

Research undertaken throughout the COVID-19 pandemic allows us to understand the immediate response of the voluntary sector, the impact on organisations and citizens, and what support will be needed post-pandemic. This summary report is the first version of what we plan will be an evolving document throughout autumn 2020. In this August edition following themes emerge:

1. Economically Unsettled

There will be long-term economic consequences for the voluntary sector and additional funding is needed.

Nationally, organisations were struggling financially pre-pandemic and the further reduction of income is going to have long-term consequences for the voluntary sector. Research conducted by OSCR found that this will affect charities of all sizes, ages and incomes to a similar extent. OSCR found that local authority funding (33%), other independent grant funding (33%), and simplified requirements for reporting on grant outcomes (32%) were considered the most helpful kind of funding support (1).

In Edinburgh, the TSI Survey found that almost half of organisations are seeing/anticipating a reduction of income from fundraising (48%) and a reduction of income from trading (43%). Almost half of Edinburgh organisations said that they need funding to get through this and they have been able to access some of what they will need (2). SCVO report that the Wellbeing fund, Third Sector Resilience Fund and Supporting Communities Fund have been appreciated, however additional funding is needed (3).

2. Increased Need for Support

There is a growing demand for support due to effects of the pandemic, such as job losses and poor physical and mental health.

The National Emergencies Trust SEFAB Briefing found that 1 in 6 people in the UK has sought charitable support as a result of the pandemic (4). SCVO's #NeverMoreNeeded Campaign highlights the importance of the sector at this time due to growing demand, and the level of support has increased with pace and flexibility (3).

The Poverty Commission have found that service users already connected to a statutory or third sector organisation can access support easier than those who are not connected to local support organisations. The Poverty Commission recommends that as organisations begin activities, support for those who have lost their jobs will be needed on an unprecedented scale. Although some activities were stopped during the pandemic, organisations such as youth work, arts and culture, sport, nature, community cafes, transport schemes and childcare will be needed in the aftermath and long-term recovery (5).

3. Repurposed Services and Collaboration

Evidence shows that the voluntary sector responded quickly and adapted well. There was increased collaboration between organisations and local networks were valued.

The sector has responded flexibly to the crisis, adapting well. OSCR found that the most common reaction from charities was to change the way in which they deliver services (1). SCVO recognise the extraordinary response of the sector and state that 'the value of the sector's support must be understood and appreciated by the government once the immediate crisis is over' (3).

In the TSI Survey, over half of Edinburgh organisations responded that they were 'doing really well' adapting to the use of digital. This signifies that many organisations have continued to provide support during the pandemic by alternative methods such as telephone and digital contact (2).

Additionally, 59% of Edinburgh organisations reported seeing improved collaboration between organisations (2). The Poverty Commission reports that hundreds of groups have worked together to make sure food, medical supplies, support and advice services are available to those who need it. The pandemic has pulled different groups together to offer support and has shown the importance of local groups and networks (5) Research from Scottish Community Alliance found that community anchor organisations had an important role in the response due to their understanding of the community's needs and their access to local connections (6).

4. Effects on Communities

The damaging effects on individuals and communities will have long-term consequences.

ECHF member's practical support and services were described as a 'lifeline' during lockdown, in particular for people experiencing health inequalities. The contribution to emergency response work supported clients through difficult times, and online services provided safe spaces to engage with the organisations and allow for social connection (7)

For people on low incomes who were already struggling, coronavirus has added significant pressure and the Poverty Commission state that 'the current crisis has exacerbated many of the injustices'. Effects of the pandemic on individuals, such as job losses or poor health, can pull anyone into poverty and this means communities are vulnerable (5).

Within Edinburgh, organisations are most concerned about mental health and loneliness for their communities (2). VOCAL conducted qualitative research with carers and found that due to COVID-19 it was difficult, and in some instances impossible, to prioritise their own wellbeing. The pandemic has had a huge impact on wellbeing, and carers have struggled due to the increased intensity of caring (8).

COVID-19 Research Studies

The following pieces of quantitative and qualitative research highlight national and local experiences:

- 1. OSCR COVID-19 Impact on Charities [Summary](#) and [Full Report](#).**
Research from OSCR details the impact of the pandemic on charities and the actions taken. By early May nearly every charity had reported negative impacts, with charities of all sizes, ages and incomes similarly affected. The research also asked what support will be needed in the future and found that charities will find guidance, access to funding and the simplification of funding procedures most helpful. For a breakdown of all the responses view the full report.
- 2. TSI Scotland Network Coronavirus Survey [Full Report](#) and [Edinburgh Findings](#).**
The National TSI Network survey heard from 1,184 voluntary organisations, community groups and social enterprises about the impact of COVID-19. The findings present the financial position of organisations and which funds were accessed. The report also gives an understanding of the immediate response from the Third Sector, including the adaptation to digital and the redesigning of services. Additionally the research asks about the effects of COVID-19 on the communities which the organisations work with, considering the long-term effects and future planning. View the full report to see the national picture and the Edinburgh findings for a local understanding.
- 3. SCVO Briefing to the Scottish Parliament. [Debate: COVID-19 Next Steps \(Communities\)](#).**
SCVO's briefing recognises the invaluable and crucial work of the voluntary sector, which has continued throughout the pandemic. However, Scotland's charities and community groups were already in an unsettled financial position pre-pandemic and the consequences from COVID-19 will be severe. Immediate financial support from the Scottish Government has been welcomed, however additional funding is needed in part due to increased demand and the sector's role in recovery. Read the briefing in full, where SCVO consider the next steps for Scotland's voluntary sector.

4. National Emergencies Trust: Trusted in Times of Need SEFAB Briefing

The SEFAB Briefing looks at statistics across the United Kingdom and the access to emergency essentials throughout the pandemic. This report has found that 1 in 6 people in the UK sought charitable support as a result of the pandemic, and around half of the early funds helped people access food and essentials. The next steps are to ensure funds raised continue to be distributed to those in need and to create a community of rapid responders.

5. Poverty Commission Poverty and Coronavirus in Edinburgh Interim Report [Summary](#) and [Full Report](#).

Research from Edinburgh Poverty Commission focuses on the impact of COVID-19 in Edinburgh for the citizens, in particular for people living in poverty. The report looks at employment issues and the struggle to find support throughout the pandemic. There is a need for continued long-term support due to the impact on citizens, and the Poverty Commission states that Edinburgh needs to rebuild with compassion and collaboration.

6. Scottish Community Alliance [Community Response to COVID-19](#).

This qualitative research from Scottish Community Alliance interviews nine community-led organisations across Scotland to understand common themes and lessons learned from COVID-19. This research specifically looks at community anchor organisations which have connections to wide local networks, provide direct service provision along with coordinating local provision and working successfully with local authorities.

7. Edinburgh Community Health Forum (ECHF): Forum Members Contribution to the COVID-19 Crisis.

Throughout the pandemic, members of ECHF adapted their work to enable them to continue to meet the needs of communities, as well as meet emerging needs and issues. Their work has been recorded by interviews with ECHF members, and presents the agility and rapid response of the sector. This research shows how organisations in Edinburgh have supported their communities, and also looks at the importance of partnership and strategic working during COVID-19.

8. Voice of Carers Across Lothian (VOCAL) Reports

VOCAL have looked into the use of Self-Directed Support (SDS) by unpaid carers during COVID-19, in particular asking whether unpaid carers knew about the SDS COVID-19 guidance and if they had been able to use SDS in a flexible way during lockdown. In another piece of research from VOCAL, they focus on how carers feel about wellbeing, and how this has changed during the pandemic.

EVOC

AUGUST 2020