



COMMUNITY ACTION NETWORK
BOURNEMOUTH | CHRISTCHURCH | POOLE

Community Action Network saves time on expense processing and reimburses volunteers within a day

The client

Community Action Network (CAN) is a registered charity that supports the voluntary sector in the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole areas of Dorset.

In December 2020, it was commissioned by Dorset Healthcare, the local NHS trust, to help the vaccination rollout by recruiting, training and managing volunteers to offer support at large-scale vaccination sites in the local area.

The challenge

The Covid vaccination rollout required CAN to quickly sign up and train thousands of volunteers. The volunteers were also eligible to claim travel expenses, which posed an administrative challenge for CAN because it had no simple way to repay them.

Initially, CAN reimbursed volunteers using petty cash but the process proved time consuming for both staff and volunteers. Volunteers had to provide copies of their receipts and fill out a form, and then staff members had to log expense payments on a spreadsheet and repay them with cash withdrawn from the bank.

Amy Collins, volunteering development lead at CAN, says: “The whole process was very manual. Our finance officer was having to make frequent visits to the bank to pick up petty cash. Naturally, that took a lot of time.”



The solution

In March, CAN decided to test the vHelp Expenses app. Amy says volunteers were happy to sign up and download the app, and staff found it easy to approve and monitor payments using the online dashboard. “The volunteers really like the fact we’re able to repay expenses within a day of expenses being submitted – instead of having to wait weeks or until we had the right change available in petty cash” she says. “The Pdf guide vHelp created for us was really useful.”

So far, 87 volunteers have used the vHelp Expenses app to claim their expenses.

The benefits

Amy Collins says the main benefit of using vHelp Expenses has been the time saving for staff during a period time when they have been extremely busy supporting the Covid vaccination rollout. It is hard to say precisely how much time CAN has saved, says Amy, but submitting expense claims using an app is far quicker than repaying volunteers using petty cash. The online dashboard has made monitoring and approving payments easy for staff. It has also simplified the expense reporting process to the finance team.

Using the app has brought other benefits. “Any of our approved staff members can quickly approve expenses, so if anyone is off work it’s really easy for someone else to pick it up,” says Amy. “Ultimately, it’s good for the volunteers. They know they can submit their expense claim and it will get paid quickly. Some of our volunteers are on benefits so paying travel costs out of their own pocket can be an issue.”

User feedback

Staff members

“The vHelp team were timely to respond when we were moving at a fast pace. They were flexible with our needs and they were patient when we had queries.”

“For me, the app is extremely easy to use. I’ve had no complaints from the volunteers, which is the main thing. Everyone seems happy.”

Volunteers

“I found the app very user-friendly.”

“It was very easy to set up and submit claims.”



For further information, please contact the vHelp team on

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