



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 and 2021 Evaluation Support Scotland (ESS) supported sixteen projects affected by the COVID-19 crisis to evaluate and learn about their response to the 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.

Carers of West Lothian offers a range of services developed to meet the needs of unpaid carers and disabled people in West Lothian. During the crisis all their delivery moved online. They saw an increase in self-referrals and more enquiries relating to health and wellbeing issues. They also issued carers respite grants. Alison Wright, CEO tells us more about their experiences.

Why did we get involved in this peer learning programme?

We wanted to look at opportunities for how we will work going forward, both as a team and in how we deliver support in more blended approach. I was keen to move from firefighting to planning towards recovery. As a team we have been struggling to make time to plan activities and staff are anxious about returning to face to face services.

We wanted to answer these questions:

- What do we know worked well? What didn't? So we can then use this to map out what the service will look like in 6 months' time
- What DON'T we need to go back to?

We were also introducing a new data management system, Salesforce, at the same time.

What are we learning about our work through this crisis?

1) We have a clear sense of what our service delivery model will be



Some changes we have made work well for us. One to one phone appointments worked equally well as our previous drop-in system. **Staff reflections**, engagement **stats** and **outcomes** information helped us make the decision to drop the drop-ins. Carers **told us** the carers grants were particularly helpful during the pandemic.



We found virtual support works well for young carers and people with disabilities. Our **stats on reach** show more people in these groups are accessing our support. We are going to trial some online only support for some groups. A virtual connection has helped some groups overcome barriers to accessing support. However, we know this support doesn't work well for people experiencing mental health issues and those with dementia.

2) We can help people be more independent



We are **seeing** an opportunity to help people to be more independent and reduce their reliance on our service by enabling them to meet up with others outside our formal scheduled groups. This increases their ownership and helps our capacity too.

How is this helpful to our organisation?

Raising our profile

Using our evidence, we created an impact statement of the carers' grants and shared this with stakeholders, such as our local MSP, Fiona Hyslop. We can evidence the positive impact these had on carers. This helped make the case to get this fund "topped up". Previously we tended to use numbers to showcase our impact. We can definitely see the benefits of reporting on outcomes for carers.

Service delivery model changes

By evaluating our work, we are much clearer about the changes we need to

make. We've had to make some difficult decisions on the back of our reflections around delivering our support during Covid-19 (removing a drop-in service and replacing this with an appointment system) but the whole team input to this decision which meant the team have ownership of making this work. The Board was able to consider this before they ratified this change. We know it hasn't changed our culture, just the way we do things.

Getting others on board

The support from ESS has helped drive a lot of the work going on in the background, such as the changes in Salesforce. Internally it's given us a chance to involve people. It's easy to get bogged down in the day-to-day stuff so it's possible I wouldn't have done this otherwise.

Our tips for other organisations

- **Take time out to reflect** - it's been good to reflect on how we can change the way we support our clients. We've seen the positive impact of doing things differently; such as reaching new clients
- **Get your team involved** - the whole team has benefitted from having a chance to reflect from their own perspective, including our volunteers, about what has worked and what hasn't; they told me they felt valued by being involved in the decisions

Contact details

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