Knowledge Hub Team Blog:
Connecting people to respond to COVID-19

Knowledge Hub brings together colleagues and like-minded professionals and provides cross-collaboration opportunities both internally and externally, and across programmes, organisations, professions, and sectors. It is about connecting people to grow and learn together, while saving time, effort and money.

With budget cuts and reduced funding, digital collaboration plays an important role and enables Knowledge Hub members to stay connected, reach a wider audience and support their work. The recent pandemic has increased the need for members to stay connected and tap into a wider audience (in addition to the usual go-to colleagues,) while continuing to carry out their job role.

Many groups on Knowledge Hub are working hard to respond to COVID-19. From dedicated healthcare professionals, care homes staff and social workers who are sharing resources and guidance quickly and easily, to local planners, enforcement officers and information managers providing fast responses to issues being discussed for others to learn from. In some cases the groups have been the first port of call during the immediate crisis and are now providing a useful shared space for colleagues to keep connected and build on knowledge together.

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Some groups have been set up specifically to respond to coronavirus, others that are regularly active and have incorporated content and discussions to respond to COVID-19, as well as those that have been dormant and have since re-engaged their members. The urgency for finding ways to keep in touch with each other has never been more critical – particularly for those who are working to maintain and deliver services to our communities.

We have put together a list of groups that are talking about COVID-19 to help signpost you to groups that might be of interest. Visit KHub Connects to access the list and join/request to join appropriate groups (sign-in required).

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Knowledge Hub has grown and is trusted by professionals across all sectors, and we are proud to continue supporting colleagues to connect, collaborate and communicate. Thank you to our facilitators and members for your contributions and participation in your groups.

We would like to highlight several groups that have been responding to COVID-19 and to raise awareness of the good work they are doing to support them, their work, and their group's members.

ADPH London - COVID-19 Community

- Tom Addey, Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) London

"ADPH London are using Knowledge Hub to collaborate across London to share best practice, resources and as a discussion forum to support local authority responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. The platform has been a really useful way for local authority public health teams – in particular Directors of Public Health and Consultants in Public Health – to share learning, offer peer support and reduce duplication of efforts across London."

Capability Development (Healthcare Project Delivery Community)

- Joscelyn Shaw, Health Education England

"In our community we have added an additional page specifically for COVID-19 resources, made available to all members. These resources include upcoming events such as webinars, mental health resources, online learning courses, lessons learned and health & wellbeing resources."

Chief EHOs in Local Government - COVID-19 response

- Peter Wright, Gateshead Council

"We now have every CEHO from an English Council in the group, which largely operates as a convenient way to contact everyone instantaneously. Its particular successes have been rapid dissemination of important information and recruitment of small task groups to create a contribution to a short deadline request from Government (for example, what new regulatory powers were needed for local lockdowns)."

Community and Care Home Staffing COVID-19 and AHP Workforce Templates

- Mary Davie, Health Improvement Scotland

"KHub has been a valuable shared space for developing workforce resources during the COVID-19 pandemic. We use it as a shared space which includes a document store, version control of resources and to update members through the announcements. We are using a quality improvement approach to develop resources, which entails tests of changes and building on learning, adapting and refining the resources. The document store holds the record of how the work evolves, up to and including, the stage the resources are formally launched.

This work has been generated by the Chief Nursing Officer Directorate of the Scottish Government in collaboration with stakeholders in health and care across Scotland. It has allowed multiple stakeholders to access the shared space when this would be logistically difficult otherwise."

EETSA COVID-19 Information Sharing Group

- Marie Meadows, Suffolk County Council

"We set up the East of England Trading Standards Association (EETSA) COVID-19 Information Sharing Group at the start of the pandemic. It is predominantly used as a resource pool where officers can find the latest stats and guidance, which are uploaded as appropriate. EETSA colleagues are also using this to share information that they may receive into their LA following any guidance they have been given by external agencies, which cuts down on email traffic when all officers are under pressure at this time. The forum is useful for officers to discuss matters they require other opinions on and to share experiences."

Environmental Health & Trading Standards COVID-19 Collaboration

- Peter Wright, Gateshead Council

"This group grew rapidly from nothing, and we extended the coverage from just Environmental Health to also include Trading Standards and Licensing after about a week. With over 2,190 members, this group has been phenomenal in sharing work between members, bringing good practice to the fore, and learning and questioning others who might know.

We managed to put the latest set of Coronavirus Regulations on the site within 5 minutes of their publication, which was essential as this was 3:30pm on a Friday – they came into effect at midnight and most would have missed out on them until after the weekend. Members are posting things they've created for others to adapt and use, sharing legal opinion on common problems for others to learn from, and asking questions."

Historic England COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund

- Rachel Prosser, Historic England

"In June Historic England launched a COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund to support heritage organisations facing difficulties because of loss of revenue etc. during lockdown. A proportion of the fund was awarded to organisations to deliver projects, which would provide support across the sector. We set up the Historic England COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund Project Support Group to bring all 30 projects together in one place, so that we could provide them with a 'one stop shop' of support, help them to make connections between what they were delivering and other projects, to provide peer to peer support and in the longer term to help us to collate lessons learnt and case studies. So far, about half of our projects have joined and these have been the organisations we have not worked with before, so it's been really helpful for them."

LACEF

- Barrie Minney, Brighton & Hove City Council

"The majority of LACEF members work in revenues collection and we had the double whammy of business rates and council tax to contend with. Members assisted each other by offering guidance and their experience. We even managed to compare collection rates for the first three months.

To cope with all these various COVID-19 issues we set up a new forum heading so all related posts could be found in one place. It now has over 110 separate discussion headings - a goldmine of useful information. LACEF members have reacted quickly to queries and responded to the crisis and continue to do so. The (financial) value of LACEF to local authorities in these difficult times must be immense."

LGA Early Years during COVID-19

- Liz Hodgman, Local Government Association

"We use Knowledge Hub to provide support to our members around the issues facing the Early Years systems, from maternity services through to starting school. The group is used to share links to resources and documents that councils and partners have produced and to share resources that we have developed during COVID-19. We have been delivering a number of online action learning sets and webinars and have used the group to share the presentations and outputs from the sessions. Members can connect with each other via the group and then communicate direct to share best practice and expertise."

PHINE Network North East

- Katie Dykes, Public Health England

"C-worKS has been set up to share discussions, resources and intelligence, region-wide (North East and Yorkshire and the Humber) across the system about the impacts of COVID-19 (and the response to this), on non-COVID morbidity and mortality, both to cover key areas of concern, but also include any positive impacts.

We decided to use the existing PHINE group on KHub as the 'home' of C-worKS as it allowed us to tap into an already established network rather than trying to reinvent the wheel. The wiki pages have been a useful way of us embedding the information we want to share and the comments section allows for discussions to take place."

Standard Operating Procedure for Single Cases of Infectious Disease

- Ben Sims, Public Health England

"We set up our group in August 2019 to help PHE South West work collaboratively and pragmatically with local authority Environmental Health teams on health protection and

communicable disease control. When the COVID-19 pandemic started to impact the South West, we built upon the network and to help facilitate communications. Our group now has a dedicated COVID-19 sub-folder and during lockdown we were meeting weekly by teleconference.

The advantages of working collaboratively across a region with external stakeholders include reducing unnecessary regional variation in activity, avoiding duplication of effort, co-ordinating task and finish groups to address emerging issues, forward planning, capturing lessons learnt and providing a platform to hear from guest speakers, such as topical updates from other government departments."