



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.

Get2gether arranges social activities for people with disabilities in safe and friendly places in Edinburgh and the Lothians. Covid-19 completely changed the course of their organisation. During the Covid-19 crisis they moved their activities online and supported members to take the lead on sessions. Mojca, get2gether's Director, shares her experiences of learning from the changes they made.

Why did we get involved in this peer learning programme?

We came on board because we wanted to make evidence-based decisions about our future. We also wanted support to better articulate what difference we made during the crisis and use this in future funding applications. We already had a lot of evidence about our reach. For example, we knew that we'd had a very high attendance at our online sessions and were delivering more member-led activities than previously. However, we could also see from our attendance rates that only 27% of our membership were engaging online. Our board took the decision that the way forward for get2gether is the 'hybrid delivery', but the question was how and when to introduce this. We were unsure about having the capacity to start delivering a hybrid model. We wanted to learn:

- Is there a need to deliver a hybrid model for service users?
- When should we resume in-person events?
- What difference do the digital sessions make to those who do access them?

What are we learning about our work through this crisis?

1) We can achieve our outcomes for members through our digital activities



We have **seen** members develop self-confidence and new skills by leading their own digital sessions, such as DJing online and running games sessions. Some of these members are now writing **blogs** for our website and encouraging others to get involved digitally. Levels of peer support and mentoring increased. Those who did attend digital sessions engaged more regularly and told us that get2gether helps them with their mental health.



We continue to monitor our **reach**. We are also engaging with our members who are not online and trying to understand why and the barriers they face. Many members say they are waiting until our club nights reopen before getting involved.



Our 3 monthly **feedback forms** also showed that many members felt that online support was accessible and fun as well as helping them to stay socially connected and develop new skills. Our members told us they are most looking forward to returning to in-person events when they could attend our popular club nights at the ATIK Edinburgh or our flagship Karaoke Discos in Edinburgh at the Lothians.

2) We are reflecting more on OUR role in members' lives



We know we have achieved outcomes for many of our members. We have **seen** signs that members are increasingly confident to lead on activities. We are intrigued by how we can support more of this in the future. Recently, we also **saw** 31 members take their social lives into their own hands. Some met in-person after a year of connecting with people online. This is making us reflect on our practice and our role. If we can help build confidence and connections, can we empower members and can our digital offering be one of the stepping stones for our members to form friendships and relationships?

How is this helpful to our organisation?

Future service delivery model

We knew we couldn't do everything so using our evidence of impact during the crisis we decided not to rush to return to face to face delivery. Our reflections on our impact and feedback from members helped the board decide to postpone the delivery of the hybrid model until the regulations allow the opening of the clubs again or to rethink re-starting a smaller scale in-person events. This has helped us manage capacity and direct resources to the activities that make a difference. This process has made us reflect on who is not turning up and not accessing support and how to re-engage with them.

Seeking new partnerships

Rather than deliver a hybrid model with the immediate lifting of restrictions in the summer, we increased our reach, because we can see the difference the digital activities make when people do engage. We have since partnered with another organisation to promote digital inclusion for our members who haven't been engaging online.

Evaluation

We have realised how helpful it is to have specific short-term outcomes in place to show what difference our work makes. Our next steps are to do a logic model for the hybrid delivery together as a team to think about realistic short term and medium term outcomes for the future and think about what activities work better in person and which work better online.

Our tips for other organisations

- **Involve your board** - it can feel hard to make decisions during the pandemic. Working with the board to take the difficult decisions is a good way forward
- **Not everything goes to plan** - take time with your team to evaluate and learn together
- **Reflect on your reach** - think about anyone who might be falling through the net. Who haven't you heard from and why?

Contact details

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