

The background features several overlapping, organic shapes in shades of green, red, and teal. A large white shape is also present, partially overlapping the green shapes. The text is centered within these shapes.

**Together,
We Help**

Collation of the Stories

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online community centre



Sam from Edinburgh Coronavirus Support shares their story on what they did, and what we can learn from it.

Edinburgh Coronavirus Support (ECS) started as a Facebook group aiming to facilitate grass roots community support, before becoming an assortment of online communities committed to strengthening Edinburgh's resilience. Having been involved in each community, I will tell a part of our story through my lens describing the impacts and learnings that we discovered along the way. Though, it must be emphasised that one person could not do justice to the sum of individual acts of support that were enacted for local communities.

Who Are We?

- 9200 Facebook members.
- 44 Affiliate Local FB Groups.
- 2500 signed up to a volunteer database.
- 13 Facebook moderators on FB Messenger.
- 16-person content design team on Slack.
- 5-person leadership WhatsApp group.

Why?

It feels natural to start with what compelled me to participate in this unique phenomenon. Despite being a key worker, I still felt that plunging stasis of a lockdown I didn't understand. Though, there was also a communal feeling of wanting to have a purpose and stay connected to each other. Due to studying communications at QMU, seeing the exponential development of organic altruistic communities became a tantalising prospect to do good, and I wanted to use what I knew to strengthen the cause.

Our Story

That was how I became involved, but truthfully the group started in February thanks to two engineering Doctoral students at the Edinburgh Uni who had the foresight to see what was coming. They created a database platform via Google Forms, categorising people by their stated skillsets and volunteering interests relevant to the pandemic. Simultaneously, interest in a pandemic support platform increasing on the prominent 'Meadows Share' group, and key members joined with the database creators to form ECS. Originally, the aim was to create an app that was able to directly link service users to volunteers with the relevant skills/interest, kind of like volunteer Uber. A local Third Sector Interface highlighted the numerous safeguarding and bureaucratic barriers which would make this inappropriate. So, we had this large Facebook platform that would allow organic member-to-member initiated support, whilst also having the now separated database of volunteers ready to support the community in crisis. This is largely where my activities begin.

The third sector struggled logistically with the wave of volunteer interest during lockdown, in the midst of transitioning to home working and funding challenges. Having an organised, categorised database of volunteers seemed like a valuable logistical asset given these challenges. Therefore, we deemed that the volunteer database employed solely as a resource for charities, interestingly providing a bridge between informal volunteers and formal volunteering. To build connections and trust with the Third sector I produced a Twitter account, and co-managed the Slack group designing the website which brought the two strands of the operation together, whilst adding helpful links to aid organisations and businesses doing delivery. Through engaging with earned news media, we connected and contributed to a SCVO 'Digi-Listen' podcast about building online communities and formed a relationship with the longstanding Glasgow Caring City (GCC) community resilience group, orchestrating a delivery of 10000 units of their #SoapAid to Edinburgh foodbanks. This connection with GCC was intriguing as they are a Global Health hygiene aid charity that doubles as a domestic community resilience group, which we found was a reoccurring theme. We had intermittent contact with QMU Institute of Global Health & Development, alongside Edinburgh Uni's Director Global Health Liz Grant; the latter interestingly curious about how this community led support could tie in with Wellbeing Economy principles/initiatives as proposed by Katherine Trebeck. The point being that there is much to be learned about how Public/Global Health, Formal/Informal Volunteering, and community resilience groups could intersect to form an equitable, fairer society.

Ultimately, for all the purposeful efforts of a few leading figures, ECS is the 9200 people choosing to cooperate in providing community resilience. What we really achieved was providing a platform and space for that activity.



Key Learnings

Volunteer Bridging

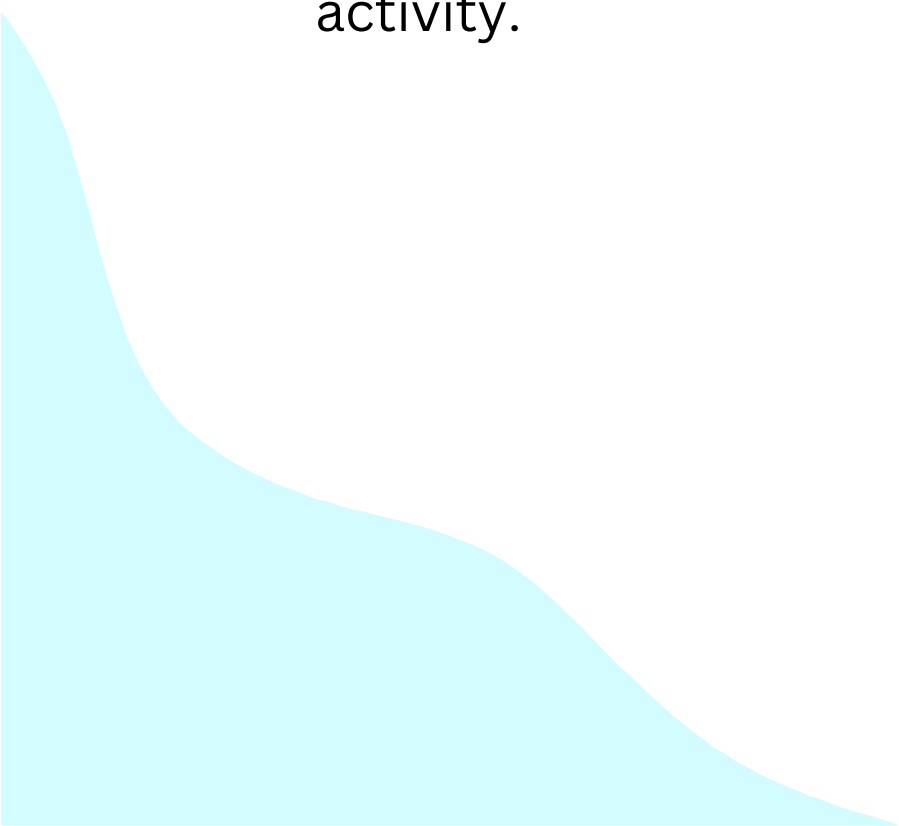
- A user led community support app would be a great digital expression of informal volunteering; or a charity facilitated app the formal volunteering alternative
- Alternatively, harvesting volunteer interest from online communities onto a database could be a great model for building a cyclical bridge between informal and formal volunteering.
- People could become intermittently dormant/active within volunteer circles, making community action more normative and pervasive.

Everything in Moderation

- Community is not controlled but facilitated.
- Community guidelines and trusted moderators are key to developing the tone/culture of an online community.
- Reliability and accuracy must take priority in tackling disinformation and politicisation.

Online Community Centre

- Using social platforms like spaces in a virtual community centre.
- If choosing a different platform for a particular audience they must understand it, and it must serve the purpose of that group's activity.



What do you think Scotland could learn from the action you took going forward?

Generally, I think Scotland could learn from how valuable the voluntary sector is, especially in a crisis.

Specifically to ECS, I think Scotland could learn how social media could be harnessed to become a form of online community centre, facilitating a bridge between informal and formal volunteering. That would make Scotland a fairer place by opening the empowering opportunity of volunteering for all, whilst mutually supporting formal volunteering initiatives for the wellbeing of society.

volunteering in Angus

Sophie, from Angus shares her experience of volunteering for social supermarket Angus, making up and distributing essential food packs during the crisis. She tells us “I think Scotland could learn to support local and work more collaboratively to support communities”

Watch the [Youtube video here](#).

weel kent faces in Ayshire



Colin Young, ACES Development Worker

ACES as the group is known locally, was set up in September 2007 by concerned residents of Woodwynd area of Kilwinning the largest housing scheme in the town.

Although the Woodwynd has large areas of green space it had very little else. The Council owned Community Centre was very under used and meant many children and young people were left with nothing to do or no where to go.

ACES started by setting up programmes for children and their families to attend this included youth clubs, drop in's lunch clubs, football teams, school holiday clubs and bouncin' bairns. we then began to visit schools and delivered awareness sessions in bullying, internet safety, knife crime alcohol and drugs abuse.

In March 2020 all of this had to be closed down and ACES were left to see what would unfold, we were asked to help the council deliver prescriptions as we were "weel kent faces" in the town and silver citizens would most likely be comfortable opening their door to someone they recognised. It became a factor that many families would struggle during the lockdown.

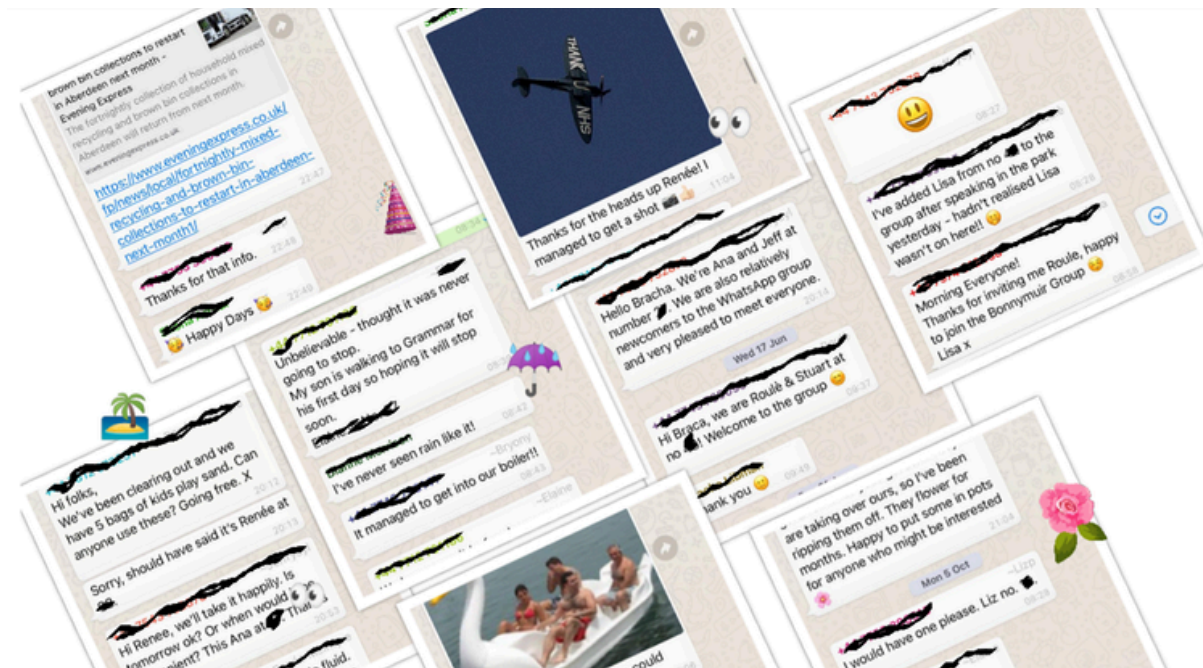
weel kent faces in Ayrshire

The council distributed food boxes to those who qualified for free school meals, however more and more families were furloughed which meant a reduction of 20% of each income reducing the household income by 40% they didn't qualify for food boxes, we spotted this loophole and began to deliver food and essential items to these families, to gain the best produce and maximise value for money we travelled 35 miles and back to the Glasgow fruit market at 2am to buy good class one fruit and veg , then come back and packed this produce into parcels and deliver it to families ,we usually delivered approx. 250 per week, using a local butcher we also rotated the food with fresh meat and also delivered cleaning materials at the same time.

This meant families had a way to feed and keep clean during the covid-19 crisis. We are currently setting up a community pantry where families can obtain food and essential items cheaply with a weekly membership of £2 they can take home £15 of food etc. we also won the regional high street hero's award for our work in North Ayrshire.

I think Scotland needs to either signpost support or support the citizens, the safety measures being put in place seem to be for a perfect conditioned country, which is confusing to all and is often out of date before being put in place, a clear structure so everyone can understand.

WhatsApp groups strengthening community



My name is Lindsay and I've lived on our street in Aberdeen for 11 years. I was a physiotherapist at ARI but now work with my husband in our family business and am a mum to teenage twins.

We live on a residential street in the Midsocket area of Aberdeen. Aberdeen Royal Infirmary is only across the road so some of our neighbours are associated with the hospital and we were so worried about everyone - we didn't know what was going to happen.

Many of the homes have families with young children, but there are also a few retired folk on the street. When lockdown happened in March and the fear and panic buying started I thought we would need a street chat group so anyone needing help with anything could ask in the group. Many of the neighbours offered to do shopping, pick up prescriptions or run errands and generally shared good wishes and supportive messages - it was really nice to see people willing to help out where they could. Before we set up the chat group, I only knew a few of my most immediate neighbours but the chat group grew very quickly and everyone invited those they knew. It's been live for over 8 months now and still going strong.

WhatsApp groups strengthening community



No one really needs help with shopping anymore, but residents use it to offer plants, or other items for free. They share information about local events or anything unusual they've seen on the street. We've even had a Peregrine Falcon and fox spotting!

It gave focus to the community and the opportunity to offer help and be helped as we went through the restrictions and anxiety together. I believe it has improved the sense of community on our street which I know will continue to go from strength to strength. I hope we can organise a big street party once we can celebrate the end of the need for restrictions. Thank you!

puzzle challenge to help friends and families

Gareth, an A&E Consultant in Aberdeen, shares in [this Youtube video](#) about the orienteering puzzle challenge he and his children organised for their community during the pandemic.

young people are strong, capable and will create change



My name is Ethan McNally and I am from Glasgow, Govan. I am a #Iwill Ambassador for Scotland campaigning for more youth social action. I started up my own youth led project called “Getting The Message Across” (GTMA) to promote youth social action and to give the chance to young people to take action within their communities on matters close to their hearts. I wanted to show that young people indeed can make change and a difference to their community and to the life of others.

When COVID hit at the start of March and forced our country into a nationwide lockdown, meaning people being asked not to leave their homes, people being asked not to visit loved ones, schools being forced to close and young people being stuck inside not being able to connect with friends face-to-face. We started to see a high level of youths taking their own lives.

young people are strong, capable and will create change

This was extremely difficult for us to hear and see as this was our peers deeply struggling and feeling they had no one to turn to. The wider community was also struggling with the deaths including their families and friends.

As a peer led group we felt we had to step in and help our community in some way. We started walking the streets in the areas affected by the deaths of young people to engage with the youth to bring them comfort and reassure them that there are people out there willing to listen and ready to support them with any struggles they may face. We wanted to reassure them from young people to young people and spread the message “ITS OK NOT TO BE OK”

I knew we had to do a little more, so we started up our very own G.T.M.A Youth Space. It was a youth club started in an outside space to give young people a place to go during the pandemic. It gave young people a chance to get out the house, clear their minds and also have the chance to talk to our youth work team which was made up of workers from GTMA & Govan Youth Information Project–(Who also do outstanding work with young people and always putting them at the heart of their work, giving them a platform for their voices to be heard) about any worries they had on their minds.

Watch the [Youtube video here](#).

bakes from a balcony

Emily, from Aberdeen, shares her videos on how she helped during the pandemic. As she was shielding and furloughed, Emily decided to fundraise for the Archie Foundation through a bake sale with a difference! Delivered by lowering a rope from her balcony she raised over £3000 for the charity.

Watch the videos: [Emily Bakes](#), and [Interview with Emily](#).

community action to support asylum seekers and refugees



by Adnan Ibrahim

North East Glasgow Framework for Dialogue Group (FFD) is a community group which provides support and advice to asylum seekers and refugees.

This group was formed in 2002. It is a constituted group and managed by a group of management committee members elected at the Annual General Meeting. We support our members by a community worker from Glasgow City Council and through funding we get from different funding bodies.

Before the Coronavirus pandemic, we held meetings every month to share information and to raise any concerns. Also, we brought in speakers to talk about services or issues relating to asylum seekers and refugees. Furthermore, we organised activities for our members for example trips, visits and trainings.

community action to support asylum seekers and refugees

We have many representations in different networks to voice out and share our needs. Our aims are to achieve with keeping our members up to date with changes to processes and legislations relating to people who are seeking asylum or who are refugees.

We also make sure that our members are aware of and know how to access services and engaging with services providers to influence and to improve services. New people who come to this country might not socialise with others due to language barriers, so we aim to reduce isolation and promote social integration.

My work with North East Glasgow Framework for Dialogue Group as a volunteer chairperson was to provide support to our members who are asylum seekers and refugees as much as I can during the Covid-19. I applied to many different funding bodies for funds to support our members. Using these funds we received, I managed to deliver four different projects.

Firstly, with our activities being reduced we are delivering a telephone service two times a week between 11-3 pm. This activity will create an opportunity for our members to speak with a volunteer and address issues but also be supported to make contacts with other agencies. Secondly, have volunteers helping our elderly with groceries and shopping and medicine drops. By doing this our community members will not feel isolated and forgotten. We also support our community members with top up vouchers to overcome the digital poverty. By doing this we hope to overcome the impact on people's mental health created by Covid-19. Provision of top up vouchers will enable our community members to stay in touch with one another and take part in online activities organised by our community group.

community action to support asylum seekers and refugees

Moreover, we planned to deliver online activities to increase social interactions in order to support mental health issues. This activity is delivered once a week by our volunteers. With the schools being back to normal we feel that this service will focus on working with adults who have been affected by Covid-19. We think that this activity will be significant to our community member's interaction and wellbeing. Lastly, we make regular weekly deliveries which include basic food, toiletries and sanitary products to our members.

I feel that everything we are doing it has helped our members cope well with the Coronavirus situation especially of those who are not allowed to work because of their immigration status. My motivation was from the Management Committee to help the community who are struggling financially. Especially those who are struggling financially such as asylum seekers and refugees.

Going forward I think that nationally the government should focus on people's mental health and provide services to help with this. Many people are being affected by the Covid-19 pandemic emotionally and financially and this should not be ignored as it might create other problems in our society. Especially with asylum seekers and refugees as they have suffered mental and physical problems and had fled their country.

Also, still struggling to get their rights due to the immigration process. The government should give more support to this category of people and the Home Office should deal with them as normal human beings. Scottish communities, NGOs and other groups should give more help and support and work together with these local communities like BAME to make them integrate with the society and give access to the services as new Scots.

distributing shopping, medicines and hot meals in the Scottish Borders

This is Jamie McCubbin's story of volunteering during Covid-19...
volunteering in the community

I volunteered to be a community resilience volunteer which was set up by the Scottish Borders Council (the local authority that oversees Innerleithen where I live) at the beginning of the Covid-19 outbreak. Requests for assistance from service users came to a central co-ordinator at the Innerleithen Community Council and who allocated these requests to volunteers like me. Once the service user who had requested assistance had the volunteer's name and contact details they tended to return to the same volunteer for future requests for help. The service users did this as it saved them having to go through the central co-ordinator again and once you they got to know the volunteer and saw they did a good job for them they felt they could trust them with future requests for assistance.

The assistance I provided covered things like delivering newspapers, food and medicines but also other tasks such as helping someone fix a lawnmower and tidying up a family member's grave and placing flowers on it.

I was quite busy supporting these activities from March to early June but after that, requests fell away quite sharply although I still deliver daily newspapers for two families. This was mainly due to the relaxing of restrictions on movement and that those vulnerable service users who had been asked to shield themselves through staying at home by the Scottish Government were no longer required to do this.

distributing shopping, medicines and hot meals in the Scottish Borders

But my story doesn't end there! I was also a volunteer driver for The Food Foundation which delivers hot meals from a hub in Peebles. I delivered to those who needed them in Innerleithen.

We delivered around a dozen meals a day. Initially it was 5 days a week from Monday to Friday but that reduced to 4 days a week from Monday to Thursday.

I got involved as a result of an appeal for volunteers by the Chair of Innerleithen Community Council. I have been a lead volunteer which involved picking up the meals from Peebles and driving back to Innerleithen to distribute them at a central point to a team of volunteers who then delivered them. I also co-ordinated the team of volunteers to make sure they were given delivery slots which suited their schedule and passed this information on to the hub co-ordinator at the Food Foundation who pulled together the weekly rotas. In the event there were not enough volunteers to cover the delivery routes I delivered some of the meals myself.

I carried out this volunteering for two months from the beginning of August until the end of September. When we delivered them the meals most of them were left on the service users doorstep for collection after we had knocked on their door to let them know we were there, although in some cases we did enter the property to leave the meals for the service user inside if they were extremely vulnerable. When we did enter the property we made sure that all social distancing and hygiene protocols were followed.

I felt that as a volunteer I was able to help some of the most vulnerable individuals in our community in a positive and practical way, helping them get through what has turned out to be an unprecedented civil emergency, and making them feel that the community cared about their welfare.

lockdown leads to library launch



by Christina West

The countrywide lockdown caused by the Covid 19 virus pushed me to start something which I have been thinking about and intending to do for some years.

I set up a small local library which gave me something positive to work on over the months we were stuck at home self isolating as a family member is in the high risk shielding category. It also gave me a way of getting hold of fresh books to read when I could not get to charity shops or the local council library as I would usually do, and also to help the local community at the same time.

I have Aspergers syndrome and one of my special interests is reading. My Aspergers went undiagnosed until nine years ago when I was 40. I also suffer from a form of dyslexia and, despite being virtually unable to read books or anything written on the blackboard at school, this too went undiagnosed and untreated until relatively recently. It is only in the last few years that I have been able to train myself to read full length books and, naturally, I want to make up for all that lost time.

lockdown leads to library launch

I started the library with only two boxes of my own books which I had been intending to take to a charity shop and it has now expanded to 14 boxes, thanks to the generosity of neighbours. It turns out that several of them were in the same position as me, with time on their hands to spring clean and declutter, with nowhere else to donate to, and also having more time to read because of lockdown.

I started the library on April 25, putting tubs of books along the pavement outside our garden every day, weather permitting, and people can donate books, swap for others, and return them after reading. Soon, others started having clear outs and giving away various unwanted items such as toys, musical instruments, paint and other DIY goods, as well as fresh milk and food. This had really built up a strong sense of community during these uncertain times. Over the months the library has expanded to include jigsaws, CDs and DVDs.

It has also really helped me by giving me confidence to talk to more neighbours and to get outdoors, both of which I found difficult in the past due to my Aspergers.

To combat the reduced opportunities to put the library outdoors over the winter because of poor weather and reduced daylight hours, I have recently set up a local library page on Facebook so people can see photos of what is available and select books from the virtual library shelves.

To date there have been very few problems other than having to remove fallen flower heads and leaves from bushes overhanging the boxes of books and I am looking forward to keeping this venture going for the foreseeable future.

encouraging connection and conversation in the LGBTQ community



Jenna Macrory is from Dumfries but studies music at Newcastle University and is a guitarist in a band. Through touring, she has become interested in the different ways she is treated from one location to the next.

Jenna tells us about starting a project and campaign – a place and a language for the LGBTQ community to come together online – as a way to bring a voice to and connect this community.

by Jenna Macrory

As lockdown restrictions have progressed over the year we have seen conversation change. Many of us lack the interactions we used to receive from colleagues or only speak in person with whomever we have embarked upon lockdown with. These limited people we are able to see (if any) do not necessarily share the same views as us. All of these factors have contributed to conversational spaces moving away from the physical interactions to open up for a new format of online conversational spaces that reconnects people during a time when we need it most.

Receiving abuse is a feeling all too familiar to most LGBTQ people. LGBTQ voices began as a project viewing hate speech as the start of an unsolicited conversation (online and offline). But I have built an online space for the LGBTQ community to express their thoughts in conversation in a productive way.

encouraging connection and conversation in the LGBTQ community

The world of online dating is one of these new online conversation spaces that is often overlooked. Apps such as Tinder serve as direct links to the local LGBTQ community. Online dating apps are one of very few places that LGBTQ people can directly and instantly connect with each other resulting in Tinder becoming a space for our conversation about hate speech as unsolicited conversation. Tinder provocations is at the forefront of these interactions with my community. These provocations are thought provoking questions loaded onto a Tinder account. These provoking questions are aimed at highlighting experiences and issues unique to the LGBTQ community, allowing these voices to be heard.

These digital conversation spaces are more important than ever, particularly in rural communities such as Dumfries and Galloway. Spaces for celebrating LGBTQ identity are scarce enough as is but with Covid-19 restrictions we see people completely cut off from communities of like minded individuals leaving behind an unheard population. The responses to the Tinder provocations developed into talking points for an LGBTQ podcast. The podcast serves as an opportunity to delve further into issues highlighted through the provocations while providing a public platform for these points. (This podcast will be launched later in 2020.)

Although listening to the community has been my central focus, the legacy of this project is intended for a different group. LGBTQ voices is for the cisgender heterosexual population. It is a way to reveal these issues not just as LGBTQ issues but as human issues. There is an illusion that because you cannot relate to someone else's experience it strips them of what you consider to be human, they become a blank canvas for abuse. I hope that through sharing in experiences one person might reconsider before shouting hate speech. Realising that LGBTQ people are as human as anyone else is the intended outcome for this project.

communities have huge resources, but need support

Parish Minister Christopher Rowe from Milton shares a video of how he helped during the pandemic, and what Scotland can learn going forward.

by Minister Christopher Rowe

What I think Scotland can learn from all this -that communities have huge resourcefulness and goodwill which often only needs to be encouraged to come out, but also that communities like Milton have very limited resources, so the help of funders/government is vital. Much of the food was funded from government, many referrals came from SCVO helplines, the church hall is requiring major investment that is beyond the resources of a small congregation and even a large denomination (which is in dire financial and membership straits and is totally dependent on the voluntary contributions of its mainly elderly members).

Watch the [Youtube video here](#).

from crisis to community



by Mazhar Rehman

What I noticed most during the start of the pandemic was the how most thought it wouldn't affect us as it was so far away. However, having taken too easy to the myth that it wouldn't affect us exploded – lockdowns, job losses, we were in crisis mode.

However, this is really about how after a long while, I witnessed people from all walks of life coming together. We all had a common enemy: Corona and we needed to defeat it.

During lockdown my small fabric business was suffering as I couldn't see customers and shops were closing and so forth. My wife also was still undergoing cancer treatment so we were extra careful, had to shield and isolate. I too was also managing my own concerns as a disproportionate number of people dying from COVID 19 were from black and minority ethnic communities and had huge concern for myself and my families wellbeing.

from crisis to community

When I started hearing about PPE shortages, NHS in trouble etc out of the blue of my customers Rule 42 called and asked if I had any cotton fabric to donate as they were making scrubs. Thinking nothing of it I was happy to donate the fabric. After our conversation I came to realise that various machinists, alterations shops had shared to make NHS scrubs scrub bags, gowns, masks under various names Julies alterations, Angelic Threads, Nifty Home Sewers, for the love of scrub bags, Dawn interiors and various independent machinists.

One by one I donated fabrics to each company and am currently still donating. We found a common bond between people, a community spirit. Machinists from all backgrounds/persuasions were showing for free and the fabric was sourced and distributed for free. A whole supply chain working as things developed, they could work as the supply increased. I made a decision to offer fabric cheaper as I did not want to profit from the lockdown. The machinist groups I supported got some funding to scale up and to help them I sourced and supplied them with fabric for free and also cheaper than anyone else.

I did and will do whatever I can, thousands of masks were bought, hundreds of scrubs, bags and masks were made. It showed what can be done when people and communities came together in adversity to help. One thing I did which I was pleased with was getting groups to work together, rather than by themselves, this meant that resources were shared and very little wasted.

As my company was mentioned in forums and groups I was asked to supply individual machinists with fabric, delivering to their home whilst observing social distancing and wearing PPE with heavily subsidised prices. Even now in November Angelic Threads are still making masks for free and I'm still supplying them with masks and fabric for free. I worked with a Kilt maker in Glasgow, dropping fabric off to them and they would use their machines to cut them off into masks or scrub bags. We are still all working together, I'm still putting posters up in Asian shops to raise awareness, I'm still donating fabric as much as I can for free. I wasn't really aware of it until a customer asked for it.

I found for the first time people forgot their labels ..Catholic , Protestant , Muslim, English, Scottish , Pakistani etc and became one multi-cultural community to support each other during the fight to reduce the transmission of the Coronavirus. People helped each other making masks, scrubs, delivering them.

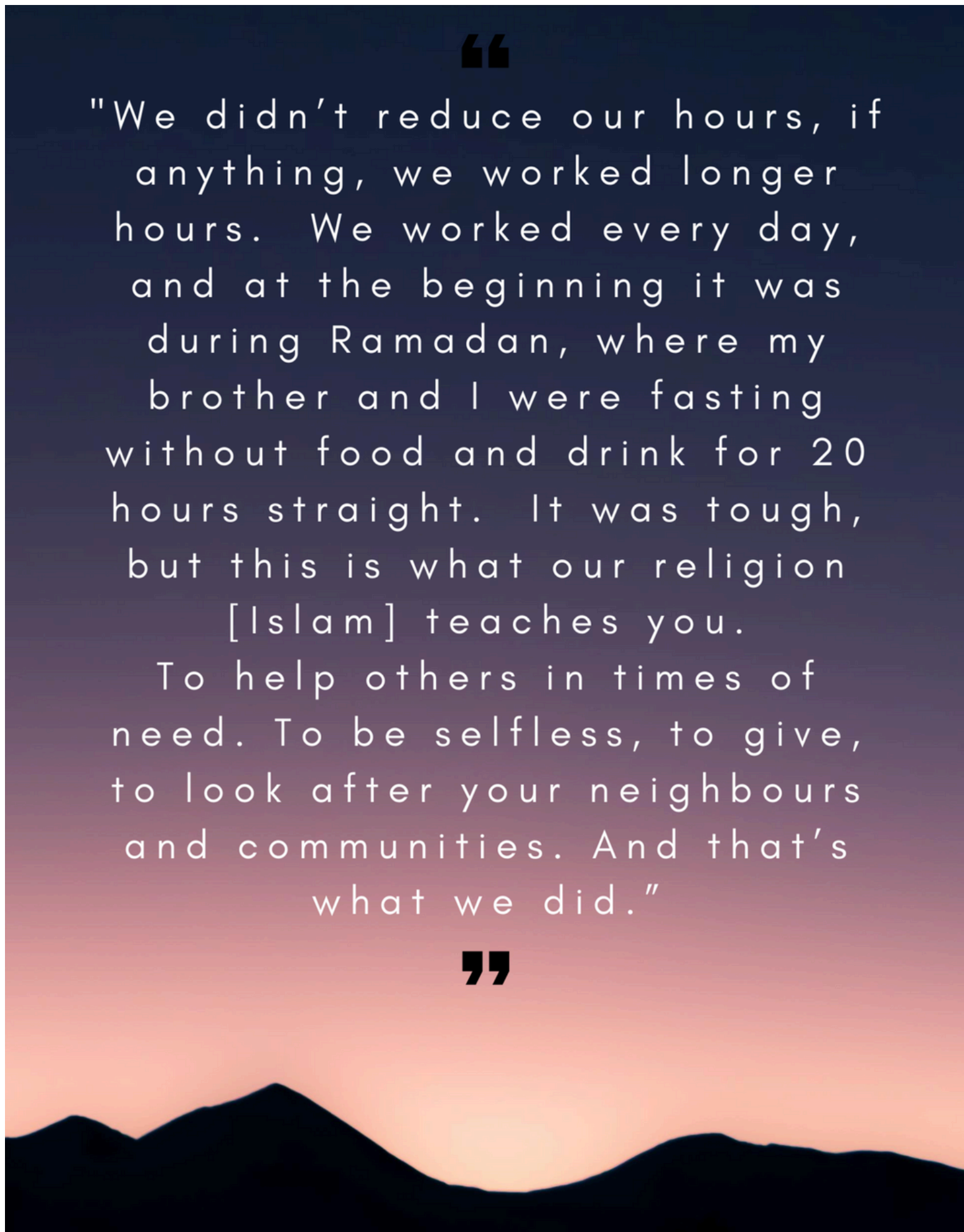
What we can learn; all the communities have special skills and when we combine them together we can help. Sewing and using old pillowcases and duvets to make scrubs and bags, driving across the country to drop off cut fabrics for machinists in Dundee, Aberdeen, Inverness, Edinburgh, Glasgow and some parts of England to make various PPE. We provided the fabrics and elastic, threads to make various items, and in doing so, people came together from all walks of life, trying to help in whatever way they, and we, could.

helping in Milton

Linda, from Love Milton, shares her experience of how she helped during the pandemic. "I thought, I want to be able to help people here.... Anybody that could help, did.... I've been on my own a long long time, for myself it's to get out and about and meet people."

Watch the [Youtube video here](#).

and the award goes to...



Adil and Asif on winning the 'Best Post Office in Scotland'

Brothers Adil Bashir and Asif Bashir won the 'Best Post Office in Scotland' when hundreds of customers voted for them for going 'the extra mile'! Working even harder during these times, even while they were fasting at Ramadan, their focus was "to help others in times of need. To be selfless, to give [and] to look after [our] neighbours and communities."

collective responsibility and empowering communities: Darkwood Crew

Darkwood Crew in Ferguslie Park supported their community during COVID-19; Terry tells us “our communities hold the solutions to many of our larger global problems including the pandemic, climate change and collective well being. Collective responsibility and empowering communities is vital to any suggested well being recovery.”

Terry tells us “I think the main thing Scotland could learn from Darkwood Crew is that our communities hold the solutions to many of our larger global problems including the pandemic, climate change and collective well being. Collective responsibility and empowering communities is vital to any suggested well being recovery.”

Watch the [video here](#).

school uniforms in Glasgow



What did you do?

My name is Leanne McGuire and I'm the Chair of **Glasgow City Parents Group**. I felt this year many families may find themselves in a position they have never been in before, worrying about how to afford school uniforms if their income had been drastically affected by Covid-19. I wanted to make it easy and discreet for families to access the support they needed and give them one less thing to worry about.

I approached two local organisations that I knew were already providing similar services but on a smaller scale. Thankfully, they agreed to get involved. We set up the service in a matter of days and started to promote it across the city via social media.

school uniforms in Glasgow

The service relied on donations, so there was an appeal to wash, fold and bag up donations of school uniform, jackets, blazers and footwear, with many donations being dropped off at my front door. All donated items were quarantined for 72 hours in line with infection control guidelines. The response from Glasgow was fantastic!

Since Glasgow schools were closed, families were unable to access uniform from school run uniform rails and so this service provided a discrete and supportive alternative access point. Families emailed me their request. I didn't ask anyone about their financial or employment situation. If someone emailed asking for help, that was enough. During the four weeks the service was running, we received almost 400 requests from families. With uniform packages averaging around 12 uniform items per child, we reused over 4000 uniform items.

We gathered feedback on the service and asked families if they would be comfortable sharing further detail about their request. This information has now been used by me and one of our partners to submit a report to Glasgow City Council asking them if they would consider supporting this as an ongoing service rather than a Covid19 response only. We have yet to take it to the committee but we are hopeful this is not the end of a worthwhile service that not only eases the financial burden for families but promotes the reuse of school uniforms and reduces our city's clothing waste.

What can we learn from you going forward?

Reusing school uniform should not have a stigma to it. It should be promoted as a good thing to do to help our environment. It should be promoted and encouraged more throughout Scotland to reduce the stigma from families who choose to use a recycled school uniform

NHS stay home poem

◆ *NHS STAY AT HOME, SAVE LIVES* ◆

This is to PROTECT us all,
children, dads and wives

We have been told to stay inside
By these rules we must abide

Do not go out,
so that Nicola does not SHOUT

We are at home, inside we have to stay
Doctors & nurses go to work each day

We wanted to send you a thank you card
To say we appreciate you all working so hard

We need to beat the virus - this corona thing
We know we can do it and once we have we
will sing

Hospitals- ambulance-cleaners-carers
Are all supporting us, to stop us being virus
sharers

Food shops, delivery men and women
None of them are superhuman
LET'S DO OUR PART AND HAVE A HEART

BY ZOE EACUPS (AGE 8) ★

A poem, by Zoe age 8.

Fernhill: a story from Kirstin



Before the lockdown

I had recently formed a new group with some other local parents called The Ohana Club. Ohana means family. We had successfully launched our pilot community cinema project in February and had an upcoming trip to five sisters zoo all planned and booked for local families at the start of April. We, like many community groups, were planning holiday programmes and trying to source and secure funding to deliver our ambitious plans.

At the start

We went through a period of confusion. We had to shelf our plans and figure out how to respond in a way that would benefit the community. Emergency response isn't what the group was set up to do but given the vast number of contacts the group had managed to make in the short time since it began it became difficult to ignore the stories of people in the area struggling. As a group we reached out to local families and attempted to understand what issues people faced and tried to identify solutions and ideas to help people.

Fernhill: a story from Kirstin

Along the way

We were able to secure funding from the Scottish Government Supporting Communities Fund to help local families. We are using the money to provide three key areas of support to local families, these are

- Weekly mobile phone top-ups
 - this allows people to stay connected with their loved ones from a distance
- Weekly home energy top-ups
 - this allows families to keep the lights on while trying to cope with increased energy costs from being at home more during lockdown
- Weekly shop vouchers
 - this allows families to keep the kitchen stocked up while trying to cope with increased food costs while the whole family stays home

This vital support provided to families has been well received with one local parent saying,

“I like that it’s a supermarket voucher rather than a bag of food every week cause I don’t want everybody to know I’m getting help.”

In an ideal world...

Obviously, in an ideal world we wouldn’t be facing Coronavirus, but in a world where we face these issues we have identified a few key things we feel would benefit the community.

The importance of community space

We feel having some kind of accessible space within the community where activity could be coordinated from, would not only make it easier for us as a group to deliver this vital support, but it would also mean we would be able to reach more people and broaden the type of support we could deliver.

We know not all families have the ability to get online so having access to a physical space would enable the creation of a drop box system that would let people communicate their needs offline and access support like their more connected peers.

What I have learned

I know from doing community work in Fernhill over the past few years that stigma around poverty is a massive issue, but I didn't think people would still feel this this because I felt like we are all in the same boat when it comes to coronavirus. But I've learned we actually aren't. With lockdown, we are all in our own little boats and some boats have more supplies than others. So we are all experiencing rough seas right now, it's just that some of our boats aren't really equipped to weather the storm on our own.

Looking to the future...

We are currently providing a much needed financial buffer for families that emergency and direct support isn't.

What I am interested in?

I'm interested in bringing people together, building networks and connections and strengthening the bonds between families in my community. I just look forward to getting back to some kind of normal that will let that happen, so we can come back from this stronger and closer than ever before.

community conversations in Carbrain

Corra Foundation Community Co-ordinator, Shazia Riaz, and local community members Frances Parks, Maureen Hascoet de Cuestas and William Holmer share what has inspired them to get involved in their community, their experience of the local responses to the coronavirus and their hopes for the future.

Carbrain is one of the nine communities Corra works alongside as part of the People in Place programme. Click here to [find out more about People in Place](#) and the nine communities in Scotland the programme supports.

Watch the [Youtube video here](#).

roots of Linwood

Roots responded to the crisis by distributing more than 12,000 boxes of food and supplies to households across Renfrewshire who weren't able to access food. This included the elderly, people who were shielding, front line workers and vulnerable families.

Click here to [read more about Roots of Linwood.](#)

Watch the [Youtube video here.](#)

art can bring us together

by Michael Clark

It's been a bizarre and thought provoking time for everyone during lockdown. As a musician all live work dried up overnight. I found myself trying to keep my mind occupied and at the start of lockdown I fixed up an old Raleigh racer bike which I'd found in a skip 8yrs ago. I quickly found that my daily cycles took me in and around Glasgow and I kept seeing positive messages written on walls and in windows everywhere. There have been some horrific and heart-breaking stories in the news but seeing people's courage and the positive messages around Glasgow inspires hope and made me feel proud to live here. I did a remote musical collaboration for the first time with an artist and harp player from Arran, Heather McLeod. I wanted to show a positive side to Glasgow during the lockdown and found that the music we'd recorded along with the clips from my phone made for a simple and hopefully positive video which I could share with people.

Several months into lockdown I was approached by the Annexe Community Group to play some live music in a local park. We felt people really needed a boost and a low key community event was the perfect solution.

Before lockdown I set up regular nights encouraging an inclusive and creative platform for people in the community to showcase their music and ideas. The nights were sorely missed by those who played and listened.

art can bring us together



Our event in the park had a great response. We picked a sunny afternoon and people turned up, socially distanced and sat within their groups. It was amazing to see people out listening to live music for the first time in months. After the gig the messages of support and encouragement were brilliant.

I think everyone needed the boost and it was amazing to see people smiling and enjoying themselves. I love how music & art can transform a situation, bringing people in the community together in a positive manner that helps us all.

Watch the [Youtube video here](#).

we all need each other



by Saima Hayat

I have always made an effort to get to know my neighbours and build a feeling of community. I think it is really important to know those around us and I think it helps us feel safe. Coming from a small Pakistani population in Scotland, community means something even wider, it means being in a different city or town and bumping into someone you've met before, or have someone in common with or someone who maybe even knows someone else from the same village your grandparents came from decades before. Community is really important to help make you feel at home.

When coronavirus hit Scotland, everyone was talking about it, everyone was worried and we all wanted to feel safe. I think community took on a new and deeper meaning for lots of us. In the first week of lockdown, a few of us on the same street set up a neighbours Whatsapp group, this was the first time many of us had properly spoken to one another, beyond the occasional "hello, how are you?" Or wave as we went about our normal daily lives.

we all need each other

A little letter was put through the doors of everyone (probably about 40 doors) to give them a mobile number to send their details to if they wanted to be added to the group. For those who were older or didn't have Whatsapp, they were asked to write down their number for us to check-in with them. Every single door responded, and for the first time we were all chatting about more than the weather.

We have been sharing information as lockdown measures ease, sharing extra food we had when there wasn't enough pasta in the shops, some of us have been sharing recipes, but mostly we have been checking in with each other, and been there to make each other feel a bit safer.

In my area there are lots of elderly people who all of a sudden were unable to go out, or get the things they normally would. They were our main concern. We didn't want them to feel alone or go without the things they needed. Those of us who could, would check in on them, once I went round the doors and dropped them all off a treat of chocolate to make them smile! We checked if they needed medicines, groceries or just a chat.

It has been really lovely to see how our neighbours have come together and how we all wanted to help each other, I hope coronavirus is over soon, but that our community sticks together like this for a long time.



together,
we help

to build forward
better

Together, We Help (2020) was part of [Social Action Inquiry Scotland](#).