



Moving from crisis to recovery - case study

This case study may be of interest to any third sector organisation who is having to adapt and learn as they go in uncertain times.

In 2020 Evaluation Support Scotland (ESS) supported eight projects affected by the COVID-19 crisis to evaluate and learn about their response to the crisis. The aim of this support was to strengthen their response and their recovery, by improving what they do or guiding future plans and strategies. This work was supported by the National Lottery Community Fund.

Eat Well Age Well is a national project, as part of [Food Train](#) - a charity that supports older people, across Scotland, to access food, through a range of services including a grocery shopping and delivery service, volunteer befriending and neighbourhood meal-sharing. The [Eat Well Age Well](#) project works to tackle malnutrition amongst older people living at home in Scotland.

Their policy and influencing work is the “glue” that brings all their activities together. **Tilly**, Impact and Policy Officer, shares her learning.

Why did we get involved in this peer learning programme?

The Covid-19 pandemic exaggerated particular challenges in relation to older people and food, including, physical access to food (Food Train saw a 70% increase in demand for its grocery delivery service) and due to the circumstances, an increased risk of social isolation and an increased risk of malnutrition amongst this social group. (Read more [here](#)).

Much of Eat Well Age Well’s work had to change at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. We adapted each of our strands of work. Our ‘Policy into Practice’ (policy influencing and awareness raising) work was adapted and delivered virtually, with a particular focus on using Twitter.

From this peer learning programme, Eat Well Age Well set out to learn:

- What difference our policy influencing work had made and where should we focus our time in the future?
- How to evaluate our policy influencing activities?

We wanted to use this opportunity to look forwards, learn and evolve, rather than stagnate.

What are we learning about our work through this crisis?

a) Policy influencing on social media makes a difference

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic Eat Well Age Well used Twitter alongside in-person events and meetings. Although we have been able to move much of this activity online, it became apparent early in the pandemic the importance of social media in

engaging with a large audience, reaching and strengthen relationships with key personnel (such as MSPs) as well as responding quickly to an ever-changing situation. This has been important in not just raising awareness of malnutrition, but in making moves towards policy change in this area.

Since the start of the pandemic, we have strengthened relationships and developed cross party support, raised public awareness of the issue of malnutrition and fed directly into policy work.



b) How to do virtual policy influencing effectively

We have continued to see that effective virtual policy influencing is not just about producing content, but also about relationship building. Twitter is also a useful platform to learn – information sharing and learning is two way and is an important element to effective policy influencing. Supporting other people’s work and campaigns on social media (through liking, retweeting) allows us to learn and establish a relevant community, supportive of our work. It is important to recognise it is not just the **number of people** who engage with us (such as reaching 10,000

impressions) but **who** engages, such as individual government ministers.



c) It is really important to evaluate this work

| Date | Quote | RTs | Engagement | Impressions | Likes | Context | Permission to use | Outcome it relates to (if applicable) |
|------|-------|-----|------------|-------------|-------|---------|-------------------|---------------------------------------|
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Social media can have a huge reach and influence and certain types of tweet, tweets with photos and the time of the tweet all influence this. This will vary depending on each individual and organisation; which is why logging social media information is valuable.

We can see the value in **consistently logging** what we are doing. Through this programme we have **developed new simple tools**, such as a social media log and a meeting log to gather evidence of the impact of policy influencing work.

This programme has been useful in demonstrating how simple this evaluation system needs to be. It is easy to feel overwhelmed at the prospect of evaluation, particularly of work where it can be harder to demonstrate the direct positive impact, such as policy influencing work.

But we have seen having a simple system in place makes it easy to do. It will also save time in the long-term and be a useful tool for gathering evidence to shape future activity to ensure we are using our time and resources as effectively as possible. The inclusion of relevant **outcomes** on these logs will also allow us to use this information to feed into reporting and our overall project outcomes.

We now have a space to capture the engagement we get from key stakeholders, including MSPs and policymakers. This will be an invaluable tool to learn from and demonstrate impact in the future.

How is this learning helpful to our organisation?

The next steps for our organisation are to:

- Continue to use Twitter as a key element to our policy and influencing work and make time to reflect on this work
- Improve our skills in this area by sharing our knowledge and experiences across the team
- Start using the new tools (i.e. social media log) we have created to gather evidence continuously and use this to shape future activity in this area

The collection of evidence from this process will take time. We will be monitoring social media, through the tools we have established, to allow us to see what works well and to understand patterns of engagement. For instance, the types of tweets different groups of people engage with (e.g. use of photos, importance of time of day), as well as how we engage with key stakeholders.

Tilly's tips for others

Learning is not always about 'doing'. By taking the time to stop, pause and reflect it allows you to see what has gone well. This is important in shaping future activity and being as impactful as possible, under time constraints and current barriers to accessing data, people and resources.

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