



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

MHCLG, communities and COVID-19: lessons learned and lessons we're still learning

Matthew McGuire

Head of Policy and Strategy, COVID-19 Community Champions

matthew.mcguire@communities.gov.uk

community.champions@communities.gov.uk



Our responses

- Mandated closure of places of worship, unprecedented.
- Huge scale engagement exercise in response – consisting of **roundtables** and **senior level Taskforce to co-produce faith neutral guidance to ensure safe reopening of Places of Worship.**

Challenges

- Representation
- Too much/too little engagement – getting the balance right
- Managing expectations
- Engaging the right people to get the message to the right audience.
- We had high expectations, and faith leaders delivered in a hugely challenging environment.
- Tailoring the message – right message at the right time.



We've created such a strong network for engagement, it's opened up opportunities to develop a scheme that's all about hard to reach communities and supporting local areas to enhance existing activity.

In October, we announced £25m for the Community Champions Scheme.

Issues we've grappled with in Whitehall, are even more challenging in local areas, and this scheme is designed to enhance the activity and capture learning from the last 9 months.

- The scheme is targeted to areas multiple complex needs with diverse communities. We had to make hard decisions about where we wanted to work – there's huge demand for comms and engagement support with these communities.
- Community Champions schemes have been used widely in health interventions, but are also supporting a range of other measures including live insight gathering and co-production of materials with communities.
- We are very keen to support a wider community of local authorities in sharing best practice and learning from the scheme and plan to hold regular webinars to hear directly from those on the ground. Also sharing comms materials.



Background: Community Champions – key facts

Number of local authorities: Up to 65, data driven decision to work with communities with multiple complex needs (higher number of disabled groups, low English language and residential segregation) and longitudinal transmission data.

Length of programme: Delivery into 2021 to support vaccine rollout but a short-term programme

Geographical spread: High prevalence North West, North East, Yorks and Humber, East England, London and Midlands. Fewer areas in South East, South West but exploring support through VCS groups. Announcement to follow in Jan.

Target audiences: Primarily BAME and disabled (not imposing definition on either), both elderly and young people. Areas have developed own focus too, including LGBTQ+, carers, disadvantaged groups.

Further rollout/future funding: No set funding for 21/22, still to be confirmed.

Cross- LA working: Potentially may be groups funded by neighbouring LAs who you could work across boundaries with. Organisation Near Neighbours also handing out limited MHCLG funds across local hubs: <https://www.near-neighbours.org.uk/local-hubs>

How to get involved: Any questions please email community.champions@communities.gov.uk