



Charnwood

Charnwood Community Action (CCA) is a partnership between Charnwood Borough Council, Fearon Community Association, Gorse Covert, The Bridge East Midlands and John Storer Charnwood formed to support the residents of Charnwood amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Working with Access, CCA received:

- A tailored onboarding and outstanding support that allowed them to overcome obstacles in providing support during the coronavirus pandemic quickly
- An affordable solution, with a two-month free offer that allowed them to navigate funding hurdles
- An easy-to-use, cloud-based system that gave all partner charities access to vitally important, up-to-date and comprehensive information
- Bespoke fields necessary to continue supporting the borough's food poverty network, safely and effectively providing food parcels to households in need across the borough

Access NFP CRM helps Charnwood Community Action support most vulnerable in Charnwood community during coronavirus pandemic

Access NFP CRM gives us visibility, accessibility and control over our data that is vital in supporting the community through this time. Access has given us outstanding support to get the system up and running quickly in response to the extraordinary challenges we were facing.

Ahead of the government lockdown in response to the coronavirus pandemic, John Storer Charnwood was approached to act as the lead VCS (voluntary and charity sector) organisation to host and participate in the CCA. The CCA assists the residents of Charnwood with information, guidance and support via a centralised hub based at John Storer House.

Within the first week of lockdown, it became apparent that the Charnwood Food Poverty Network was at severe risk of collapse, due primarily to the age and vulnerability of its own workforce. Therefore, CCA requested all foodbanks provide data regarding their clients and stocks so that Charnwood Community Action could also set John Storer House up as a centralised hub to provide support to those in hardship, particularly those who were also shielding as a result of the pandemic.



NOW DELIVERED OVER
8000
PARCELS
to households
within Charnwood

Around **600** parcels
are delivered weekly,
supporting around
1440 individuals.

Overcoming challenges to support those most vulnerable

With several agencies working together, each with their own data collection and storage systems, CCA did not have a centralised view of the support required throughout the borough. They also had to combine data from CCA partners and information from the government on those who had been advised to shield with details of individual requests for and provision of support. This included requests for food parcels, shopping assistance, safe and well calls and telephone befriending. As such, CCA needed to swiftly implement a solution that would help them to effectively manage this large and complex data set and enable them to continue to offer support to the most vulnerable in the community at this challenging time.

John Storer Charnwood Director Karen Frostick notes, *"Nobody had a single system that everyone could access without data protection issues. We needed something that could house all this data, that was remote and that lots of different agencies could log into. Access NFP CRM was the solution to that."*

Access NFP CRM gives CCA a secure, cloud-based system, which nominated operators can access remotely. This means that if any of the agencies receive queries, they can quickly and safely access up-to-date and comprehensive shared data on all the support provided by Charnwood Community Action partners.

"The software has been ideal for us; in particular, the grouping function has been vital. Working with lots of very vulnerable people in the Charnwood community, we find that many people need multiple types of support."

With so many people to support across the borough and multiple support provisions to manage, it's been imperative that CCA was able to quickly get a system in place that allowed them to see a full picture of their operation and to share vital information, such as shielding status, with their partners.

"That ability to group in a straightforward, intuitive way has been invaluable. We may view a person because they're in the Tuesday food group, but we can see that they're also in the shielding group, in receipt of p-card and have probably got a befriender. You don't have to search for any of that. It's all just really apparent. You can report on any one





Number of foodbank newsletters circulated
including information and food box recipe ideas



Number of Mental Health Week flyers circulated

of those groups, and that person's details will come in. That means it doesn't matter if it's our colleague on the befriending team needing befrienders, or another colleague needing to see all the recipients of a food parcel, they'll have the full picture of all the information we have at their fingertips.

This functionality has enabled us to easily group people together, pull up reports on particular dates or activities, create labels for food parcels. All within the one system and accessible remotely by any of our partners."

Obviously, in such challenging times, CCA needed a system that was easy to use and which required minimal training to get all operators up and running quickly and effectively.

Since implementation, Sam Broadhead, House Co-ordinator at John Storer House, has been using the system daily to support the operation of CCA's centralised foodbank.

"Day to day usage is really easy. The system is really intuitive, whether it's creating reports, inputting new clients or creating labels you have all the data there that you need, and it's quick and straightforward to use."

Support that makes a difference

In light of the rapidly changing situation, CCA faced a lot of challenges that they needed to resolve as quickly as possible. Still, as a newly formed partnership rather than a typical charity, they also needed to navigate working without established funding streams. They desperately needed to get the system up and running but had to work within their own limited resources, both in terms of time to set up and funding. The team at Access worked closely with CCA, in particular Karen Frostick, to ensure their onboarding happened as quickly as possible.

★★★★★
202
individuals

are in regular
contact with staff and
31 volunteers for
telephone befriending



"Access provided us with two months free, which was vital because we didn't have any funding directly associated to purchasing IT, and then offered us a really affordable package after that. On top of that, they provided lots of additional free support in setting up the systems."

Given the exceptional circumstances, Access provided CCA with their new Access NFP CRM offering, ahead of its planned launch. Access' Head of Product for the Not-for-Profit sector Andy Campbell also worked directly with Karen and the CCA to ensure they received a tailored onboarding that got the system in place effectively and answering their immediate challenges as quickly as possible.

"We had amazing direct support from Andy Campbell, we spoke regularly, and he helped us to get the system to where we needed it really quickly. Not only that, but where there were things that weren't immediately possible, rather than just saying nothing could be done, he would actually go away and find a solution that met our needs. Andy helped us to create reports as a template, and we now use those reports every day. I think it really helped that Andy's background is in the charity sector. He understood the challenges we were facing as a smaller sized charity and was able to work closely with us to overcome those obstacles."

As head of product, Andy hopes that the work he was able to do with CCA will also help Access to better support other charities facing similar challenges in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

"Some of the work I did, personally, was simply to configure the software, as any customer would be able to. Because the timescales were so short, I helped CCA to do that quickly and easily so they could get the data in the right place at the right time. We also saw an opportunity, during the lockdown, to help a whole range of charities that would suddenly face similar challenges. So, working with Karen, we picked up on their experience of what was needed and were able to put in a couple of small additional features which we hope will also benefit other charities with similar obstacles to overcome."

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