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Apart but not Alone

Neighbour Support and the COVID-19 Lockdown

*Voluntary Sector and Volunteering Research
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7th September 2020

The project team



Mat Jones



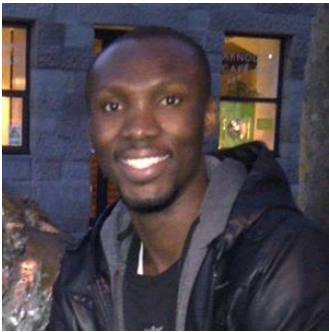
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+ Bristol Ageing Better Community Researchers and Public Contributors from People in Health West of England

Background and context



Three phases of the project

Phase 1: Survey 1

- What are the characteristics of neighbour support in the early stage of the COVID-19 lockdown, and how are these associated with area-based social deprivation?

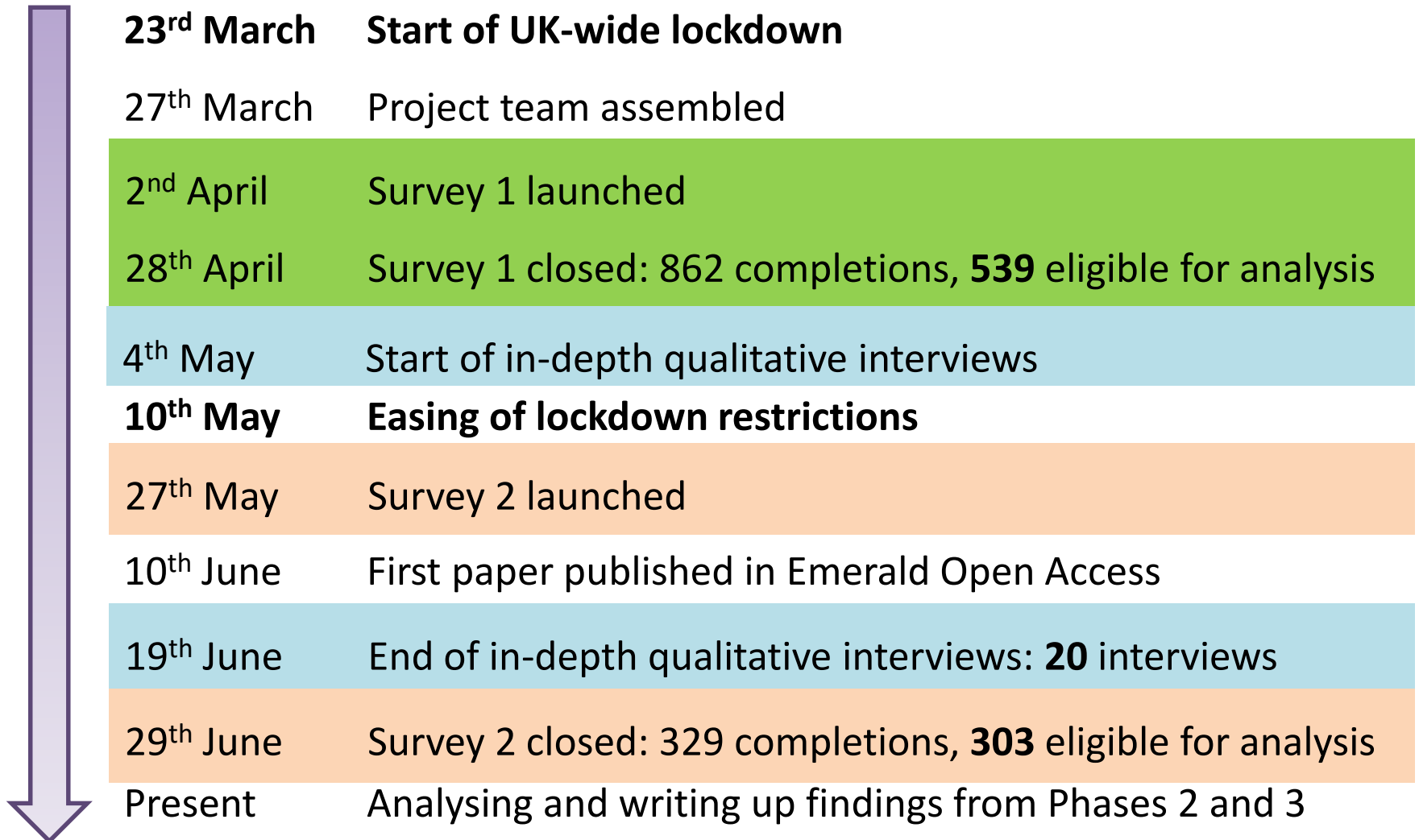
Phase 2: In-depth interviews

- What is the role played by social capital in diverse neighbourhood responses to COVID-19 in a UK city?

Phase 3: Survey 2

- What are the characteristics of neighbour support in the period following the easing of lockdown restrictions on 10th May?
- How do these characteristics compare to neighbour support in the initial period of lockdown?

Project timeline



At the start of lockdown – Phase 1

- **Everyone's involved:** including older people categorised as being at-risk of contracting the virus.
- **Doing things quickly:** neighbours acting faster than voluntary and public agencies.
- **All manner of support:** from crisis support, food and medical prescription assistance, comedy and creativity, small acts of kindness.
- **Every route available:** to link up with neighbours including vulnerable groups; frenetic social media activity.
- **Inequalities magnify:** more deprived areas were more likely to report addressing the needs of people with disabilities or reduced mobility, those with no access to outdoor space, and those with financial difficulties.

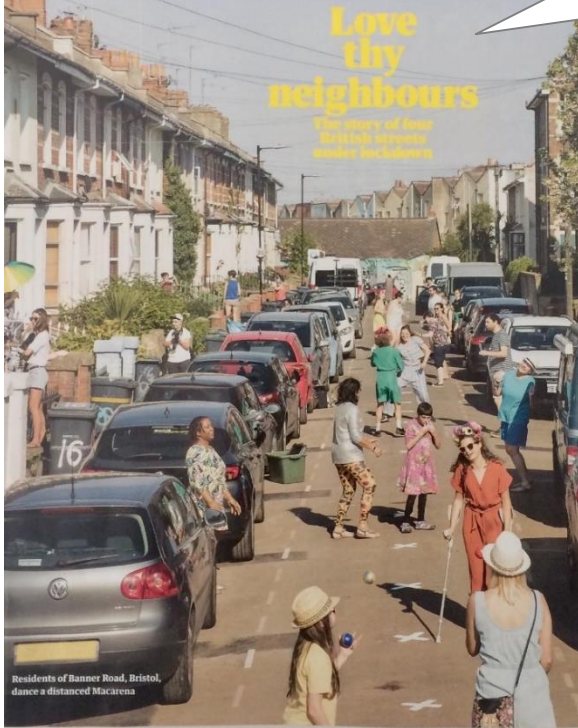
In-depth interviews – Phase 2

- **Identities:** a high level of **response from women**, many of whom appeared to be taking on organisational roles within communities.
- **Intense belonging:** Diverse experiences of the impact of lockdown and COVID-19 on local communities, with both **decreased and increased sense of belonging** reported (significant divisions along ethnic, gendered and class lines).
- **Liminalities:** Lockdown has presented a **liminal space**, where social connections and resources (**social capital**) have come to the fore.
- **Weak ties:** Has highlighted importance of '**weak ties**' in strengthening social capital and community responses to lockdown and COVID-19.

At the end of lockdown – Phase 3

- **New connections:** getting more involved in neighbourhood life and interested in becoming more involved in future.
- **No going back:** not wanting to return to pre-COVID neighbourhoods.
- **Fatigue:** discontents amongst neighbours about rule-breaking, loss of solidarity, OTT behaviour, social media grievances.
- **The liminality can't go on:** uncertainties about the future need to be addressed somehow by someone.

“Love thy neighbours: The story of four British streets under lockdown” – *The Guardian*



Residents of Banner Road, Bristol, dance a distanced Macarena

Coronavirus: UK lockdown solidarity 'starting to fray'

By Mark Easton
Home editor

30 July 2020

Coronavirus pandemic

“The restrictions of lockdown have fostered a new community spirit in Britain, but there are signs feelings of solidarity and togetherness are already beginning to fragment and fray.” – *BBC News*



Philanthropy + Add to myFT

Voluntary work comes under spotlight in UK's virus recovery

Economists to study how civic society can play more a more important role



Gus O'Donnell and Andy Haldane said the crisis had demonstrated the unmeasured but high value of volunteering © Dan Kirwood/Getty Images




“What the crisis created was the situation where people put leaflets through doors saying they were willing to do shopping, collect medicines and help out . . . It developed social networks which probably won't go away.” – *Lord O'Donnell in the Financial Times*

Chris Giles in London AUGUST 30 2020



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Apart but not Alone? A cross-sectional study of neighbour support in a major UK urban area during the COVID-19 lockdown [version 1; peer review: 2 approved]

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