and suggest ways we could present them for maximum impact in short/concise briefings."

Lead partner staff

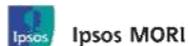
THANK YOU

Your feedback over the past year has been extremely helpful and has fed directly into our planning for events, activities and support for the remainder of the Help through Crisis programme. Thank you for sharing with us your thoughts and suggestions!

We always welcome and value your feedback – let us know if you have other ideas for discussions or resources you'd like to have for your Help through Crisis project by emailing HelpThroughCrisis@Ipsos-MORI.com



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PLANS FOR THE REST OF 2020 AND 2021

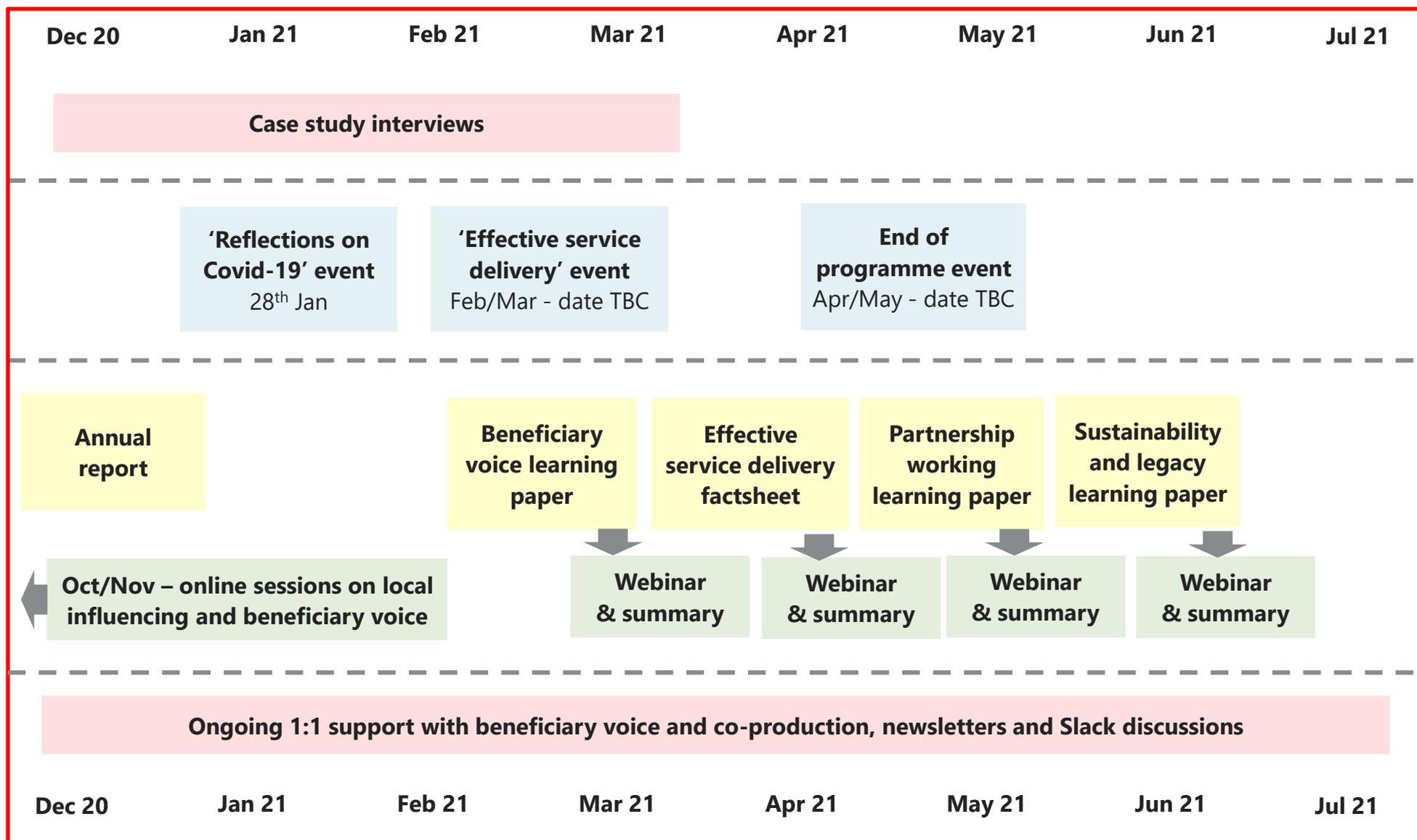


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WHAT WE'VE GOT PLANNED:

The calendar below summarises our plans for case studies, events (likely virtual), written resources and individual support.



THANK YOU!

Thank you to **everyone** who has taken part in our networking, learning and sharing activities. And especially those who've given up their time to share what they've learned in more detail during an interview:

- *Wyre Forest Nightstop*
- *Newcastle Law Centre*
- *Lancashire Citizens Advice*
- *Mid-Norfolk Citizens Advice*
- *Access Dorset*
- *Birmingham Rathbone*
- *Citizens Advice in North and West Kent*
- *Women's Centre Ltd – Moving On*
- *MindOUT*
- *Oxford Citizens Advice*
- *Mancroft Advice Project (MAP)*
- *Cambridge Crisis Network*
- *Better Leeds Communities*
- *Hull & East Riding Citizens Advice*
- *Ravenscliffe Community Association*
- *Community Links Trust*
- *Rossendale and Hyndburn Citizens Advice*
- *Stockton Citizens Advice*
- *Wai Yin Society*
- *Urban Outreach*

We're always keen to hear what you are doing, so let us know if you'd like to feature as a case study in the future!

We hope you have a restful Christmas period and look forward to working with you in the new year.

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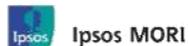
OUR TEAM CONTACTS

Please do get in touch with any members of the team below if you would like specific help or support. You can also contact the Help through Crisis email account and we will pass on your message to the best person.

- **Any questions:** HelpThroughCrisis@ipsos.com
- Andy Williams can help with **co-production:** Andy.Williams@revolving-doors.org.uk
- Rebecca Wilson can help with **evaluation:** Rebecca.Wilson@ipsos.com
- Henrietta Hopkins can help with attendance at any of **our events:** Henrietta@Hopkinsvanmil.co.uk



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Please get in touch!



HelpThroughCrisis@ipsos.com