



## 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.

The **Sorted Project** supports people in Edinburgh and the Lothians recovering from substance dependency and mental health. Prior to Covid-19 they had commissioned a canal boat which they were using as a base to run groups and activities.

During the pandemic they moved their services online and linked with other recovery organisations to provide online learning, conversation, and links to support such as online yoga classes, quizzes, book clubs and drop in group chat. During lockdown they registered the boat as a training centre in preparation for the future (helmsman courses). Karen, Project Manager, shares their experiences of learning from the crisis.

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

We had only obtained our boat a few months before lockdown and we thought 2020 was going to be our year! We came onto this programme to explore our decision making. In particular we wanted the opportunity to reflect and think about how we adapt when we return to the boat and start to bring our participants together again. We also wanted to connect with other organisations to share experiences. We wanted to know:

- Are we and did we go in the right direction?
- What changes do we need to make now and in the future to meet the needs of our participants?

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

## 1) We helped support people from relapsing during the pandemic

We focused our activities, video calls and check-ins on maintaining hope and motivation for our participants. We think that hope, purpose and connection have helped to support our participants from relapse during this tricky time. This reaffirms what is particularly important about our work and how important a sense of hope for the future is in recovery.



We carried out informal evaluation by **asking participants** about their needs and what was working for them/what wasn't.



We **noticed** people engaging well on social media and telling us how much they appreciated the contact. For example, we posted soup recipes on Facebook because people previously loved the soup on the boat.



## 2) New needs are emerging



We are now asking **specific questions** in a more formal approach with referrers and individuals as we restart groups. The pandemic seems to have brought into sharp focus how much people value our service.



We are learning about new needs from **referrers** and potentially new clients that might need our support - such as people who have used substances to cope with lockdown.

## How is this helpful to our organisation?

### Support for the team

The support from ESS has had an emotional impact for me. I know that I'm not dealing with these things on my own. Using our learning has helped me focus on the things that we can control.

### Funding application

We are using our learning for funding applications. This learning helps to reaffirm that our approach and model is right and makes a difference to people in recovery. We can explain that better now. We can report on the fact that there is a solid sense of a recovery community out there.

## Partnerships

We know there are new needs emerging, so we are using this learning to develop new partnerships and contacts to reach out to organisations.

We have a better sense of our role and who we need to partner with. We can now easily reach out to other organisations in the recovery community and say “can you do that? We'll take care of this”.

## Our tips for other organisations

- Look at the things you CAN do and can evaluate
- Using your learning can inspire you and your team to do more
- Even in a time of crisis, it's OK to be bold and to plan for the future

## Contact details

If you would like ESS's support please contact us at [info@evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk](mailto:info@evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk).

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