

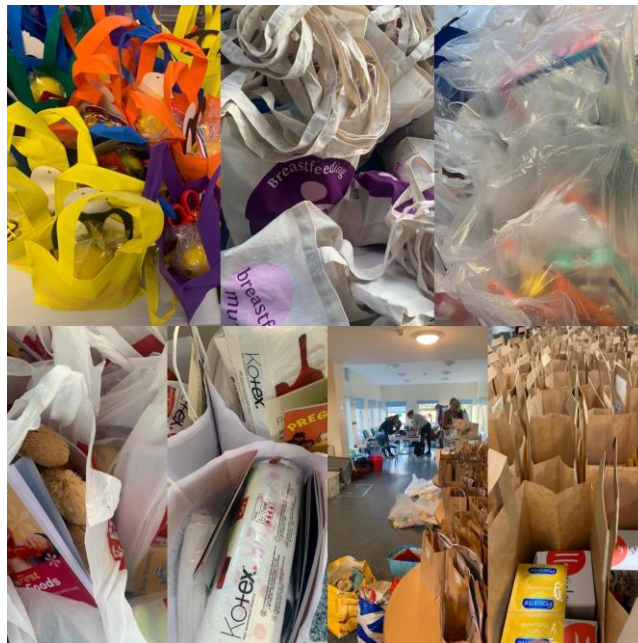


Scottish
Communities
for Health
& Wellbeing

Communities in lockdown

Case Studies

*How local health groups have
responded to the pandemic*



July 2020

Contents

Introduction	1
Blueprint for a Healthier Scotland	3
Case Studies:	
Annexe Communities (Glasgow)	4
Health All Round (Edinburgh)	6
Healthy Valleys (South Lanarkshire)	8
Mearns and Coastal Healthy Living Network (Aberdeenshire)	10
Safe Harbour (Inverclyde)	12
The Health and Wellness Hub (North Lanarkshire)	14
Wellbeing Works Dundee	16
Yipworld (East Ayrshire)	18
Some immediate conclusions	20

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a challenge for every section of our society. Whilst putting great pressure on acute health services, it has also exposed yet again the impact of inequalities in health. Lockdown, social distancing and closure of many economic, community and leisure activities have put great strain on the ways in which people protect or improve their wellbeing, and therefore in the longer term their physical and mental health; and a risk of greater social isolation has been added to the high levels that already existed for many people.

Many people work to tackle health inequalities and promote health and wellbeing in communities, in a wide variety of public services and voluntary organisations. But there are among them a range of independent grass-roots bodies which are community-led and for whom promoting health and wellbeing is the principal focus of their activities. Scottish Communities for Health and Wellbeing (SCHW) exists to bring such organisations together, and there are currently 78 across Scotland in its network.

We have been hearing stories from around Scotland about how such organisations have been playing central roles in the enormous wider community response to the pandemic. We thought it would be helpful to capture a little of this by researching and providing these case studies of what organisations have been doing. We also report a few of their immediate impressions of the impact of the crisis.

The eight organisations described here work in very different parts of Scotland, from Dumfries to Aberdeenshire and from inner cities to rural areas. Some have a special focus on young people and families, or on older people; many have activities for all sections



of their communities. All will encounter people experiencing mental health challenges; some have a more specific focus on supporting those people. But all of them work by knowing the specific needs of individuals and their communities and draw on a similar range of activities – activities which bring people together in groups, offer personal advice,

support and practical help, and create opportunities to live healthy, mentally and physically active lives.

The organisations we cover have volunteered to be included or were approached to ensure a wide spread of examples. But we know that the great majority of the independent local groups in our network have been taking special initiatives to deal with the crisis in their communities. We have seen this for example by our monitoring of the organisations that have received support from the national COVID-19 emergency funds established by the Scottish Government and Foundation Scotland.

We give a brief description of each organisation and its 'normal' work, explain what activities and services it has been delivering during the pandemic, and present a variety of examples of the resources that have been deployed – or placed in jeopardy, of the partnerships that have been relied on or created, and of the impact of the situation on the individuals and communities concerned.

The descriptions are based on discussions with the lead staff member in each organisation, together with their public web and social media profiles. Drafts have been seen and approved by each organisation. The discussions took place in late June or the first half of July 2020. So we describe largely what occurred when the lockdown was in full force, with some early indications of responses to its relaxation or plans for this. The organisations described rely on funding from a wide variety of funders, which cannot all be named here, along with trading income of their own in many cases.



Ten organisations in our Scottish network participate in the SPRING project and have local Social Prescribers. Three of them are included in these case studies. So we describe briefly here the project and its response which they share. Other organisations also deliver social prescribing, through different programmes.

SCHW is currently involved in SPRING Social Prescribing, jointly with colleagues in the Northern Ireland Healthy Living Centres Alliance and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund (UK). This major project promotes and documents the impact of an approach to social prescribing - linking medical care to locally delivered support services - which is led by community organisations themselves.

SPRING services have been adapted to ensure all clients feel supported and connected throughout the lock-down period. Connect Well is a new remote service provided by the social prescribers during Covid-19. Each Social Prescriber is in contact with every client by telephone, text, or video link. Referrals remain open to GPs and Primary Health Care professionals

More information: <https://www.springsp.org/>

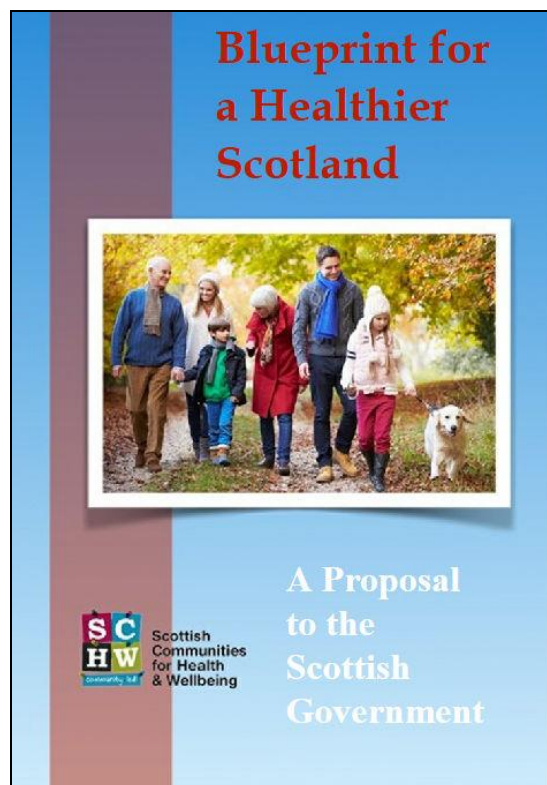
BLUEPRINT for A Healthier Scotland

The organisations featured here and others like them make a proven contribution to improving the health and wellbeing of many of the most disadvantaged communities. But the survival and potential growth of our sector rests on the shakiest of financial foundations.

Scottish Communities for Health and Wellbeing has made a proposal for a partnership with the Scottish Government. This would invest in the future of community-led health organisations, through a programme of core support that would empower and enable them to improve people's health and wellbeing.

As we were completing the Blueprint, the current pandemic struck. Whilst this is not the time for immediate detailed discussion of specific proposals, there is a widespread acceptance that as we emerge from the crisis we will need to look at how to do things differently.

We need to find ways of guaranteeing that as many communities as possible have a strong core capacity. This will enable them not only to respond to crises, but also to empower people in their communities to tackle the inequalities that currently make them vulnerable to longer term health challenges and burden our health and public services with greater costs.



READ the full Blueprint at <http://www.schw.co.uk/>

Annexe Communities

Who they are

Annexe Communities is an independent community run charitable company which operates at its centre in Partick, Glasgow, around the west end of the city and beyond. Activities delivered by staff and volunteers include lunch clubs, music, arts and crafts groups, walking, dance, therapies, and cookery. Many have in recent years been especially aimed at the elderly and isolated. Support to others with poor mental and physical health, carers and their families etc., is also provided and being further developed. The Annexe is a delivery partner in the SPRING Social Prescribing project (see p.2). It supports user groups to become independent, helps other local organisations, and is developing Participatory Budgeting for local communities.

Responses to pandemic



The Annexe centre closed to the public on 19th March and all group activities were suspended. Staff and 23 volunteers immediately began coordinating the PATCH (Partick and Thornwood Community Help) scheme. Food supplies previously used for the café and lunch clubs were expanded in volume, with big donations direct from a local supermarket and elsewhere. Fresh fruit and vegetables and fresh meat were included. Support was aimed at vulnerable and/or elderly residents (aged 32-90) who had no family support, no internet access to order food online, or were self-isolating or shielding.

Beginning with existing Annexe participants, the scheme was rapidly expanded, with over half those served being new referrals from Housing Associations, sheltered housing complexes, mental health charities and elsewhere. The client group was adapted to include much younger people who were living with underlying health conditions. Initially the

service was overwhelmed with referrals.

By June 2020 over 100 people were regularly receiving doorstep deliveries of food, cleaning items and toiletries, pet food and wellbeing activity packs such as DVDs, books or magazines. Phone calls and wellbeing check-ins were made twice weekly to all participants. Two volunteers organised game shows based on popular TV shows with older people living

in sheltered housing on the telephone – including those who had no internet or smart phone.

The Social Prescriber provided regular online and telephone support to her own group of clients – who tend to be younger and to have internet access, but often experience mild to moderate mental health issues.

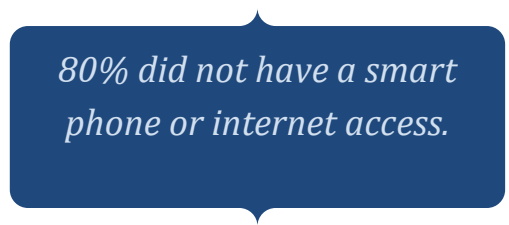
Resources and partnerships

Consent was sought from funders to change the role of staff on existing projects. Additional funding for the support scheme was obtained from the National Lottery, Scottish Government and a charitable fund. Some staff involved purely with the centre were furloughed. Links with Housing Associations and other local partners were strengthened, as the Annexe took a lead role in co-ordinating the local response.

Impacts

The people being supported were surveyed and said they were bored, thoroughly fed up and sometimes anxious. 80% did not have a smart phone or internet access. Staff and volunteers have had to deal with new levels of stressful situations.

The majority had not been outside since the beginning of lockdown. Many reported that they were fearful of coming out their home and going to shops or public spaces once they ended shielding. More recently volunteers have been encouraging those who are vulnerable and hadn't been over their doorstep, offering to walk with them to the corner shop or pharmacy. They plan to continue this, gradually building confidence. However, there was still a small cohort of clients who appeared fearful and reluctant to leave their homes. A few appeared to be getting worse each week, and in some cases were not interacting at all with volunteers – requesting that food be left at their closed door.



80% did not have a smart phone or internet access.

A phased plan is being developed to get the building ready to reopen and meet the requirements for social distancing and cleaning, and to update policies and procedures. Staff will return at the beginning of August, and the centre should open to the public in September, if permitted. The Annexe is part of a local voluntary sector network in North West Glasgow working to share ideas and devise plans for returning to work.

Contact details

9a Stewartville Street, Glasgow G11 5PE

info@annexecommunities.org.uk

<https://www.annexecommunities.org.uk/>

Health All Round

Who they are

Health All Round (HAR) supports people living in Gorgie - Dalry and surrounding areas of Edinburgh to live longer, healthier lives, using a community development approach. Supported by the Health and Social Care Partnership, it offers a wide range of activities at its offices (for one to one work) and in local community centres, under these main banners:

- 'Good Morning Gorgie': offering social activities and befriending for older people
- 'Heads Up': working with people experiencing mental distress, offering counselling and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (group and one to one support)
- 'Active Steps': in partnership with The Health Agency, Wester Hailes, supporting people in South West Edinburgh to become more physically active
- 'Grow + Create': art and creative groups and a community allotment
- Hosting Link Workers to two Medical Centres, part of the Scottish Government scheme. Clients referred by GPs are supported to attend HAR or similar services. One worker has a specialist role to support the Polish community.
- Complementary Therapies: profits help to support HAR's charitable activities.

Responses to pandemic

Face to face activities and therapies were suspended, and staff worked largely from home. Amongst the many various, sometimes individualised, forms of support offered were these:

Good Morning Gorgie: telephone support was given to 50 members. Staff and volunteers gave practical support to people who were isolating or unable to leave home. They did small amounts of personalised shopping, where food bank deliveries were inappropriate due to allergies or medical needs, and arranged essential home repairs. Doorstep conversations were important, lasting up to 30 minutes. Support was given with IT, benefits etc.

Heads Up: 12 counsellors provided in depth telephone support to 2- 4 clients per week each; 'light touch CBT' was also offered by telephone; three telephone helplines operated three days a week to help people experiencing anxiety and low mood.

A new online 'Ecotherapy' (Mindfulness in Nature) programme was offered, both one to one or via weekly videos. Two volunteers provided Life Coaching via telephone or Zoom.



People experiencing mental distress were also offered practical support as necessary – delivery of essentials, medication, crisis grants etc.

Active Steps provided a range of on-line exercise classes with 2000-3000 hits per week, individual support to vulnerable service users, and an on-line coffee morning.

Grow + Create activities were largely suspended, except for an online Writing Group. A volunteer looked after the allotment. Working with a partner organisation, 'grow your own' kits were delivered, accompanied by online tutorials and interactive chats.

Doorstep conversations were important and could last up to 30 minutes.

Link Workers continued to accept referrals, gave telephone support and arranged for practical needs of their clients to be met. This included crisis management to prevent homelessness and securing and administering approximately 60 crisis grants.

From 8th June befrienders were allowed to meet their befriender outside for a socially distanced walk or chat; other socially distanced outdoor contacts were offered: with an exercise practitioner, for a few people without on-line access; and for mindfulness meditation, with people experiencing stress and anxiety. Plans were made for the gradual restoration of services in each official phase of the lockdown. Telephone befriending and counselling, and deliveries, were likely to continue for some people.

Resources and partnerships

Some small additional grants were obtained, much less in value than the 75% drop in HAR's own generated (non-grant) income that had occurred. HAR was already active in a local public/ voluntary sector forum. Meetings have been much more frequent and better attended since they went virtual. For example it ensured that local food banks co-ordinated their provision. An Intergenerational Pen Pal project is being set up with local Primary Schools, matching isolated older people with children for letters, poems and pictures.

Impacts

The crisis brought recruitment of new volunteers, some replacing those who were shielding or uncomfortable with providing remote support. Impact on service users was mixed, with some coping very badly, and others greatly valuing the support received, even increasing their contact with HAR.

Contact details

24 Westfield Avenue, Edinburgh EH11 2QH

info@healthallround.org.uk <http://www.healthallround.org.uk/>

Healthy Valleys

Who they are

Healthy Valleys is a key community anchor organisation in the rural Clydesdale area of South Lanarkshire, with a focus on the communities most in need. Based in a decommissioned section of a hospital in Lanark, they provide activities, support and services there and in a wide range of community venues and partner offices, in each of the towns and villages. The following are just some of the activities that are delivered:

Resilient communities: Community Health Cafes; healthy eating cooking courses; food & hygiene training in Healthy Valleys' own REHIS accredited centre; local exercise opportunities; health walks; indoor bowling; community based Active Play clubs; Holiday Play clubs; early years play sessions; physical activity and wellbeing courses for children facing difficulties in school transitions. They facilitate the creation of clubs and classes for arts and crafts, physical activity etc. where these do not exist, with the aim of handing responsibility to local volunteers to sustain them.



Resilient Families: One to one support for vulnerable pregnant women and families with children up to the age of five; Family Education and Support Programmes aimed at families living within rural South Lanarkshire who need extra support.

Resilient People: Community Health Navigators offer 1:1 support to individuals to set achievable goals and connect to support in the local community, working with GP practices in a long-standing social prescribing programme. This is complemented and enhanced by participation in the SPRING Social Prescribing project (see p2). The ReConnect project offers 6-8 weekly sessions of practical and emotional support to people aged 50+ who are lonely and isolated. Specialist support is also given to women who are survivors of domestic abuse.

Responses to pandemic

In mid-March 2020 the NHS decided that it needed the whole of the Lanark building for its Covid response. So Healthy Valleys lost its HQ, with 10 days' notice. Staff have been working from home and a variety of rooms that they 'begged, borrowed and stole'. Face to face service delivery was suspended.

From the week beginning 16 March, the team developed an Action Plan. They mapped existing assets in the various villages and communities; individual staff members were assigned as leads in each area. Much of the response involved co-ordinating and supporting local 'pop-up' Community Response groups with information, ideas and shared resources, taking the lead if there was no local group –which was mainly in the most deprived areas.

Food distribution was a major element of the response. In addition to supporting the local groups, direct support was given to 246 existing service users: food packs, supplemented once funding was received with fresh foods, plus wellbeing and activity packs, adapted to age and family needs. Other provision has included cooked meals, food shopping, prescription delivery, and packs for weaning and pregnancy, healthy start vitamins, or PPE. A minibus was hired to take a mobile 'community larder' into a deprived housing scheme, where take-up of other provision was low. This shop-style larder, and another in a village hall elsewhere, offered more choice of food in a less stigmatising way than food banks can.

The Resilient People team offered a variety of 'wellbeing' and 'listening ear' phone and text conversations, specialist therapeutic sessions and 1-1 calls to survivors of domestic abuse. New referrals were received from a Council Covid Helpline and were supported by phone or online, including some CBT sessions, leading to a need to engage new sessional staff.

Jack was referred by another organisation. He is 82, has multiple health challenges and lives alone. The Project Worker rang to assess his needs. She then matched him with HV volunteer Stewart - himself an older man. Stewart and Jack now chat at least once a week. Jack says "I look forward to Stewart's call. It's the highlight of my week". Stewart also supports another isolated older man and has made plans with them that the three will meet once the lockdown is over and may go for a weekly meal at a local café.

Resources and partnerships

Healthy Valleys quickly took the lead in creating a weekly Clydesdale Covid Co-ordinating Group for the local response groups and public and voluntary agencies. Support from Healthy Valleys has been vital for people in the Community Response Groups facing new challenges of working with vulnerable people.

The Voluntary Sector Chief Officers have met more frequently and constructively, in greater numbers.

Around 60 direct Healthy Valleys volunteers have been active. Many replaced people who were shielding – but who may need to be re-engaged as newer volunteers return to work.

Impacts

An increased need for mental health and wellbeing support is evident among service users. Some older people are fearful of re-emerging into a changed world.

New partnerships have been made with people in some communities, and it is hoped that with support these can lead to their better future engagement in Community Planning.

Services will have to change in future, with less reliance on a central base. But face to face support will still be the 'bread and butter work'.

Contact details info@healthyvalleys.org.uk <https://healthyvalleys.org.uk/>

Mearns and Coastal Healthy Living Network

Who they are

Based in Laurencekirk and working throughout the rural and coastal Mearns and Kincardine areas of southern Aberdeenshire, Mearns and Coastal Healthy Living Network was established in 2002. It provides volunteer-led services and activities to improve the health and wellbeing of older people and to tackle social isolation and loneliness. It is led by a board many of whom are themselves older people, as are many of the volunteers.

Services provided, to those who need them to enable them to live independently for as long as possible, include garden maintenance, help from a handyperson, transport and shopping (home delivery or accompanied).

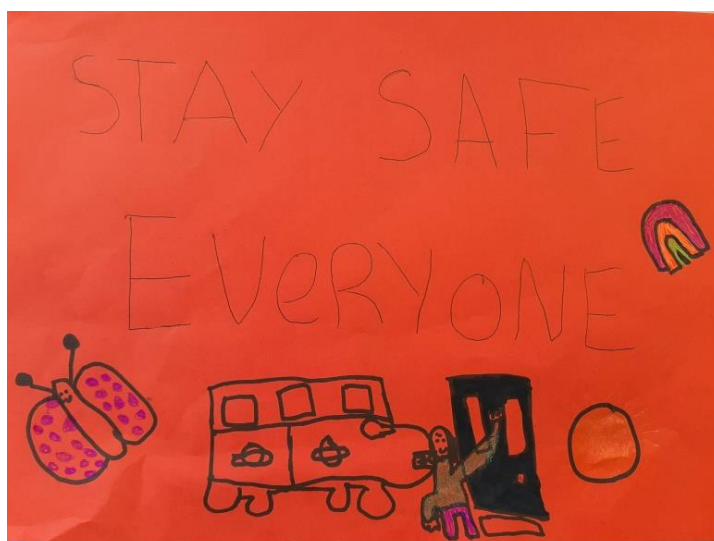
Activities, aimed at increasing wellbeing and reducing isolation, include lunch clubs, gentle exercise classes, social gardening groups, health walks, a Past Times social group for people with mild cognitive impairment or early stage dementia, and, also for people with dementia and their families and friends, a Memory Café and film screenings. Activities are designed to also contribute something to the community where possible e.g. by gardening at local railway stations.

In addition, the Network builds the skills and confidence of older people by offering volunteering opportunities and setting up older people's forums. Partnerships are vital for MCHLN, including Aberdeenshire Council, local schools, care homes and other charities.

Responses to pandemic

All groups and activities were suspended. Ways of working were quickly adapted to keep clients and volunteers safe and to ensure compliance with social distancing, shielding and other requirements. The following services continued:

- Transport, mainly for healthcare appointments
- Home delivery of shopping, including prescriptions and Post Office pickups (charges normally made for transport and shopping were waived)
- Garden maintenance (with updated guidance for volunteers)
- A new telephone contact service, generally weekly.



Shopping was based on the shopping lists that individuals provided. Volunteers were matched to regular clients to allow them to develop personal contacts and knowledge of needs. The shopping volunteers were the only sight of others that some people were getting. Any concerns about clients were noted and passed on to housing or other agencies.

Criteria for support services were expanded to meet increased demand, including anyone considered 'vulnerable', on a case by case basis. 130 new clients were added to the 135 existing ones.

New groups sprang up in several villages providing 'community larders'. MCHLN used its experience to support these with guidance, funding advice, PPE etc.

Resources and partnerships

There was a drastic reduction in the ability of existing volunteers to participate, but an appeal to local communities resulted in the recruitment of around 40 new volunteers. There is both a long term need for more volunteers and an opportunity to keep these people's commitment.

The board met much more frequently than normally, to support the staff, understand the new systems that were required and share understanding of the community. They reached out to many old and new partners. They have developed new funding strategies, both short term for the crisis and long term.

Impacts

Older people have suffered from the loss of group activity and structure to their time. Many were feeling increasingly vulnerable as the whole world moved on line and they did not have the devices or the knowledge to do so. Often they would not have been able to organise shopping for themselves.

Many older people were feeling increasingly vulnerable as the whole world moved on line

Keeping in touch with users of the dementia services has been one of the biggest challenges. MCHLN used its new volunteers and telephone service to close the gap.

Before Covid-19 MCHLN had been working with schools to help older people use ICT. Now they are looking at how they might be able to make greater use of ICT for some group activities in future.

Contact details

44 High Street Laurencekirk AB30 1AB

mchln.office@gmail.com <https://mchln.org.uk/>

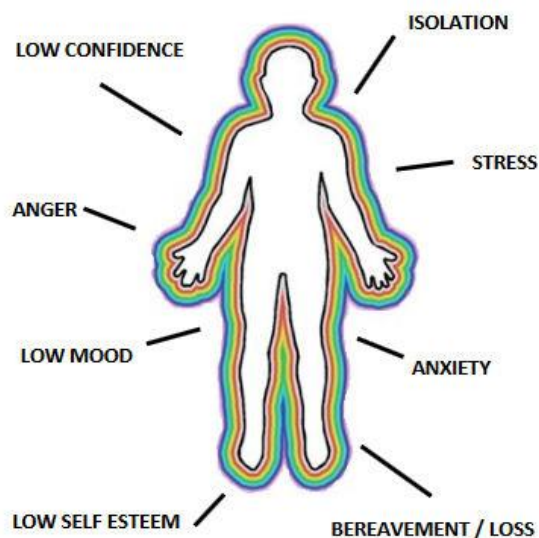
Safe Harbour

Who they are

Safe Harbour is an emotional support service for Inverclyde, working in some of the most deprived areas in Scotland. They enable people to improve their emotional wellbeing by improving such things as self-esteem and self-worth, and to enhance their skills for coping with difficulties in life. They aim at 'emotional reconstruction', to improve people's capacity to process risk taking behaviours. Referrals are received largely from GPs, and include many people who have been their long term patients. Many are found to have experienced previously hidden traumas.

The charity provides free one to one support from a small staff team of counsellors. Former clients act as volunteer ambassadors for the service. Recovery rates of service users have been excellent, and the aim is to go beyond recovery to build aspirations for life changes.

Have you ever felt any of the following issues?



The service offered is individual to the needs of the person, usually lasting for around twelve weeks followed by a three month follow up. The essence of the support is building a trusting relationship and forming a positive attachment, getting to know clients as people.

The core service consists of pre booked face to face sessions. Although there can be a waiting time of several months for these, Safe Harbour begins immediate telephone support when people are referred to it.

Attachment is also built through outdoor 'Walk and Talk' sessions, for the majority of clients. These help to tackle isolation and phobias. Some clients are also helped to begin group activities.

Responses to pandemic

Staff have worked from home providing counselling by telephone to all existing clients (the waiting list had already been closed in February, because planned numbers had been reached). The previous experience of telephone support turned out to have helped them to prepare well for remote contact during the epidemic. Video is generally not an appropriate medium for this type of counselling.

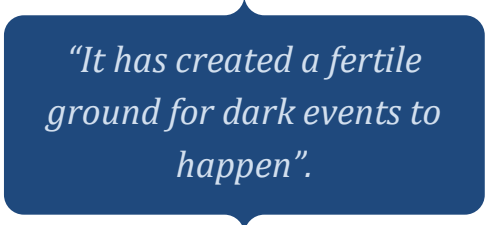
Contact with clients has tended to become more frequent. In addition to the planned sessions, counsellors have been able to call them in a crisis. Although no new emotional support cases have been taken on, other calls asking for support have been taken and responded to. Staff have gone beyond their usual remit to arrange for food deliveries or other support as required.

In July 2020, face to face support with a few people who are 'acute' cases was being resumed.

Resources and partnerships

Though Safe Harbour is regarded as an important local service, no local funding is received – most funding comes from the Lottery. In the crisis, no staff furloughs were required.

The trusting relationships that have been built up with clients have allowed Safe Harbour to continue to contact GPs and other services on their behalf throughout the lockdown.



"It has created a fertile ground for dark events to happen".

Impacts

A vital lifeline of support and continuity has been provided. A familiar voice can prevent crises, including suicidal tendencies, bringing reassurance and feelings of safety.

But the impact of the epidemic on these service users has been severe. "It has created a fertile ground for dark events to happen". There has been an increase in the intensity of 'behind closed doors issues' such as abuse; and there has been a significant increase in situations requiring police involvement.

Contact details

2A Newton Street, Greenock, Inverclyde, PA16 8UH

info@safeharbour.org.uk

<https://www.safeharbour.org.uk/>

The Health and Wellness Hub

Who they are

The Health and Wellness Hub have since 2012 provided health and wellbeing activities, from their own base in Motherwell and in weekly 'hubs' in community centres in areas of North Lanarkshire where deprivation exists. Most users have long term health issues.

The Hub is a social business using volunteers who are disadvantaged (e.g. through learning/physical disability, mental health issues, long term unemployment), and to whom they provide an intensive volunteer support programme. 10 out of 14 staff are former volunteers: they have tried to design new jobs for volunteers around their personal skill sets.

Normal services include:

- Community café (volunteer led) and healthy cookery classes
- Holistic therapies and training provider in accredited therapies
- Activities such as walking, yoga, tai chi/flow n' slow, fitness, relaxation classes
- Coaching and mentoring by trained staff
- Volunteer development and training programme.

They deliver the North Lanarkshire Shopmobility service in Motherwell and Coatbridge, providing scooters that allow people to shop, attend GP appointments and meet friends.

Responses to pandemic

Normal services have been unable to operate. The first priority was to support staff and volunteers. Strong support mechanisms were put into place, including regular Zoom meetings, a closed Facebook page and on-line training in counselling. The management team checked in with staff at regular intervals and changed their work patterns and tasks to accommodate particular needs.

The Hub then quickly offered a support service to users. They distributed packs of food and other essential items, though they had never previously been involved in anything similar. The base in Motherwell remained open to prepare packs, with staggered working times. Wellbeing packs were distributed, personalised by including e.g. gardening or knitting materials and tablet computers with internet dongles for people without access.



Staff and volunteers also offered wellbeing and befriending calls, prescription pick-ups and dog walking. Social media streams were used to provide wellbeing and self-care tools (videos, advice, classes in Tai Chi, Yoga) and information relating to COVID 19 (on scammers, advice from NHS, DWP etc.)

There were 260 new users, many through word of mouth or social media. During the month of May, 589 households were supported with deliveries and/or calls. From July 2020 Shopmobility services began to resume, by prior booking instead of drop-in.

Resources and partnerships

At the start of the pandemic they were receiving no information from the statutory sector about what was needed. But they found that as a community organisation they could respond fast and flexibly. “This has taught us that we can’t sit and wait, we had to respond immediately to local need in our community.”

“This has taught us that we can’t sit and wait, we had to respond immediately to local need”

They formed new links with other organisations who were providing a COVID 19 response, such as carers’ organisations, Befriend Motherwell and a Congolese group. They were commissioned to be the ‘community anchor organisations’ for Airdrie

and for Motherwell, and have distributed £50,000 from the Scottish Communities Fund to community organisations providing services directly related to the crisis.

After a successful application, from July 2020 they were commissioned, on behalf of the Health and Social Care Partnership, as Locality Partnership Development Hosts for Airdrie.

Impacts

Remote working initially caused some staff to feel anxious, and the befriending and support calls could be tough. Staff and volunteers feared that isolation and lack of structure and routine would cause their mental health to decline

Many users are really struggling. Isolation was the initial cause; the emphasis then shifted to the lack of money. The need for services is not slowing down. Isolation and mental health problems are likely to continue, even when others think things are going back to normal.

The Hub’s trading income was hit. But they found it quite refreshing that major funders approached them and offered simplified processes. They hope that the funding landscape will change in future, allowing community organisations to get on with doing their job.

Contact details

Unit 3, 58-60 Albert Street, Motherwell ML1 1PR

info@thehealthandwellnesshub.org.uk

<https://www.thehealthandwellnesshub.org.uk/>

Wellbeing Works Dundee

Who they are

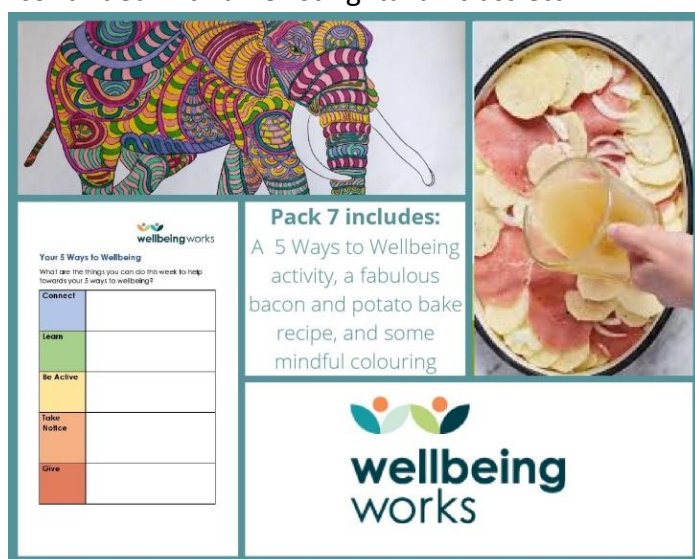
Wellbeing Works, formerly Dundee Association for Mental Health, has helped people who face severe and/or enduring mental health challenges for more than 50 years. They provide support to move towards recovery and better wellbeing to around 120-130 people at any time. A lot of one to one support is delivered, but most is through groups. Opportunities are provided for people to build confidence and meet new friends through activities. These include music, walking, cooking, arts and crafts, discussion groups, special interest groups and self-management and wellbeing classes. They find that the same types of techniques that work in preventative health work also benefit people with severe mental health difficulties.

They have an outdoor activity programme where participants can get involved and share skills in conservation, tree planting, clearing paths or beaches, and environmental arts and crafts. Wellbeing Works also has an allotment and supports other organisations to look after their plants and gardens.

Responses to pandemic

The offices were closed, and all staff worked from home. Only the allotment stayed open, after a risk assessment. Users already had their own plots and separate tools were provided for each of them.

Support staff had caseloads of people who they supported. This was mainly through telephone contact, one to three times a week, or as needed. Most participants are older and less likely to be digitally connected, or cannot afford broadband charges. Only about 20 initially could make contact on-line, rising to 35. With these they held mindfulness sessions, continued with an existing Italian class etc.



Wellbeing Works also sent out information and activity packs to 80-90 people each week, and shared them on social media. They were designed to help people towards small goals and positive behaviours that can help to keep them well. The packs included new ideas and suggestions every week, including a newsletter of positive things, tips on gentle exercise that can be done at home, healthy recipes, mindfulness

exercises and art challenges, tips on how to stay positive and manage anxiety, and personal cards or letters. Packs with art materials were also sent to those interested.

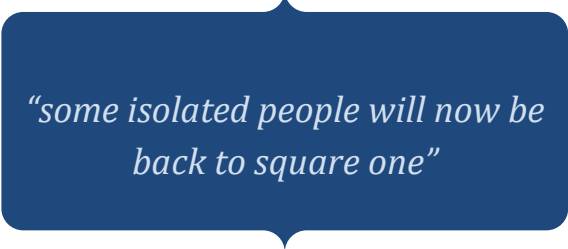
Although they expect to continue providing such packs for months to come, they have found that all the remote approaches became less effective as time passed, and people seemed less motivated and less interested in the coping techniques offered. The next steps, as lockdown eases, are to provide one to one Walk and Talk sessions and hopefully small group activities that help to re-connect people and re-build confidence in the community.

Resources and partnerships

No staff were furloughed. Extra funds were accessed, particularly for the significant expense of creating and posting packs. Wellbeing Works is well connected with the local Health and Social Care Partnership and other mental health and wellbeing networks. In response to COVID-19 they are working to deliver a Peer Support Helpline connecting members of the public in distress or in need of support (in partnership with Dundee Volunteer and Voluntary Action, Penumbra and SAMH), which they hope will continue in future.

Impacts

Providing support by telephone is far removed from the very things that they know help wellbeing: connecting with others, being active, and learning new skills. Many participants missed the connections with friends and the structure and routine that help to keep them well. Many struggled to make sense of what had taken place. Some resorted to using alcohol to help them get through the crisis, others reported low mood, poor sleep routines, and increased symptoms of anxiety depression.



“some isolated people will now be back to square one”

Reactions ranged across the whole spectrum, from seeing the whole situation as a conspiracy to being terrified to leave home. It has taken years of patient work to build some previously isolated people up to full participation in groups. They fear that some will now be back to square one or worse. There is no possibility of simply returning to things as they were before..

Wellbeing Works’ premises are completely unsuitable for socially distanced activities. They are expecting to get the use of a vacant shop in a main shopping centre for future group activities.

Contact details

4 Chamber of Commerce Buildings, Panmure Street, Dundee DD1 1EP

hello@wellbeingworksdundee.org.uk <https://www.wellbeingworksdundee.org.uk/>

Yipworld

Who they are

Yipworld is a 20 year old charitable enterprise providing a wide range of activities and services for young people and their families. Its model of outreach youth work in rural communities for vulnerable young people and adults aged 16 to 25 years aims to improve their health and wellbeing. In addition, staff engage with family members, if requested.

The original drop-in centre in Cumnock remains important; outreach services are delivered to villages in the whole southern half of East Ayrshire. Activities such as family movie nights, cooking and baking classes, messy play, walking groups etc. are designed to be engaging and accessible. Services include a Careers Adviser, a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA), a community garden, a social enterprise upcycling bikes and leading cycle rides for young people, and the 'Scunnered' school holiday summer programme for 100-150 young people per day.

The Social Prescriber (part of the SPRING project, see p.2) accepts referrals from GPs throughout East Ayrshire and supports adults to build confidence, engage in their community and participate in social activity. Staff deliver programmes in primary schools throughout Ayrshire, which develop self-esteem, health and wellbeing.

Responses to pandemic

The centre was closed and youth work services were suspended. Early in lockdown distribution began of around 350 activity packs for children and young people, and this will continue during the school holidays.

Phone calls and several social media channels have been used extensively to keep in contact with young people and families. Facebook proved important from the beginning for keeping different generations in touch. Creative ideas have included an online pet show, a photography competition (for a 2021 calendar) and a TikTok competition, in which young people had to include family members in their videos. The Careers Adviser regularly answered questions live on Facebook.

Some Social Prescribing clients are amongst the



loneliest and most likely to struggle with remote contact. Visits to them were being reintroduced, in gardens, during June 2020.

Support has been flexible and individual, based on knowledge of the community. For example, families not on other services' radar received food Gift Cards in their packs; young people who had been moved from homeless hostels to flats were shown how to garden on

*Support has been flexible
and individual, based on
knowledge of the community*

balconies; free bookings for the MUGA were given to families who lacked alternative open space; sports kit was provided if needed; flowers were sent to some people living in isolation; a laptop was found for a family where seven children were trying to access one device.

A casual drop-in service is unlikely to resume soon, however ten families are engaging in a five week holiday hunger programme. One family attends per morning or afternoon over five days.

Resources and partnerships

In this situation, there was no such thing as a defined job description – staff just did what needed to be done. A minority were furloughed. Additional funds were obtained from various charitable and government sources.

Yipworld normally hosts a Food Bank. But it decided to let other organisations deal with local food distribution, and to choose interventions which are closest to its main purposes. It gave administrative support to other local organisations and built new partnerships.

Impacts

After an initial 'holiday' feeling for families, pressures mounted over home schooling. Anger and frustration began to build up. Teachers advised them that supporting people's confidence was the top priority.

Yipworld may engage with schools more in future, and return to the greater focus on employability support that it had in previous economic crises.

Contact details

19 Barrhill Road, Cumnock, East Ayrshire KA18 1PG

info@yipworld.org www.yipworld.org

Some immediate conclusions

There will be time in future to learn deeper lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic and the responses to it. But we believe that the experiences that we have described and many others around Scotland help to demonstrate the capabilities of our sector.

The outpouring of mutual aid and volunteering that has been seen has been vital to support those most affected by the crisis. We believe that it has often been most effective when mobilised or supported by organisations like those featured here, since these:

- Involve and are close to communities, yet
- Have a established organisational presence and, where required, a professional approach, and
- Have a knowledge of and commitment to tackling individual and collective barriers to health and wellbeing.



In these case studies we see how organisations have been able to:

- react speedily and flexibly to change their activities, support new people and where necessary recruit new volunteers
 - use well-established links and relationships with vulnerable people and those who might otherwise be seen as 'difficult to reach' or 'easy to ignore'
 - understand local needs
 - deliver support and services which have often been personalised to the needs of each individual involved
- act as hubs for a broader community response, advising, supporting and bringing together in partnerships groups which are new or less experienced in this work.

The pandemic will have many long term effects that we are only beginning to understand. For our organisations there may be long term impacts on the type of activities that they can

deliver and on participation in them. Some will face financial difficulties, increased costs and reduced income.

But more positively, important new partnerships have been formed with other local organisations and with public services. Links have been made with new sections of the community, who will become involved in future community activities. New volunteers have been recruited, many of whom now want to continue to help.

The rapid deployment of several funding streams directly into communities and with relatively 'light touch' administration has been positive. We hope lessons can be learnt.

But the pandemic has also created enormous difficulties for our communities and threatened serious long term impacts. For now, we will just single out two themes that emerge very clearly from these experiences:

- The exclusion of many older people, especially, from the ICT based technology that others have relied on
- The serious and possibly lasting impact of lockdown on many people's mental health, witnessed to most powerfully by those organisations that work most closely with those affected.

Prepared by Peter Taylor, board member, SCHW, in consultation with all the organisations named.

SCHW

Tel: 0141 646 0123

E-mail: admin@schw.co.uk

Website: <http://www.schw.co.uk/>

Registered Office:

16 Farmeloa Road, Rutherglen, G73 1DL

Registered Scottish Charity: No SCO44327