

Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE)

Briefing paper – Impact of COVID-19 on third sector health and social care organisations
19 June 2020



The impact of COVID-19 on third sector health and social care organisations in Scotland is becoming stark, with multiple data sources highlighting a range of concerning common themes.

Funding

More than half of Scottish third sector organisations¹ have lost fundraising income as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This can be attributed to;

- the cancellation of face to face fundraising events – many of which are usually held in the early summer months
- the closure of charity shops and other venues
- reduced public donations due to increased pressure on households

The extent of this lost revenue is significant. For example;

- Crohn's & Colitis UK has reported that its income has been halved²
- Cancer Support Scotland has reported³ a loss of 40% of its income between March and July
- Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland has reported⁴ a loss of £500,000 a month in fundraising income

This loss of income is having a severe impact on the ability of organisations to plan and deliver future services, and in some cases poses a threat to their very survival.

¹ 51% of respondents to an OSCR survey conducted between 5-15th May 2020 reported a loss of fundraising income <https://www.oscr.org.uk/media/3925/oscr-covid-19-research-summary-report-020620-002.pdf>

² https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/case_studies/crohns-colitis-uk-adapts-to-respond-to-covid-19/

³ https://www.holyrood.com/inside-politics/view,charities-in-scotland-facing-an-uncertain-future_15474.htm

⁴ <http://thirdforcenews.org.uk/tfn-news/health-charity-in-nhs-warning>

- Data published by OSCR⁵ reveals that one fifth (20%) of Scottish charities foresee a critical impact to their finances at some point within the next 12 months. 11% foresee this happening in the next 6 months
- Research compiled by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO)⁶ highlights that around half of charities think they will run out of funds in six months, and a third of organisations have less than three months' worth of their funding in reserves

The consequences for those that rely on their support, including disabled people, people living with long term conditions and unpaid carers, is potentially incalculable.

Demand

This stark financial impact comes at a time when many third sector health and social care organisations face increased levels of demand for their services. This is a particularly acute issue as organisations adapt to respond to requests from disabled people, people living with long term conditions and unpaid carers, who seek information and support for a range of issues, including self management, independent living and unpaid caring.

- 2 in 5 charities report an increase in demand for their services at present⁷
- Crohn's and Colitis UK has reported a 400% increase in demand for their helpline services and a 600% rise in demand for their website⁸
- Chest Heart and Stroke Scotland has seen an 80% increase in demand for its Community Support services⁹
- There are an additional 392,000 unpaid carers in Scotland as a result of COVID-19, bringing the total to 1.1 million¹⁰

There is also growing evidence that there will be more people with a range of longer term conditions – including respiratory, neurocognitive, heart, mental ill-health – than

⁵ <https://www.oscr.org.uk/media/3925/oscr-covid-19-research-summary-report-020620-002.pdf>

⁶ <https://scvo.org.uk/policy/evidence-library/2020-coronavirus-and-its-impact-on-the-scottish-voluntary-sector-what-do-we-know-so-far-may-2020>

⁷ <https://scvo.org.uk/policy/evidence-library/2020-coronavirus-and-its-impact-on-the-scottish-voluntary-sector-what-do-we-know-so-far-may-2020>

⁸ https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/case_studies/crohns-colitis-uk-adapts-to-respond-to-covid-19/

⁹ <https://www.scotsman.com/health/leading-scottish-charity-losing-ps500k-every-month-lockdown-2850797>

¹⁰ <https://www.carersuk.org/scotland/news/covid-19-pandemic-392-000-become-unpaid-carers-in-scotland-in-a-matter-of-weeks>

ever before as a direct result of COVID-19.¹¹ Third sector organisations are a vital strategic and delivery partner across health and social care in Scotland; they are crucial in the longer term to ensure people get the right support at the right time.

However, the ability of organisations to respond to increased demand even in the short term is constrained by capacity pressures in relation to both paid staff and volunteers;

- 15-30% of third sector staff have been furloughed – equivalent to between 16,000 and 32,000 people¹²
- A third (29%) of charities surveyed by OSCR reported a decrease in the number of volunteers with which they engage as a result of the pandemic¹³

Adapting services

Despite the changed world and financial constraints within which they are working, third sector organisations have taken swift action to reconfigure their operations in line with the restrictions put in place to control the spread of the virus;

- 92% of charities surveyed by OSCR have reported that their ability to deliver services has been disrupted¹⁴
- 84% of charities surveyed by OSCR have reported changing the way they deliver services. This included shifting to providing support remotely (47%) or ceasing operations (36%)¹⁵

ALLIANCE members and partners have been agile and flexible in their responses to the new demands brought about by COVID-19, as demonstrated by the broad range of activity in our [‘Community in Action’](#) initiative and [on our website](#). Just some of the many examples include:

- Perth and Kinross Association of Voluntary Service (PKAVS) has increased its telephone capacity to continue to support carers in the local area, making more than 1,000 contacts per week¹⁶

¹¹ <https://www.vox.com/2020/5/8/21251899/coronavirus-long-term-effects-symptoms>

¹² <https://scvo.org.uk/policy/evidence-library/2020-coronavirus-and-its-impact-on-the-scottish-voluntary-sector-what-do-we-know-so-far-may-2020>

¹³ <https://www.oscr.org.uk/media/3925/oscr-covid-19-research-summary-report-020620-002.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://www.oscr.org.uk/media/3925/oscr-covid-19-research-summary-report-020620-002.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://www.oscr.org.uk/media/3925/oscr-covid-19-research-summary-report-020620-002.pdf>

¹⁶ https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/case_studies/a-crucial-service-for-carers-during-covid-19-in-perth-and-kinross/#expanded

- SCLD has developed a ‘knowledge sharing hub’ to make essential information readily available and accessible for people living with learning/intellectual disabilities, who face particular challenges in accessing COVID-19 information¹⁷
- In addition to converting its work to online platforms in the space of just a week, Multiple Sclerosis Centre Mid Argyll has been delivering food and essential supplies to people who are unable to leave their home¹⁸
- RNIB Scotland’s ‘Technology for Life’ service is supporting blind and partially sighted people to access technology they haven’t used before, in order to keep in touch with friends, keep entertained and access information about COVID-19¹⁹
- Moray Wellbeing Hub has adapted all of its services to be accessible remotely, including delivery of Principles of Mental Health First Aid sessions²⁰
- Mel-Milaap moved from providing day care facilities to older people to providing hot meals three times per week across Glasgow²¹
- Macmillan Cancer Support’s Volunteering Hub shifted from face to face to telephone and online support, reducing risks for many of their 130 volunteers who are older people and/or shielding²²

Self Management Fund

The ALLIANCE administer the Self Management Fund on behalf of the Scottish Government, investing £2m annually to third sector organisations to develop person centred activities which allow people to be in the ‘driving seat’ and live well with a long term condition or as an unpaid carer.

We have been in close dialogue with all funded projects since the onset of COVID-19, recognising early on that the pandemic could have an impact on the ability of organisations to carry out their planned activities. The ALLIANCE has agreed sensible and compassionate positions with all projects in terms of funding, project changes, and reporting. An agreement in principle is in place to offer projects funded in the most recent round of the Self Management Fund the opportunity to apply for an additional grant and an extended period of time to complete the project

¹⁷ https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/case_studies/sclد-responds-to-covid-19/

¹⁸ https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/case_studies/ms-argyll-responds-to-covid-19/

¹⁹ https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/case_studies/rnib-scotlands-rapid-response-to-covid-19/

²⁰ https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/case_studies/moray-wellbeing-hub-supports-mental-health-during-covid-19/

²¹ https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/case_studies/mel-milaaps-essential-response-to-covid-19/

²² https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/case_studies/supporting-people-affected-by-cancer-during-covid-19/

We will continue to offer sympathetic guidance and support to projects as necessary.

Recommendation

The sustainability of many third sector organisations is of particular concern over the coming months, when essential and welcome sources of emergency funding and the furlough scheme draw to a close, and reserve funding is used up. However, this is not just a short-term crisis; the longer term survival of third sector health and social care organisations is at stake, and the unique services and support they deliver will remain just as vital – if not more so – as we continue through COVID-19 recovery into the post-pandemic period.

The ALLIANCE asks all funders and policymakers, including the Scottish Government, NHS, Local and Integration Authorities, and private grant making trusts and foundations, to outline the measures they will take to address the financial issues facing third sector health and social care organisations as a consequence of COVID-19.

We also urge the Scottish Government to continue promoting the role of the third sector in the delivery of the post-pandemic response to health and social care through the Scottish Government, NHS Boards, and Integration Authorities. A Third Sector Cohesion Fund for national third sector health and care organisations would be an investment in progressing a sustainable model of integrated care for the future.

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About the ALLIANCE

The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE) is the national third sector organisation for health and social care in Scotland. The ALLIANCE is a company limited by guarantee. Registered in Scotland No.307731 Charity number SC037475.

sector intermediary for a range of health and social care organisations. We have a growing membership of nearly 3,000 national and local third sector organisations, associates in the statutory and private sectors, disabled people, people living with long term conditions and unpaid carers. Many NHS Boards, Health and Social Care Partnerships, Medical Practices, Third Sector Interfaces and Access Panels are also members.

Our vision is for a Scotland where people of all ages who are disabled or living with long term conditions, and unpaid carers, have a strong voice and enjoy their right to live well, as equal and active citizens, free from discrimination, with support and services that put them at the centre.

The ALLIANCE has three core aims; we seek to:

- Ensure people are at the centre, that their voices, expertise and rights drive policy and sit at the heart of design, delivery and improvement of support and services.
- Support transformational change, towards approaches that work with individual and community assets, helping people to stay well, supporting human rights, self management, co-production and independent living.
- Champion and support the third sector as a vital strategic and delivery partner and foster better cross-sector understanding and partnership.