

Future of the charity sector

# How do charities adapt to the impact of COVID-19



Key findings  
22 May 2020

## Challenges facing the charity sector

It is widely recognised that the charity sector does such a huge, important job in supporting those most vulnerable within our society.

Given the current climate and what we have seen, the charity sector has been and is still facing many challenges. Due to COVID-19 there is an increasing demand to support those most affected and vulnerable to the effects and impact of COVID-19. This covers a whole range across society from the elderly, those with underlying health conditions, not to mention risks associated individual family situations having to stay at home, for example risks of increased domestic violence and the opportunity abusers will have to control their victims. These challenges coupled with budget cuts, funding and limited resources, with staff and volunteers being ill due to coronavirus, places even more difficulty for the charity sector.

What about the support from the public and how is this affecting funding? Support from the public can play a huge part in charities funding and being able to deliver the services it is aimed to deliver. However, what we have seen is the concern that individual, financial giving may reduce in some instances because people are facing sudden and wholly unexpected financial pressures where they need to prioritise money being spent in addition of cancellation of many fundraising events across the country.

*“I do feel that people just don't have the money for charity donations at the moment. I usually support my local charity shops but none have been open at this time”*

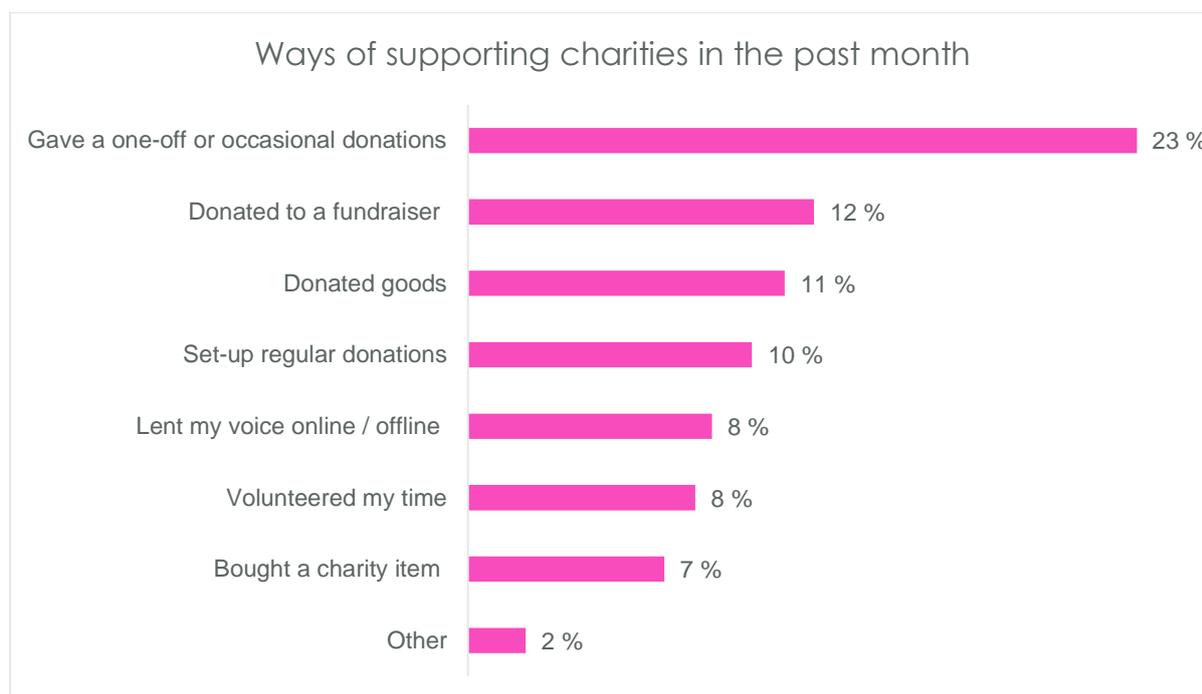
*“Charities will have lost money during this lockdown. I was part of capital fundraising team for a hospice and many events cancelled”*

So what does the current situation look like? We wanted to look at how the public feel about this, their current charitable behaviour, but more importantly hear from them how they think the charity sector could move forward given the current times and what would encourage them to support these vital services in our society.

## Current giving behaviour

### Support during the Coronavirus pandemic

Half (49%) of UK adults have not supported a charity during the last month while the country has been under lockdown due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Those that are donating are more likely to be providing one off or occasional donations (23% of UK adults) rather than setting up regular donations (10%). Meanwhile, 12% have donated to a fundraiser and one in ten (11%) have donated goods.



Of those that have supported a charity in the past month, encouragingly over a third (37%) have donated to specific Coronavirus emergency funds. Half (51%) have donated to causes they have donated to before, which are not related to Coronavirus, while over a quarter (28%) have donated to a cause they have never previously given money to, but which is unrelated to the current pandemic.

The top 5 causes supported during the coronavirus pandemic compared to those supported in the past are fairly similar. For instance, specific diseases are the top most supported cause in the past (33% of UK adults have supported this cause), while it is the second most supported during this pandemic (18% of those who have donated to a charity during this pandemic). However, there is a more of a focus on those who are facing immediate problems during this pandemic, with the top 5 causes supported rounding off with those in poverty, local services and homelessness.

TOP 5 CAUSES SUPPORTED IN THE PAST

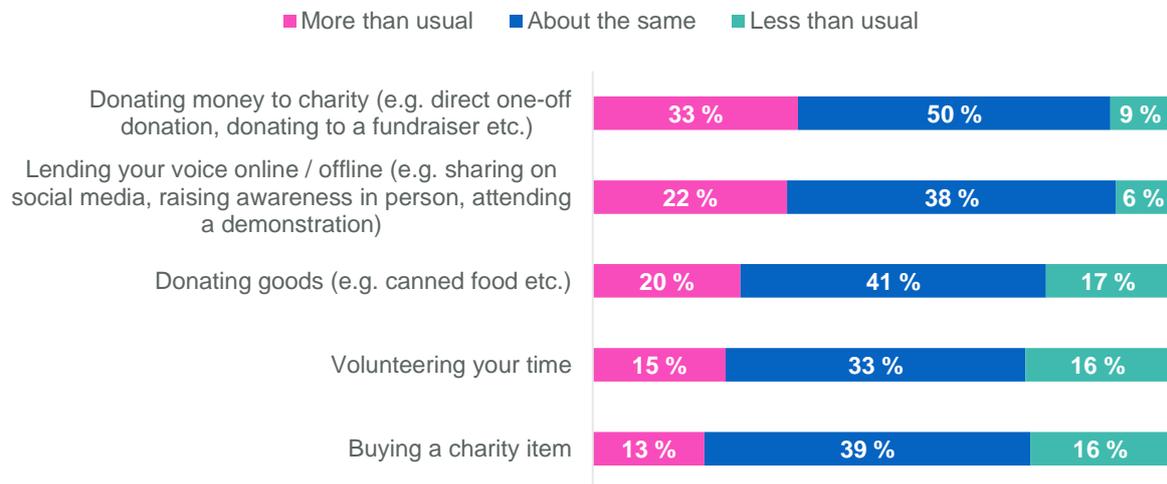
- Specific diseases (33%)
- Animals (31%)
- Children (26%)
- Emergency search (22%)
- Mental health (20%)

TOP 5 CAUSES SUPPORTED DURING CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

- Animals (18%)
- Specific diseases (18%)
- People in poverty (16%)
- Local services (16%)
- Homelessness (14%)

Those that are supporting charities in the last month, are largely providing the same level of support as they were before lockdown. However, a third (33%) of those that have supported a charity have mentioned that they are donating more money than they usually do, while a fifth (22%) are promoting charities more than they usually do online or offline. With difficulty accessing food at the start of the pandemic, and worries about loss of jobs, a fifth (20%) of those who have supported a charity during this time say they have donated goods more than they usually would outside this time period. There has been a big drive locally and nationally to help those who are most vulnerable to Coronavirus. 15% of those who have supported a charity say they are volunteering more of their time than they usually do.

Support of charities during the lockdown compared to before



Support in the future

Many of these supporters encouragingly will be providing the same level or more support going forward once lockdown is lifted and life starts to return to normality. Of those that are donating more than usual currently, 12% say they will donate more money to charity when they things start to return to normality, while three in four (76%) will continue donating at the same level that they are currently. Similarly, of

those that are donating more goods than usual, one in five (20%) say they will do this more when things return to normal, while 70% will continue to donate at their current level.

*“It is the right thing to do, and charities need our help more than ever during this difficult period (and will continue to do so)”*

## Why some will support more in future

### Recognition of long-term support needed for charities

One of the common themes emerged was the public’s recognition that the difficulties charities face at the moment will not become better overnight and will still need much support after the lockdown has ended with the associated long term repercussions. This ranges from understanding that some will be or even more so vulnerable after the lockdown and will need more help in the future to the economic downturn effects long term among UK adults and the charities themselves.

*“Communities will struggle for a long time after lockdown is eased and need help getting back on their feet”*

*“The long-term financial damage to charitable organisations caused by the Coronavirus means more money will be needed to get them back to where they were beforehand”*

### Personal awareness and appreciation

From having faced the experiences of the coronavirus pandemic, some members of the public have built more of a conscious awareness and appreciation for difficulties people can face which in turn has led to wanting to support charities and help those in need more during this time.

*“I have more appreciation for things like mental health as current times are very depressing”*

*“I think the virus has made me realise how many people struggle to afford the basics in life and I am lucky to not have to worry, therefore I would like to support charities more, such as food banks”*

### Personal experiences and sense of community

Tying in with the increase in personal awareness, people’s experiences they have faced during this time has motivated them in the level of support they give. This varies from their own difficulties they have faced during this time, to their family members being given support by local services.

*“I will be volunteering with the MH services in my area as I’ve had two crises since lockdown and I’ve been quite unwell. I want to give back to those who’ve worked so hard during the lockdown and I’m so grateful for the support I received from MH services”*

### Impacts of restrictions lifting

The practicalities of lockdown lifting will also naturally motivate some to give more with the idea of charity shops re-opening, being able to volunteer more easily and the potential financials going 'more back to normal'

*"I will be able to go out and actively volunteer in places that need help. I will also have more money once I start work again!"*

## Why some will support less in future

### Forgetting the current pandemic

Of those that say they will support less, one of the common themes emerging is the notion that people will no longer be in as much need of help.

*Some online support specifically for mental health during lockdown, this won't be needed after*

### Financial limitations to donate

The impact of coronavirus has meant that people's financial situation has worsened and this will be impacted on a more long term basis.

*"Things will be incredibly tight in the future financially with Covid and Brexit future is just doom gloom and very little light"*

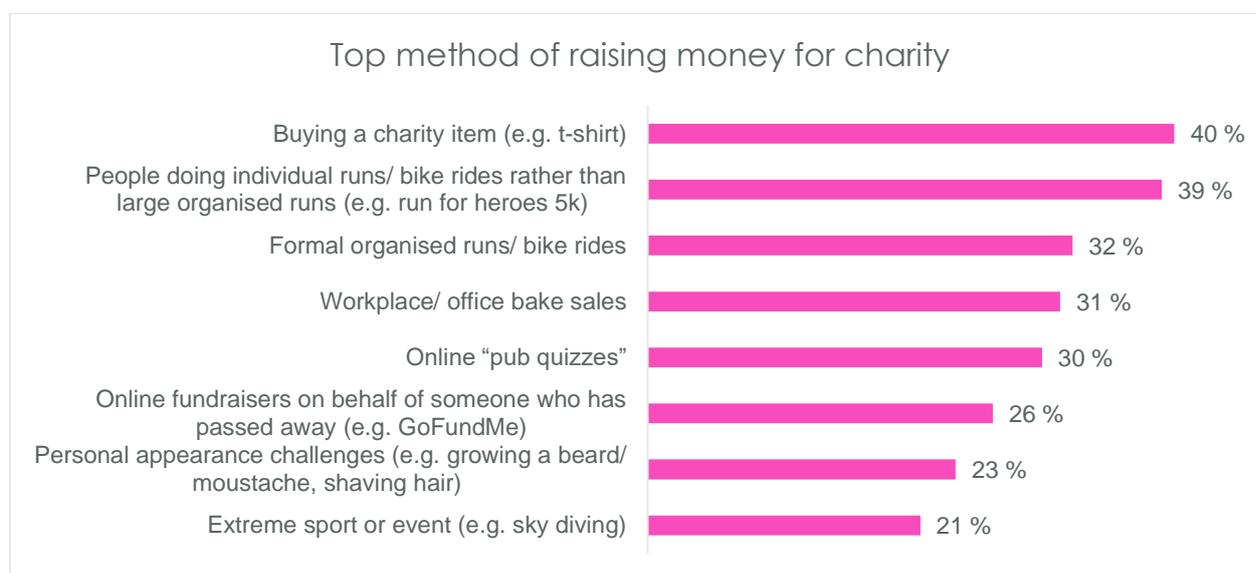
### Less time available

Once UK adults go back to a more form of normality and return to work, this will inevitably impact the amount of free time available to help out and volunteer.

*"At the moment I am working from home, so I have had more flexibility and have been volunteering with my local Foodbank to do deliveries. I might not be able to do this in the same way once I return to the office"*

## How do charities move forward and adapt?

With social distancing measures looking like they will remain in place in some form or another until a vaccine for Coronavirus is available, charities will need to look at adapting the way they engage with supporters and encourage them to fundraise. Thinking about what supporters like, and what would encourage people to engage with charities in raising money, two in five (40%) UK adults said they either love or like buying a charity item (i.e. a shirt) as a way to raise money. Doing individual runs or bike rides rather than large organised runs are also popular (39% love or like this), as are online pub quizzes (30%) and online fundraisers on behalf of someone that has passed away (26%).



## Public advice to charities moving forward

We asked UK adults what advice would they give to charities now and moving forward to help encourage support and we found various suggestions from individual fundraising, celebrity endorsements to more of a focus on digital campaigns and fundraising activities.

Below provides some more detail and advice given from the public:

### Need for ongoing digital campaigns

Due to the current situation and the impact that this will have in the nearer future with lockdown restrictions still in place for a while, the focus on digital campaigns and fundraising activities is a practical one and has been perceived as successful. This could vary from online auctions, quizzes and gigs.

*'Since lockdown so much has been done on the internet very successfully so there is no reason why that cannot carry on once lockdown is over and everything is getting back to normal*

*'People providing content online (like YouTube) and monetising it directly for charities. This is also more trustworthy because the audience can see where the money is going as opposed to other charity work that have dodgy Monetary strategies*

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In relation to the comment above, we also know that being transparent about where people's money is gone and showing success stories are also key drivers in supporting charities generally.

## Use of celebrity endorsements

The use of celebrities to help encourage support and raise money has also been seen as something charities can leverage more going forward.

*"Celebrity use, I have tried to create a fundraiser for charity since the lockdown by putting myself to a test of physical endurance at home, and I received zero shares and zero donations. But I have seen thousands if not millions of people donating towards charities all over the world, just because someone famous sings on camera from home (which they get paid for doing anyway, so there's no challenge)"*

*"I think something in the way of sponsoring a celebrity/MP. To have their head shaved/jump out of plans etc. It would show that they too are helping charities even if they are not giving their money"*

## Effectiveness of individual fundraising

The public have seen the success if individual fundraising initiatives and activities that think are successful and should be carried forward from the likes of the 2.6 challenge ([click here](#)) to ' Captain Tom's' fundraising ([click here](#))

*"Friends granddaughter spent 24 hours building Lego for her local Young Carers using a Virgin initiative "24.7".*

*"I think it's hard to predict what will and won't be successful, but campaigns that form around individuals (like captain Tom) seem to resonate with people"*

*"Children clubbing together to "climb Everest" on a treadmill raising money for their sick Uncle"*

## Not to expect too much money

Another piece of advice was for charities not to expect too much in terms of financial donations

*"Personal opinion but on tv you are often asked to donate 5 or 10 pounds by texting a certain number. This is too much and I can't afford to give this. I'd rather give 1,2 or £3 so charities should give options to donate lower amounts"*

## Maintaining the sense of belonging and community spirit

Carrying on the sense community and helping those nearer to them in need as been seen to work well and charities should look to keep this messaging going for longer term and once out of the current full lockdown to help keep charities moving forward.

*"I think charities should look to capitalise on the new sense of community and belonging, for example ideas like coffee mornings or talent competitions/entertainment that children and friends of all ages*

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*can join in. People are beginning to realise their own power and ability to take part and bring change - this should be encouraged''*

Quote from Kate Whiffen, Senior Research Manager:

***Charities are currently going through some challenging times from the impact of COVID-19. The challenges won't be over just yet with society not returning to full normality anytime soon so knowing how charities can adapt and move forward in these times is key.***

***We have heard some very positive stories from the public as to what makes them support more now and what would do in the future, but it's the challenge of communicating and educating the long term impact Covid-19 will have on the charity sector and learning from new initiatives that have been successful that would work in the future.***



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