



## 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.

**Women's Aid South Lanarkshire (WASLER)** support and empower women, children and young people who are experiencing, or have experienced domestic abuse. During the pandemic they changed their services by:

- introducing an online chat function to allow women to access the service
- providing practical support (supermarket vouchers, wellbeing packs, activity packs for kids)
- setting up a Google classroom to provide resources to families

- delivering services by phone and video
- delivering online group-work

**Heather**, Interim- Chief Executive Officer, shares their learning.

### Why did we get involved in this peer learning programme?

We were keen to understand what we should keep from the changes we made during the COVID-19 crisis.

In particular we wanted to know:

- What needs are women facing and how have we helped them during the crisis?
- Does remote delivery make a difference? Does it meet women's needs?

### What are we learning about our work through this crisis?

Initially, staff at WASLER assumed that remote support was not as effective as face-to-face support. However, the feedback that we gathered and analysed showed that, in fact, remote support was effective for a large number of women and helped improve engagement particularly for our group-work delivery with women. However, it has also demonstrated the need to continue to provide face to face support for a small number of women we work with (particularly those whose first language isn't English or those with cognitive difficulties).

### a) our support makes a positive difference even when delivered remotely

We sent a **survey** out to all the individuals who are active within our service and those on our waiting list. We wanted to know whether the remote support is working and how did women feel about it? We sent it to about 200 women and got 33 responses. What the survey showed was that the remote support helped them to build relationships with their worker, helped them feel safer and felt more able to cope. The support also fitted in within their lives as they were able to juggle caring responsibilities while also accessing support.

We've been able to use resources more effectively. Our **waiting lists** are down from 90 to about 10 women. As a result, we are able to reach more women who need support. Evaluating this has relieved staff anxiety and encouraged them to keep delivering this way.

### b) We can help families even while they are on the waiting list for a support worker

We set up a Google classroom for those women on the waiting list who are waiting for a worker to become available. The survey **feedback** received showed that those resources were very helpful. Mums told us that during this time they felt well supported to help their children.

### c) Reaching children and young people is challenging

Where remote support hasn't worked as well is in relation to children and young people. They are not keen on engaging in remote support. We think some of the challenges might be a lack of privacy and confidentiality and a lack of access to

digital devices. We have received some devices from Connecting Scotland and we've sent these out to 20 families on our waiting list. We will monitor and see if this helps us keep in contact with young people better.

## How is this helpful to our organisation?

Most of this learning is helpful from a service planning perspective. Remote delivery is working well and will continue. Gathering feedback from service users has alleviated staff concerns and anxieties about whether our approach is working.

We will definitely continue with the Google Classroom for families waiting for support.

## Heather's tips for others

### Set aside time for reflection and learning.

This process has given me that **space** to think, which has been quite important because things have been changing quite rapidly. Often one of the difficulties with voluntary organisations is that we move quickly from one thing to the next. Just having the **time** set aside to think about evaluation has been really useful.

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## Contact details

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