

BEYOND THE COVID CRISIS

LESSONS FROM LOCKDOWN



Glasgow's Third Sector Response to Covid-19 and Lockdown



Report by Glasgow Third Sector Interface Network

SUMMARY

During the lockdown period, Glasgow's third sector responded to community needs with breathtaking speed and commitment. Millions of meals were delivered to those in need, and services to address digital exclusion, mental health and isolation, and wider aspects of poverty were created and developed, showing the innovative capacity of the third sector. The flexibility of funders was crucial to this, although funding for food provision could usefully have been better co-ordinated to avoid duplication, and some might have been better addressed to other emerging issues.

Where third sector organisations formed or built upon collaborations and partnership models to meet the needs of the communities they serve, duplication of service was avoided. Those organisations who set out to communicate widely with their service-users or the wider community were well placed to identify unmet needs, and to deliver services to people who had previously not been engaged.

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1. INTRODUCTION

When Scotland went into lockdown in late March 2020 to try to prevent the spread of Covid-19, people felt fear and uncertainty. But the third sector across Glasgow responded comprehensively and rapidly, working together to put in place services for the communities they serve. The speed of this response and the size of it across the city were unprecedented.

There are many research projects currently underway looking at aspects of this third sector response, including detailed analysis of food work. The purpose of this research is not to count the beans however, but to pull out some of the key lessons of this lockdown period, both to ensure that any second lockdown or similar emergency will see an even more effective third sector response and also to set the terms for the ongoing discussions about the role of the third sector.

2. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Glasgow Third Sector Interface Network (GTSIN) co-ordinates third sector representation on the Community Planning Partnerships and other relevant partnerships and committees in Glasgow. Our committee is made up of representatives from thematic and geographic third sector networks in the city. We are funded by the Scottish Government as part of Glasgow's Third Sector Interface (TSI) and are hosted by Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector (GCVS).

This paper is based on 23 interviews with key people who led or contributed to Glasgow's third sector response (A full list of interviewees is at Appendix A) and on Scottish-wide TSI research, reports from GCVS events, and Glasgow City Council papers (full list at Appendix B). All quotes are from these sources. We have chosen not to attribute quotes directly because we do not want the focus to be on individual organisations, but on the sector's response as a whole.

It was an oversight that GTSIN did not interview anyone working in Violence Against Women services as part of this research. The Glasgow Violence Against Women Partnership have produced a report for the city's SAFE Partnership.

The aim of this report is to identify the broad themes that have emerged during this strange period in our lives, and to promote further discussion and understanding about them.

3. THIRD SECTOR SPEED AND ADAPTABILITY

"Within a couple of hours, we were contacting our community groups. We got hold of them and worked through what they were going to do and how they were going to do it. This enabled us to gather a lot of information about immediate needs. Within two days of lockdown we knew we were facing a lot of digital poverty. We knew people were going to face social isolation, and we knew we were going to have problems with access to food. We had that information straight away. We've been able to support a lot of people via Zoom, so we responded very quickly and put systems in place to continue our work very well."

The speed at which third sector organisations moved from being sent into lockdown (with staff working from home, some premises closed, etc.) to supporting their communities cannot have failed to inspire

respect for the third sector's agility. There were no long debates about what the third sector should do; rather there was an instant sense of energy and imperative.

While some third sector organisations, by the nature of their core work, closed, many more immediately sprung into action, changing the nature of their services and how they were delivered to meet the new situation.

The most obvious example of this is how the sector adapted to new technology. Prior to lockdown no third sector organisation was using Zoom for meetings or service delivery. Within days of lockdown, as it became clear that this was the technology that was most suitable and readily available, virtually all the third sector organisations we spoke to were using Zoom. Outwith the time limits on free Zoom meetings, the only two issues identified with Zoom were;

1. Safeguarding concerns for young people using it, and the need to have meetings protected with passwords.
2. Public sector partners were not allowed to use Zoom, which meant engaging them in ongoing meetings and discussions was difficult.

Additionally, organisations reported making effective use of Twitter to connect with other organisations across the city, and on the utility of Facebook community pages as a route to getting information out to people.

While digital exclusion (discussed at section 9 below) was an issue, many organisations reported that using Zoom for community meetings and events actually saw greater participation, including from those who were not normally able to attend physical events.

Many organisations expanded the scope of their normal activities, engaging in direct delivery of food and other services door-to-door, and many innovative new approaches sprung up. Examples include;

- Glasgow Helps Directory- Within the first couple of weeks of lockdown GCVS had created an online directory and helpline so people could search and connect to the services they needed. With hundreds of charities and community groups changing their service delivery Glasgow Helps allowed members of the public to find someone to help, whether that was with food and prescription delivery, mental health support or financial advice.
- Glasgow's Golden Generation App- Glasgow's Golden Generation began providing their members with tablets and developed their own app to be used on them. The app includes daily activities such as bingo, armchair exercises, pre-recorded cooking demonstrations and golden oldie radio playlists. The Fire Service and Police Scotland have also been invited to add content and hope to include some security features in the app.
- G53 Rickshaws- When the Silverburn Shopping Centre closed its entrances which were closest to Pollok, the G53 Collaboration arranged for rickshaws to take elderly and vulnerable people round to the other side of the centre to buy food and pick up prescriptions, saving them a twenty minute walk round the outside of the centre.
- Organisations who normally provide activities for children and young people creating and delivering activity packs, to alleviate the boredom of lockdown. (Activity packs were also used for other client groups.)

During lockdown the third sector has demonstrated its ability to be flexible and adapt to the needs of the community swiftly and innovatively.

4. FINANCE

“I went to look for funding for this (delivery of activity packs to households with children and young people) and at the start it was really frustrating because everybody knocked me back because it wasn’t food distribution. Funders were giving tens of thousands to people to do food distribution, but I couldn’t get a couple of grand for activity packs...They told me that if I put an essential food pack in with it, they’d look at the application. So, if I’d put a tin of beans in, they’d have given me money. My point was that people were already getting food, and I was trying to do something a bit more.”

“We had a big conversation about money, and we were all conscious that at some point the money would dry up. Did we need money, or did we need people and organisations to come together? And that was our priority. The money won’t always be there, but the local people and organisations will be, regardless of the money. Obviously the money is helpful and makes things happen a bit quicker, but it’s not and won’t be the priority for us going forward.”

“Financially we’re facing an uncertain future. We don’t know about the Communities Fund. Let’s have an honest grown-up conversation, and let them treat us with equality and respect. I’m not going back into that situation where I have to beg for money. Enough is enough.”

Third sector funders were responsive and helpful in permitting organisations to change how they were spending grants. The National Lottery Community Fund and Glasgow City Council’s Holiday Food Programme allowed organisations they were already funding to alter how they used their grants meaning organisations could react rapidly to help their communities through lockdown.

It is estimated that around £13.9 million came to organisations in the city specifically for Covid response work.

Table 1 Covid-Specific Grants Paid to Third Sector for Work in Glasgow during Lockdown

Funder	Total Grants
Scottish Government Third Sector Resilience Fund	£4,192,670.75
Scottish Government Supporting Communities Fund	£4,142,729
Scottish Government Wellbeing Fund	£3,311,775
Foundation Scotland Response, Recovery and Resilience Fund	£932,858
National Lottery Awards for All	£600,996
Esmeé Fairbairn Foundation	£279,775
Charities Aid Foundation	£142,571
Virgin Money Foundation	£125,000
Clothworkers Foundation	£32,945
BBC Children in Need	£67,016
Glasgow Food Fund (from Scottish Government Food Fund)	£50,000
Paul Hamlyn Foundation	£40,000

Many of these funds, however, were put out to third sector organisations in isolation, resulting in some being funded to do work that others were already doing. Duplication of services was an issue, especially of food in some areas (See section 7).

Many charities and social enterprises reliant on trading income, particularly space-based organisations, have had their income hit badly by lockdown. The loss of income from closed rentable spaces will probably be an issue after lockdown is eased as face-to-face services will take longer to restart. It's anticipated that these organisations may not recover within a year. The current expectation is that some community buildings will close for good.

Other organisations have been able to expand the services they offer and increase their reach into the community with the extra emergency funds. In order to do this some have increased the number of staff working with them. One concern for organisations is that funders will have spent so much money in emergency Covid grants that there will be fewer grants available in this financial year. Organisations are worried this will not be sustainable when the funding runs out and they are anxious about what will happen to their services, employees and those in the community that they were helping.

The flexibility of funders and the additional funds made available played a key role in the response to lockdown. Some organisations have seen huge increases in funding during Covid, but many are now left anxious that this means less to come in the future. If a similar crisis were to happen again communities would benefit from more directed, coordinated grants, avoiding duplication and increasing support for a variety of services including mental health and digital inclusion.

5. WORKING WITH PUBLIC SECTOR PARTNERS

“Public partners have been really mixed...Conversely, operational relationship with key managers across the council and HSCP have been really positive, and have enabled us to keep the wheels turning in the right direction.”

“We’ve helped and are still helping a lot of people, thousands of people. And not one council worker or community planner has phoned up to see if we’re managing OK or if they could help.”

“Glasgow City Council needs to move to be a facilitative council that works in partnership with key anchor organisations. GCC needs to work in partnership – they were getting their arses handed to them while we were kicking about saving the day. The idea that they ‘worry’ about the voluntary sector! What we need is true partnership, which means organisations being well resourced and coming to a space where there’s not an imbalance in power dynamics. It needs to change its culture and understand what it truly means to work in partnership.”

“I’m appalled at the lack of leadership, direction, support from Community planning. When the third sector have pushed ahead and worked incredibly hard to reach the most vulnerable people, and Community Planning has been nowhere to be seen. With the new Communities Fund grants still to be made, some of the jobs of people who have been delivering this emergency work will not survive. People are already on redundancy notices.”

“It seems like a strange counter-narrative to what we’re hearing, which is all doom and gloom, but people do feel energised in a different way, perhaps because they felt ignored and abandoned, but

perhaps because the public sector hasn't been there for the last few months people feel that they can do more for themselves."

In the interviews carried out for this report, some participants felt very strongly that the council or Health and Social Care Partnership should have provided leadership to foster collaboration. The council-led Community Planning Partnership structure includes a local Area Partnership in every council ward, each of which has a third sector representative on it, along with the police, council and health services. It would have seemed natural for these Area Partnerships to have overseen the crisis response in their own communities.

Some of our interviewees thought that the council did have a resilience plan which it did not use. Others mentioned that the council has long spoken about resilience, including working with the Rockefeller Foundation over many years after its successful bid to become one of their 100 Resilient Cities worldwide. Yet there was no evidence of any of this feeding into the community response.

More concerning was the extent to which some key council services appeared to become unreachable during lockdown, with one organisation reporting that they were unable to get a social work response to a child protection issue they came across.

However, some organisations reported a helpful council response over issues like rubbish removal during the crisis. Many elected members volunteered with local community organisations in their wards, delivering meals and coordinating local meetings.

Lockdown has shown the capability and worth of Glasgow's third sector, and organisations have expressed a wish to work with public sector partners as an equal partner in the future.

6. THIRD SECTOR COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP DURING LOCKDOWN

"Best partnership project we've ever been involved in... We've got statutory, voluntary, private, councillors from different parties, no nonsense. It's been brilliant. If we learn anything from Covid it's that, that the third sector can pull partners together and do the job."

"Where there was a strong relationship in the community, collaboration was better. Organisations working together to make sure there weren't patches or places with no food provision. Places where there were strong third sector organisations who had great relationships with their community, that's where it worked well."

"Some degree of mess is fine, because people will find particular niches, and that's OK and, if over time, we can knit them into something stronger that's great."

Where organisations worked together, focused on the needs of the communities they serve, and used their strong local knowledge and relationships, it resulted in an incredible response from the third sector. The third sector provided their own leadership and together brought about a brilliant community response.

Effective collaboration and partnership was the best model for supporting communities during the crisis. Pre-existing collaborations quickly proved their worth (such as Castlemilk Together) and new collaborations were brought together by anchor organisations (such as Kinning Park Complex or Milnbank Housing Association). New and exciting partnerships, such as the G53 Project, will benefit and support the community beyond the Covid crisis.

Co-terminosity Issues

An enduring barrier to collaboration in Glasgow is the lack of co-terminosity. Glasgow Helps logged calls by 'neighbourhood', based on the 56 neighbourhoods identified and used by Glasgow Centre for Population Health. This is a useful construct, as it goes beneath the 23 council election ward level, but there is no way of ensuring that constructed 'communities' like this march with the natural communities that people feel they live in. Many if not most local third sector organisations provide services in 'areas' which do not match neatly with wards or 'neighbourhoods'. This leads to the possibility that there are some parts of the city, or even individual streets, where no organisation has a mission to provide any kind of service.

During the crisis, it was a marked feature of the third sector response that the vast majority of organisations delivering support were willing to help those who lived near but not in their 'catchment area'. That general willingness to go beyond the confines of their mission statement (either geographically or in terms of services delivered) epitomised the flexible, whole-hearted response of the sector.

There is a key lesson about when collaboration works in local communities; organisations who are linked in to each other and willing to work in partnership, accompanied by a strong lead or anchor organisation with the resource and credibility to pull partners together with an emphasis on shared values, work best. There's a real hope this can continue post-lockdown and that community links and partnerships can flourish. This has underlined the need to improve third sector infrastructure to inspire and strengthen more partnership working.

7. FOOD

"Money went to food delivery, but they have not always been delivering a quality service beyond food. Larger organisations soaked up resources but didn't have the links into the community. You can't just invent yourself as something that you're not just to get money. You need to distribute in the right way to ensure communities benefit."

"We kept coming across people who had got shielding letters, but hadn't read the letter or opened it, or understood it. They didn't know they had to call and register, so as we were going round doing food deliveries people were coming out asking how they got access to food. More and more it became about welfare related issues, fuel costs, etc."

"Our approach was food solidarity, no questions asked, no needs assessment. If you're asking for a bag of food to your door and you don't know what's in it, you don't know if your children will like it, and you're not entirely sure when it will arrive, if you're saying that you need that then I'm not going to delve into it. There have been quite a few tricky conversations, which highlighted variant understandings of what food solidarity means."

The most immediate need identified by both the third sector and by funding organisations was food.

Glasgow City Council was responsible for delivering regular food parcels to those who were officially shielding, and additionally worked with British Red Cross to deliver food parcels to other vulnerable households. There were around 22,000 people on the shielding list in Glasgow. The Council also sent supermarket vouchers out to families which included children who received free school meals.

For organisations who were being funded for the Easter and Summer school breaks through the city council's Holiday Food Programme, the council were quick to approve organisations to reprofile their spend to meet the needs of lockdown.

Despite this there were huge numbers of people who could not access food but were not on the shielding list, or who did not find the shielding parcel delivered to them adequate for their needs. At the start of lockdown there was a fear, shored up by panic buying in the shops, that people would go hungry. Over half of the calls made to Glasgow helps (57%) were regarding food provision. On top of this a quarter of calls included enquiries about shielding issues and emergency food parcel delivery.

Family Action in Rogerfield and Easterhouse (FARE) co-ordinated the largest citywide emergency food provision. They estimate they have delivered over a million meals during the crisis. When combined with the many other organisations engaged in emergency food provision, the final figure is likely to be substantially more than that.

It is important to note that many third sector organisations who became involved with food provision did not aim to simply drop off food parcels or cooked meals. Many organisations used food as the lead offer to open up conversations with people which led to household receiving other relevant support, such as access to Wi-Fi or additional devices, referrals to welfare rights services, etc.

Duplication of Food Deliveries

In some areas of Glasgow – but not all - duplication in food deliveries has been identified as a concern. Where there were strongly-led collaborative partnerships, any duplication was quickly dealt with. Referrals were cross referenced against other organisation's lists. Where organisations who had never been previously involved in food work, or who did not have a footprint in local communities, became involved in food delivery duplication was more likely.

Data Sharing

Many organisations, because of GDPR rules, were reluctant to share with other organisations the lists of people that they were delivering to. It has been suggested that the Health and Social Care Partnership might usefully take up a role around data management, providing 'safe hands' to hold and compare the data from individual organisations. Developing this – or a similar – idea now that we are moving out of the immediate crisis should be a priority for the third sector and for public sector partners.

Communication

"We've been dealing with a panic more than a crisis. We've been hearing so much about Covid as a crisis, but the shortage of food wasn't caused by the crisis but by panic. There was a lack of information flowing from the government to the council to the communities, so the communities felt a bit of panic".

How the third sector communicated with the people receiving aid was crucial. One organisation reported that when they phoned those on their list, 40% of people receiving their food support did not need further food provision!

Glasgow Disability Alliance (GDA) used lockdown as an opportunity to contact the thousands of disabled people on their database by telephone, and were able to quickly identify those in greatest need and design bespoke services for them. Kinning Park Complex put leaflets round every door in the neighbourhood they cover, ensuring the community knew what services were available.

Communication – not just around food – is another area which should be considered and developed during a time of non-crisis. A simple model should be developed ready to be rolled out immediately in the event of another crisis. That could be as straightforward as the council using its resource to print a leaflet and have it delivered to every door in Glasgow, directing recipients to a clearing-house type operation (such as Glasgow Helps provided) for onward referral to a third sector project.

While these points emerge as part of the discussion about food, they would also be applicable to any kind of emergency. We should not make assumptions who might need help, we should be prepared to provide individualised responses rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

Food-led Responses, Not Food Delivery

"We were going out to every door every week, which meant we were on the doorstep, socially distancing, and seeing if there was anything else people needed, but people told us they were struggling for food. We advocated for them and linked them up to the organisations providing food. We worked through every issue. We were delivering wool, blow-up beds, to people. We were there every week and we started to build a relationship up with people."

Organisations reported that food provision was a gateway service; those that took the time to talk (socially distanced) to the people they were delivering food to soon came across a range of issues. As a result, many began to include activity packs to alleviate social isolation, and identified the reality of the digital exclusion issue and started to work to address that also. By developing relationships with those who were receiving food, organisations were able to help people into other services which supported them.

We cannot look at food provision in isolation; Universal Credit came up repeatedly as an issue which causes poverty, and food dependence. Issues around transport and digital exclusion were also raised repeatedly. Food poverty and insecurity is not a stand-alone problem, but a feature of wider inequality and poverty.

Quality and Suitability of Food

“I understand that people were scared they couldn’t get food, I get all that emergency stuff. But after a few weeks it should have clicked in – why are we letting people get fed this crap? Hot meals with no labelling on it, telling people if it’s been frozen before or not, no labelling telling them calories, fat, sugar, no allergy labels. Why was there no accountability for that? Covid is connected to diabetes, to obesity, to deprivation. Why did they feel it was all right to fire out Supernoodles and biscuits to people?”

In the rush to ensure that nobody was hungry, insufficient account was taken of individual needs. This became apparent from the BAME communities very early on, when it became clear that religious, cultural and also health food needs were not being taken into consideration in standard food packages.

Cultural and religious dietary requirements were often overlooked. However, the response from Sikh and Muslim groups was exceptional in its vigour and inclusivity. There were also some smaller BAME organisations that partnered with local African and Asian shops to provide specialist food and vouchers for members to spend there.

Some issues were identified with the suitability of the food being distributed. Some of the parcels received were not suitable for the person’s diet; some vegetarians were receiving meat, those who are gluten intolerant were receiving loaves of bread. These were often passed on to friends, neighbours or family but there undoubtedly was a degree of food wasted while some people were left hungry.

Some of the food parcels being delivered were of poor nutritional value. Foodbanks usually work with dieticians to make sure the food being given out is providing a balanced healthy diet. Some were worried that in the initial panic parcels were being rushed together with little thought being given to what was going in the bags. However, there were some great parcels being sent out to families, with organisations providing fresh fruit and vegetable boxes with recipes included and activity ideas for children.

There’s no doubt that the third sector response to food provision was outstanding. These deliveries were lifesavers for the many housebound or quarantined in the city and this regular face-to –face contact meant they could be referred onto other services if needed.

However, should a similar situation arise, there are lessons to be learnt. There needs to be better coordination to avoid duplication of provision. It is worth noting that there were two groups of people requiring food; those who could not afford it and those who could but had difficulty getting to the shop. In the case of the second group it might make more sense to make greater use of food delivery services, such as Food Train.

8. VOLUNTEERING

“There were large numbers of people wanting to come into volunteering, and that was more of a challenge than an opportunity for third sector organisations...What we needed was some really targeted pieces of work, and some thinking about how we recruit people based on particular skills and strengths, not just identifying those folk who suddenly had time on their hands and a willingness to help.”

“We’d have had no idea of how to get in touch with volunteers recruited through the Scottish Government scheme. Nobody gave us a list of volunteers in our area for example, which might have been useful. As far as I know none of that was made available.”

“It really has been grassroots volunteers, and that has made such a big difference, because they take great pride in the level of localised support that I don’t think you can get from national volunteering programmes or big organisations like the Red Cross. People have taken real pride in being able to help their neighbours.”

“We had to tell our 70 plus volunteers not to come in. We couldn’t put anyone at risk.”

Perhaps in response to a similar scheme being operated in England, the Scottish Government launched a national volunteering recruitment campaign in the early days of lockdown.

Many of those who signed up for the Scottish Government programme did so with unrealistic expectations. They expected to be immediately put to work helping out in their communities, but the Scottish Government was not working directly with those organisations who were doing that work. There is a real concern that people may have been put off from volunteering in future because they have had such an unsatisfying experience (or no experience at all!) during lockdown.

Local organisations who were working in communities did not ask for the Scottish Government to carry out this recruitment. Indeed, most reported that they already had sufficient volunteers from their existing base, topped up with others in the community who came forward to help, including teachers, councillors and those on furlough or working from home. A survey of TSIs across Scotland found only 7% who said they were struggling to access volunteers. Only 13% of organisations recruited new volunteers during lockdown.

The question of vetting is particularly relevant; no third sector organisation would use a volunteer to provide support to vulnerable people without first getting a PVG (Protecting Vulnerable Groups) check from Disclosure Scotland for that volunteer, and without putting the volunteer through some kind of training or induction. Organisations working on the ground simply did not have time to do that while their communities were in need. Only now towards the end of lockdown has this process been made available online, with around a week’s turnaround time.

Many organisations were disconcerted by the ‘Mutual Aid’ groups which sprang up, often replicating work that was already happening and using volunteers who had not been through disclosure or training, and with limited regard for data protection or the sensitivity of working with vulnerable groups.

It’s clear that in a similar situation a more localised response to volunteering would be appropriate. It would also have been beneficial to have a more targeted campaign and to place volunteers based on their skills and strengths. For example, Edinburgh did this more effectively by the TSI taking on a co-ordinating role and allocating tasks directly to volunteers who signed up.

9. DIGITAL INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION

“The digital divide is now a digital chasm.”

“The digital divide is not going away; we uncovered something that was already there, but it’s much more apparent now”.

“There’s no point in all of us trying to do digital exclusion work. Let’s work together for a shared understanding of digital exclusion, about it being a social justice issue and not just as simple as giving a device and Wi-Fi. There are issues like privacy in their own homes, etc.”

“We did know that digital exclusion existed, not just for people in the communities but also for some of the frontline staff in third sector organisations. Members started saying to us that it was becoming a huge concern when they wanted to put their operations online. Not just the kit but also the internet access. I could give 10 devices away a day if I had them! We’ve given away 45 PCs and 10 tablets so far in less than 8 weeks. And I’ve got a waiting list of about 30.”

Before the pandemic hit many people were digitally excluded. This intensified during lockdown. Not everyone had access to a computer, tablet or smartphone and many did not have access to the internet or phone credit. Those who did often found they didn’t have enough devices to balance parents working from home and children completing school work. Some families were trying to homeschool multiple children sharing one smartphone. An increase in internet usage added costs to households who were already struggling to pay bills.

Some people lacked the digital skills to access information and support over the internet. Disabled people were often excluded from online sessions due to accessibility issues. A survey carried out by Glasgow Disability Alliance at the start of lockdown found only 37% of members were connected online. People learning English also faced additional barriers to navigate the technology and get online. Lack of confidence and technical terminology were often barriers to getting online.

The third sector responded by acquiring funding to supply devices, internet connections and ongoing support and training. The Connecting Scotland scheme was heavily oversubscribed but around 780 devices were distributed in Glasgow. Glasgow Clyde College’s Gift-Tech project recycles old equipment and was useful for many organisations sourcing laptops. They partnered with North West Glasgow Voluntary Sector Network to provide over 40 laptops and tablets for people in the area. NWGVSN’s Digital Project included partnering with EE to provide internet connection and was in high demand from schools for pupils who could not work from home.

Digital service delivery became especially important for social enterprises who had lost income so Glasgow Social Enterprise Network supported 30 member organisations with a £22,000 grant for capacity building and transitional work around this issue.

Several interviewees mentioned that taking events and meetings online actually enabled some people – particularly those housebound due to health or disability and parents with childcare responsibilities – to engage for the first time. Many third sector organisations are considering retaining digital events and meetings alongside traditional ‘in a room’ ones, to maximise participation.

Lots of organisations came up with inventive ways to keep people busy and connected online; through bingo nights, curry and film nights, online quizzes, art classes, storytelling, music nights etc.

As digital exclusion continues to present itself as an issue many third sector organisations will look to continue their digital projects. The issue of digital access as a human right has been raised and there have been calls for affordable internet access for all or community Wi-Fi projects.

Access to the internet was crucial for people staying connected, getting information about the crisis as it developed, receiving vital services, and combatting social isolation. Many people in Glasgow are still excluded because they don't have the devices, the internet connection or the skills and confidence to go online. It's likely many organisations will continue a blended online and in person service. Most will look to increase their digital programs and will continue to come up with creative ways to interact online with service users. This will be really important should a second lockdown or similar crisis hit in the future.

10. SOCIAL ISOLATION AND MENTAL HEALTH

"There will be loads of people we didn't reach. There were definitely folk feeling isolated, but we did hear quite a lot of folk say they were isolated before Covid and now there were things online they could do, and people giving them a wee phone to see how they were doing, which didn't happen before."

"We've had four youth suicides. Not all can be tied exclusively to lockdown but that's definitely been a factor. So, a lot of the work we've been doing has been around younger people, and evidence shows young people have been really impacted by that sense of isolation."

"Mental health has been the main issue apart from emergency food/poverty response and trying to get people connected. First of all, there are people who have a diagnosis and their usual supports are not there. Mental health services have got much worse. People saying they couldn't get hold of CPNs, and psychiatrists. We have dealt with a huge amount of people in real distress and suicidal."

"Peoples' general mental health has deteriorated over this period. A couple of people sadly (older men with health issues) both said 'I'm afraid that I'll die and nobody will know. Nobody will find me and nobody will know.' That's a terrifying thought."

Participants of the TSI Scotland Network Survey were asked what effects most concerned them for their community if ongoing social distancing was extended; 91% said mental health followed by 86% stating loneliness. The two issues are obviously very closely linked with social isolation contributing to poor mental health.

Social isolation was especially difficult for older adults and disabled people who were more likely to be excluded digitally. Befriending services over the phone were extremely popular and a lifeline for many isolated individuals.

Organisations reported an increase in people who were previously coping who were now not due to lockdown and increased pressures and anxieties. Even now as lockdown eases, many feel nervous leaving the house again. On top of this there were new cases of people contacting them needing

support after losing work and income. Poor mental health was a rising issue among young people as social distancing and staying at home took its toll.

Most mental health organisations moved their support online or through the phone. Most were surprised to report that there were some clients who preferred phone consultations rather than face-to-face as it allowed them to open up more freely.

Some organisations, such as Lifelink, were able to increase their capacity, though they initially struggled to fill these spaces as their main referrals were from GPs. This meant they began to connect and reach out to local organisations and form partnerships. Referral pathways and lack of knowledge of available services were an issue previously and hopefully lockdown has highlighted the urgency with which this need to be addressed.

It's expected that, as lockdown eases, there will be a gradual increase in demand for mental health services and some in the sector worry that services won't be able to cope.

Should a similar occurrence take place again in the future the third sector should be in a stronger position to combat social isolation. Many services have been taken online and work has been done getting people connected to the internet.

One lesson that can be taken from lockdown is the need for improved referral systems and pathways. Communities often didn't know what help was available and who was providing what services. There needs to be a more effective way for people to get the help they need.

11. BUILDINGS

"I had a talk with the council two weeks ago about getting back into the community centre. The council now have their own corporate policy. Their timetable for opening buildings is not the same as the Scottish Government's. Two weeks ago I had a phone call saying I wouldn't get back in until October at best, January at worst. I said no, we need a presence. We need to be physically there. We're meeting in car parks to give people food vouchers. We need into the buildings."

"We're still unpicking how we're going to do this. We can't start delivering until we decide we're ready to go back into our studio space with shared facilities, which I'm not ready to do yet. The building we're based is open, but we're not going. I don't feel comfortable yet asking my staff or young people to jump on a train or a bus to come to something."

"We're an organisation for disabled people, and some of our staff and members are at high risk, so we're only now starting to think about offices, wondering if some of us could stagger going in... We're only now starting to think about a few people going back, but we don't anticipate being able to get disabled people together - these are people who would be high risk - any time soon. We'll continue what we're doing, taking baby steps back to some staff using the office again."

In terms of buildings there are several different issues that need to be looked at;

- Most offices shut and many staff were working from home for the first time.

- Some organisations that wanted to continue to use their premises to help with service delivery were unable to do, because their landlord had shut the building.
- In terms of re-opening buildings, and re-starting services, there are concerns both about when this will happen and if the guidance is specific enough, but also about finding money for additional measures such as PPE and more frequent cleaning of buildings.

One change that seems likely to stick is more people working from home. Virtually every manager interviewed spoke of previous scepticism about the efficacy of having staff working from home, but have been pleasantly surprised during lockdown about how well that's worked. This will have knock-on implications for demand for office space in the city in the longer term, although it does also bring with it questions of staff welfare and income inequalities. (If you have a boxroom you can turn into an office working from home is easier than if you are working in a shared living space or from the kitchen table.)

Landlords (including Glasgow Life) often closed buildings completely, whereas organisations which had their own buildings or premises with separate entrances were able to use them for continued services, or as base points for organising food or activity packs for delivery.

As we move out of lockdown, organisations are addressing issues about re-opening buildings and restarting services. There has been a lack of specific guidance for organisations on how they can safely open buildings and many have found extra risk assessments particularly difficult and time consuming to complete. Those with especially vulnerable service users (those who are older, have disabilities etc.) are finding it even harder. The costs of PPE, safety screens, new signage and extra cleaning products are high and many organisations are concerned how they will afford to make the changes required to keep people safe. Others are concerned that even when buildings can re-open they will be very limited on space and how many people can attend their group sessions due to social distancing measures still in place.

Overall, there has been poor guidance and support for those in charge of buildings and community halls. Organisations have been left to put in place new plans for re-opening and restarting services safely. Most organisations are beginning to manage problems they have come across by sharing policies and procedures. It would be helpful to have specific plans and support for this should a second spike or similar situation arise.

12. POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

"...a chap phoning up for employment advice, and he had given his notice to his old employer and was moving into a new job, and new employer phoned him to say new job no longer exists. Horrible messy stuff. We had people on the dodgy side of employment, getting paid cash in hand, and the impacts on them were bad. They couldn't get furloughed, and the bosses were still demanding that they came in. People needed the money, but they were really scared for their health. Some of the calls were stressful for advisors."

"We're all worried about the impact on poverty. The most difficult period for voluntary organisations is still coming."

Lockdown highlighted levels of inequality in the city and a huge concern for third sector organisations coming out of it will be the increase in poverty. The TSI Coronavirus Survey found 75% of organisations that responded were worried about increased poverty if there were to be a significant economic downturn.

There has been an increase in people applying for Universal Credit and Citizens Advice Bureaux saw an increase in enquiries from self-employed people and from furloughed people who now could not work. Unemployment levels will rise and debts will increase. This will add extra strain to an already stretched benefits system.

The third sector will need to be ready to support Glasgow's poorer communities and respond to a rise in redundancies, debt, homelessness etc. Work experience schemes, employment support and training will be key to recovery. They will need to be resourced.

13. IMPACT ON THIRD SECTOR STAFF

"I'm absolutely frazzled. I'm burned out today. I was supposed to be on holiday yesterday but had to do a funding application. Today our summer programme opened outside, so we had 33 kids and 17 mums and dads out today."

"The first 4 – 6 weeks were just completely overwhelming. I was doing 12 - 14 hours every day, day in day out, whereas now we have things established and it's easier to run."

"You have to think about how individuals adapt as well, suddenly working from home. For me as a manager that was difficult because you had to make sure everyone was OK. I was watching people on Zoom calls, picking up tells about who might not be doing well. Supporting staff became much more difficult. There's nothing like sitting down with a cup of tea with someone and having a gab, and screens aren't quite the same."

"We are already stretched and at bursting point. The elastic can't go any further without more investment in the sector. But as I say this the funding landscape is completely changing. It's galling that I've got advisors who are giving advice on redundancies when they are sitting with redundancy notices themselves. It's hurtful."

Employees quickly adapted to working at home. They adapted to using online technology to deliver their usual services. Many willingly switched their usual day to day tasks to help with the response. Some continued to go into their buildings to assemble food parcels and activities packs, answering helplines and delivering food across the city.

For those organisations who are reliant on council grants for some or all of their staffing costs, it is worth noting that this extraordinary effort was often carried out by people who were on redundancy notices, pending the decisions to be made on the Glasgow Communities Fund.

The mental health of staff members was a worry for many organisations. Employees across all sectors were facing the same issues of balancing childcare and work, those living on their own were trying to

adapt to the social isolation and many struggled acclimatising to the strange new world we found ourselves in. Organisations learnt the importance of workplace mental health support.

Staff and volunteers across the sector often deal with emotional situations in their line of work. However, it's often difficult to debrief from these difficult phone calls when working from home where work and home life boundaries can be blurred. The office is a natural boundary and leaving indicates time to switch off from work.

The interviews for this research were carried out as lockdown restrictions were easing, and third sector organisations were having their first opportunity to take a breath and consider what to do next. We found that people were tired, some burnt out, and that staff welcomed the chance to take a few days off and reconnect with their own lives, so consumed had they been in meeting the needs of their communities for the previous few months. However, the resilience and optimism that characterises the third sector was also in play, with people preparing to move on to the next stages, and thinking about how their services could be re-opened (even if in a different way) as lockdown rules changed.

When people make an extraordinary effort in new and strange circumstances at short notice – as happened during lockdown – some degree of burnout, exhaustion and confusion is inevitable. Organisations that are large enough to have Human Resources professionals or other staff support systems were better places to tackle this than smaller organisations with no real backroom staff.

14. A SECOND SPIKE OR OTHER DISASTER – WHAT DO WE NEED TO KNOW NOW

“People keep talking about going back to normal, but the old normal was shite. We have to hope that something a bit better for people and communities arises out of this.”

“But communities are robust as well. A lot of people will just get on with it when we get out of this. But the biggest thing for me is it's shown the lack of public service. Welfare state my arse. All the gradual reduction in services that local authorities and health boards have had through austerity really came home to bite during the pandemic. There was just nobody there in direct service. We were on our own with the third sector organisations; that's how it felt.”

“We're covering so many different potential bases, from small activities to kids all the way through to new models of local economic generation. None of that would have been possible without this major interruption that we've all experienced in our lives. We're trying to take some of the positives from that, for the new ambition that exists within the community that we want to ensure that we harness all the energy and enthusiasm for people to do new things.”

“Systemic change and co-ordination; there's something in there that we're struggling with, and it's quite critical. Third sector organisations responded quickly, but equally there is a place for process, a place for co-ordination, and a place for governance, especially if something needs to be more widely embedded.”

“We'd like to keep the prominence in the local area that we had, and to keep the connection with the folk we had. We'd like people to go forward with the lack of shame in terms of accessing support that

was there. One of the biggest things that changed was the political will that changed to support organisations. When everybody was in the same storm then suddenly finding it difficult wasn't anything to be ashamed of anymore, and we don't want that to go back to how it was. People started valuing what was truly important in their lives, and had an understanding of public space, health and wellbeing, and a desire not to leave anybody behind struggling on their own. We don't want any of that to change."

"We keep coming back to things that worked well that were built organically from the ground up. The only way we're only ever going to get proper community engagement is if we give communities the ability to mend themselves. It can't work from the Scottish Government."

If there were to be a second spike, local lockdowns or another disaster in the future the third sector would build on the lessons learnt this time round which have been highlighted in this report. Response times would be even quicker; most organisations now have new systems in place, new policies, procedures and strategies ready for a more streamlined response. People have extended their networks and increased their reach into the communities.

One of the biggest positives that organisations mentioned was the empowerment people felt to help their communities themselves and the strength they found in the new local partnerships that had been created and developed. Going forward organisations will build on this.

The coronavirus pandemic forced people to stop in their tracks and see what wasn't working in their communities and in society more widely. It has highlighted a lot of problems in the way things are run and it's given people the opportunity to think about how we can work together to do things differently. People aren't happy with the status quo and don't want to return to the 'old normal.' There's space and energy for new ideas, new ways of doing things. GCVS have set up the Build Back Better network for the sector to discuss these new concepts. If another disaster hit in the future we'd be in a much stronger place to face it.

15. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Glasgow's third sector has proven essential during this crisis. The scale of hunger and social isolation that people in Glasgow would have suffered had the third sector not stepped up to the plate is frightening.

Things that provide a model to build on to tackle any future crisis include;

- In many communities collaborations and partnerships between third sector organisations have been newly created or built upon, and will provide a more resilient framework for the future.
- The citywide platform provided by GCVS's Glasgow Helps website and phone line both helped avoid duplication of services and also provided a way for Glasgow's citizens to access the help they needed.
- The crisis pushed the speed of development of new services and projects. The third sector has shown itself to be agile and innovative, and this must be encouraged.

- The opportunities of digital or blended meetings increase opportunities for participation and engagement, and people moved very quickly to use these technologies. It was very unfortunate that public sector partners were not able to use Zoom, when this was the best platform for digital meetings and was quickly adopted by the vast majority of third sector organisations.
- Where organisations communicated with large numbers of their service users or potential service users they were able to offer bespoke services to meet individual needs. Priority must be given to mass communication in any future crisis.
- Using emergency food provision not as an end in itself, but as a tool to open up conversations in the community about wider needs was a better model than dropping off food parcels. It resulted in decreased demand for emergency food apart from anything else. It also led to further innovation in service development as people were asked what their actual needs were, rather than them being assumed.
- The flexibility of funders – including the council and the Lottery – in allowing organisations to reprofile their spend made much possible. (Conversely, however, where funders themselves were not consulting with key structures such as the TSI, the result was a degree of duplication in service.)

Areas where more work is needed include;

- Consideration of the destructiveness of competitive funding processes which mitigate against longer-term collaboration between organisations.
- The Scottish Government needs to recognise the importance of communities solving their own problems, and move away from top-down, centralised approaches. As a minimum it should work through the local TSI infrastructure more. Many of the larger national charities who the Scottish Government work with do not have connections to local communities in Glasgow or to the organisations that work in them.
- We recommend that in any future crisis better use is made of Community Planning Partnerships to bring people together (at least at ward level) to consider how partners can work together and to address any local issues.
- The Council should use its greater communication reach and resource in any future citywide crisis.
- Can we solve the perennial issue of GDPR to enable organisations to identify people in greatest need and avoid duplication?
- Organisations - and their landlords if applicable – need to plan now for future events which might lead to buildings being closed or otherwise facing restricted access.
- One size never fits all; the needs of diverse groups should be built in at the roots of service design and provision.
- In the midst of this crisis, the Black Lives Matter movement came to prominence. This is supposed to be the moment for change - but whilst there have been many supportive statements made this has not translated into anything positive or different as yet. The BLM movement and the differential Covid-19 impacts on BME communities are intrinsically linked; many of the differential impacts are as a result of institutional racism. Fundamental change is required by / within all organisations, and required urgently.

Urgent issues which require to be addressed in the near future include;

- Strengthening efforts to tackle digital exclusion.

- The potential for a forthcoming crisis in mental health, and increased poverty and debt is real, and a return to 'normality' will not protect our communities from these scourges.

APPENDIX A: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Ian Bruce, GCVS
David Maxwell, Volunteer Glasgow
Anne Strachan, VSV
Belle Barnes, VSNEG
Debbie McGowan, Urban Fox
Martina Johnston-Gray, NWGVSN
Alan Benson, Milnbank Housing Association
Hannah Mclean, Glasgow CAN
Lorraine Barrie, GEF
Jo Jarvis, Glasgow ESOL Forum
Sandra Stuart, GDA
Eddie Kane, Barnardos, Citywide Forum
Nick Hopkins, South West Foodbank
Jimmy Wilson, FARE
Richard Donald, Glasgow's Golden Generation
Frank Mosson, CABs
Jatin Haria, CRER
Jewels Lang, Scottish Refugee Council
Paddy McKenna, Castlemilk Together
Jill McKay, North United Communities
Sandy Busby, Yoker Resource Centre
Martin Avila, Kinning Park Complex
Cllr David McDonald, SWAMP/ G53

GTSIN would like to thank the above individuals for their time and honest thoughts. Any conclusions are GTSIN's own.

APPENDIX B: LIST OF REPORTS, PAPERS AND GCVS EVENT REPORTS

Glasgow City Council, *Shielding Support Transition Report*, CPP 5th June 2020

Glasgow City Council, *Shielding and Shielding Plus: Analysis on Customer Contact and Service Delivery (An analysis of service delivery in response to customer contact via the Council's Shielding Helpline and the Scottish Government's National Helpline)* PowerPoint at CPP

Glasgow City Council, *Covid 19 and Food Support Report*, Glasgow CPP Executive Group 10th June 2020.

TSI Scotland Network, *Coronavirus Survey Report*

GCVS, *Glasgow Community Response Helpline Statistics, Operating Period: 31st March 2020 – 31st July 2020*

GCVS, *Third Sector Covid 19 Zoom Session Report*, 22nd April 2020

GCVS, *Poverty and Post Covid Planning Session Report*, 14th May 2020

GCVS and Everyone's Children, *Partnerships in Children's Services Post COVID-19*, 16th June 2020

GCVS, *Glasgow's Mental health and Wellbeing during and beyond COVID-19*, 2nd June 2020

GCVS and CLD Network, *Overcoming Digital Exclusion*, 10th July 2020

GCVS, *Glasgow Third Sector Food Event Report*, 22nd and 24th July 2020

GCVS, *Opening Space- A Conversation*, 31st July 2020