



TSI Covid-19 Learning Project

A focus on the roles played by
Third Sector Interfaces during Covid-19

MAY 2021

Contents

Socially Distanced
Volunteers' Picnic
hosted by Volunteer
Midlothian



1	Executive Summary
2	Background information
3	Some things you might want to know about the third sector & Third Sector Interfaces
4	Key findings
5	How Covid-19 has affected the third sector
6	TSI roles funded by the Third Sector Unit during the crisis at different stages
7	The role of TSIs in coordinating the emergency response
8	The role of TSIs in supporting the third sector through challenging times
9	The role of TSIs in renewal as we transition back to more normal times
10	Local stakeholder views
10	Recommendations and next steps
Appendix 1	Examples of work
Appendix 2	TSI case studies

Executive Summary

This review aims to better understand of the role of Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs) during the Covid-19 pandemic. It identifies the types of activities undertaken by TSIs during Covid-19, the effectiveness of different approaches and lessons for the future of TSIs.

There is a Third Sector Interface in every local authority area of Scotland. The TSI model was developed in 2010 and reviewed in 2017. Although each TSI is independent they operate nationally as TSI Network Scotland and have a critical role in supporting the third sector and volunteering through their shared outcome framework.

TSIs have played many significant roles during the pandemic. They have coordinated the third sector's crisis response – connecting people, organisations and resources with a focus on key areas such as food, isolation, medicine collection, and parenting support. They have supported TSOs in challenging times, helping them to access funding and reboot their business models. And they have had a key role in involving the third sector and partners in resetting the agenda both locally and nationally, in areas such as vaccine roll out, economic recovery, and employability.

Interviews with stakeholders in the six case study areas showed that the work of TSI during the pandemic has been valued. Stakeholders noted that TSIs have a unique contribution, particularly in terms of their relationships with the third sector and their ability to identify and broker new opportunities.

The review has identified that the way TSIs work is critically important, including the commitment to partnership, working alongside communities and being flexible. They were also helped by the pre-existing relationships they had with both the third and public sector. A critical challenge to success was the ongoing disconnect between TSI resource levels and the complexity of the role that were identified in the 2017 review.

As we transition towards more normal times, there is an opportunity to work differently across the public and third sector. TSIs have a critical role to play in this, with a unique position of knowledge and relationships. This will require continued recognition of the role of TSIs, resources and a continued commitment to changing systems.

The review has identified five critical recommendations, which are outlined on [page 4](#).

The review has been funded by Scottish Government and prepared in partnership between Third Sector Interfaces and Evaluation Support Scotland (ESS). The review included a desk review, case studies of six TSI areas, and independent interviews with local partners.

Key Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Celebrate the role of the third sector and volunteers during Covid-19

It's clear that local third sector organisations, supported by TSIs played a very important role in the response to Covid-19. The network should consider how they can celebrate this and if they might do this with national intermediaries, including SCVO.

Recommendation 2: Build awareness locally and nationally of the role and impact of TSI's

Covid-19 has raised awareness of the third sector and the TSIs. But there are still gaps in stakeholder understanding at both local and national level. TSIs could do more work to highlight the role they play locally.

The TSU should promote the existence and role of the TSI across the whole of government. They should emphasise the importance of engaging with TSIs when designing national programmes of support for the third sector as well as identifying other ways in which TSIs can support national policies and programmes.

Recommendation 3: Invest in the capacity and reach of the third sector in local decision-making

Structures for involving third sector organisations and TSIs varied in strength and this affects the ability of the third sector to contribute to the making and implementation of local priorities. The TSI network and Scottish Government should consider how they can help local authorities and health and social care partnerships to get the best out of third sector relationships.

Local stakeholders identified greater scope for TSIs to improve the capacity of the third sector to: demonstrate outcomes, deliver services and be strategic commissioning partners. The network and Scottish Government should identify if there is appetite and funding for specific programmes to support evaluation skills and capacity building in specific areas (including strategic commissioning).

Recommendation 4: Build on the opportunities that have come out of Covid-19

The profile of the sector and TSIs has risen, the value and benefits of volunteering and community engagement is better recognised, the increased use of digital platforms has led to increased communication, sharing and coordination within the network. The network should consider how they maintain and build on this momentum.

Recommendation 5: Review funding

Scottish Government and TSIs should work together to develop a strategy for future funding of TSIs, with the aspiration of ensuring that TSIs have sustainable capacity to respond to the increasing pressures they face. Adequate and fair resources are critical for supporting the third sector contribution to Scotland's recovery from Covid-19 and for achievement of many Scottish Government policies and priorities.

TSI Covid-19 Learning Project: Background Information

Background

The Scottish Government Third sector unit (TSU) funds 32 Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs) to support local third sector involvement in community planning and integration and in responding to local needs and outcomes.

This includes support to traditional voluntary organisations, community groups and social enterprises and support for volunteering.

In September 2018, the third sector unit co-produced a new outcome framework with TSIs outlining 4 roles that they would fund, working towards 6 medium term outcomes.

£2 million was invested by Scottish Government into the TSI network at the start of the pandemic, recognising the particular role that TSIs could play in supporting the response.

Purpose of the learning project

Is to better understand:

- The roles played by TSI during Covid-19 at different stages - emergency response, transition to recovery and renewal
- Approaches that worked (for e.g. speedy response, partnership working, capacity building etc)
- Lessons for the future role and support to local TSOs and
- What this means for the role of TSIs in the medium to longer term
- Whether the TSI outcome framework needs review

Covid-19

In the Spring of 2020 a national lock down was enforced because of Covid-19. This left some people vulnerable, lonely and isolated, facing money worries, unable to get food and prescriptions, cooped up in small spaces, lacking access to information about financial and other support they could get and in some cases at extra risk of violence and neglect.

The third sector locally played a crucial role in the emergency response, often initiating actions at a community level. TSIs as local supporters of third sector organisations also played crucial roles in helping to support the sector to provide a local coordinated response along with statutory partners.

Some third sector organisations had to close their doors, others changed the way they delivered services, others flexed and turned to providing emergency support. New groups emerged. This has created a need for information and support around a range of issues.

Along with further periods of restriction and lock down, Covid-19 has led to longer term issues around loss of income and employment, social isolation, mental health issues. Inequalities have been exposed and deepened. The third sector have a part to play in responding to these needs.



Methodology

ESS facilitated a working group of senior officers from 6 TSIs. Each member developed a case study about:

- Context
- Activities undertaken throughout Covid-19
- What was important about how they worked
- What difference they made
- Challenges and changes
- What they learnt
- What they would do differently post Covid-19

A consultant undertook interviews with local strategic stakeholders.

ESS also undertook a small evidence review of other reports.

The working group looked for common themes and key learning/ messages to share with Scottish Government/ others.

ESS wrote this report with group input.

The 6 TSIs involved

1. Glasgow: large urban, three agency partnership TSI.

2. Midlothian: mid-size, mix of small market towns and semi-rural, two agency partnership TSI.

3. West Lothian: small, mix of urban and rural, single agency TSI.

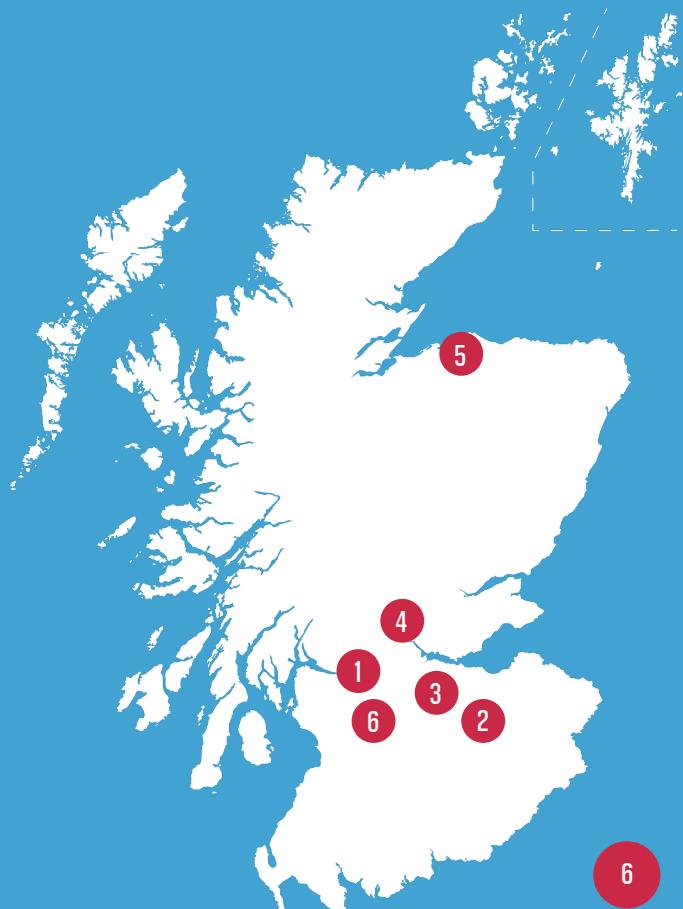
The 6 TSIs involved cont.

4. Stirling: mid-size, mix of urban and rural, single agency TSI.

5. Moray: mostly rural with small market towns, single agency TSI.

6. North Lanarkshire: largest unitary TSI, 8 dispersed towns with satellite villages and areas of rurality.

This is a good spread of TSIs, although we have no island TSIs.



Some things you might want to know about the third sector and Third Sector Interfaces

The third sector is large and very diverse

There are 40,000 third sector organisations (TSOs) in Scotland, including charities, community groups and social enterprises.

They work in a wide range of policy areas (social care, culture and education, law and advocacy, health, environment and animals, community economy and social development, housing, religious).



In 2018 the third sector had an annual turnover of £6 billion.



The third sector in Scotland has over 100,000 paid staff.



Two thirds of income is earned, not donated.



There are many national organisations (some with local branches) but 78% of charities in Scotland are local.



Over 1 million people volunteered in Scotland last year.

See SCVO 'State of the sector 2020'

Support for third sector organisations comes from a range of places

SCVO: national umbrella body

National intermediaries where members are third sector organisations working in the same field

TSIs as local intermediaries

National support agencies focussed on particular issues

Local support agencies or departments funded or provided by local authorities

TSIs are diverse

Some operate as a partnership between specialist support agencies (volunteering, social enterprises and more traditional third sector organisations). Some operate as single organisations.

Some are small and some very large (dependent upon population size, territory, Scottish Government grant and other funding).

- TSIs are working in very diverse contexts with differences in relation to:
- Needs and priorities
- Geography and demographics
- Infrastructure support to local third sector organisations from both statutory and other third sector agencies
- The extent to which the third sector are recognised, valued and involved in planning and delivery of services.



TSI four roles funded by the Third Sector Unit

1. Intelligence

Collating and sharing knowledge about:

- Third sector locally,
- Local and national policy and how it might affect local TSOs, communities and citizens
- How the third sector can contribute to those agendas.

2. Voice

Ensuring a strong third sector voice at a strategic level within local planning structures and nationally.

3. Build Capacity

Developing the capacity of volunteering, community groups, voluntary organisations and social enterprise to achieve positive change.

4. Connect

Providing leadership, vision and coordination to the local third sector to better respond to local priorities, including through partnership and collaboration

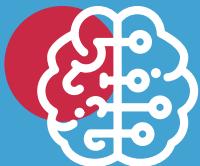
TSI works towards these common medium term outcomes

1	People are more involved in their community
2	Improved cross sector collaboration
3	Third sector organisations are better able to lead and develop shared agendas
4	Third sector organisations are better able to respond to local need
5	Key decision making includes third sector input
6	Third sector organisations are better able to contribute to a strong and inclusive local social economy.

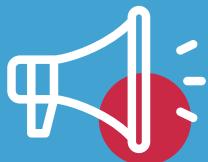
Key Findings

Roles played during Covid-19

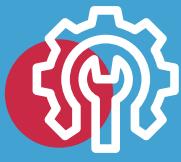
The functional roles funded by SG have been important in enabling TSIs to support the third sector during Covid-19.



Intelligence



Voice



Building Capacity



Connecting

See *pages 12-13* for brief summary of the impact of Covid-19 on the sector and vice versa.

See *pages 14-15* for summary of roles played at key stages.

TSIs have played important roles:

- ▶ In coordinating the third sector's crisis response – connecting people, organisations and resources
- ▶ In supporting TSOs in challenging times
- ▶ In involving the third sector and partners in resetting the agenda both locally and nationally.

See *pages 16 to 21* for more details and *Appendix 1* for examples.

The role played by TSI and third sector organisations locally depended upon the emergency planning and response arrangements in each local authority. It was easier to support and mobilise the third sector when relationships and structures for involving the third sector were stronger.

See TSI case studies in the *Appendix 2*.

Distance Befriending/
Support Guidance
produced by Volunteer
Midlothian for local
Resilience Volunteers

Midlothian
Distance
Befriending
and Support

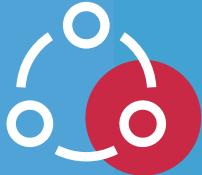
DISTANCE
BEFRIENDING/
SUPPORT GUIDANCE
MIDLOTHIAN

Stakeholder understanding & views

Generally local stakeholders:

A - Confirmed the roles stated previously.

B - Identified the unique contribution of TSI re:



Reach and connections to the sector



Reach into communities



Brokering engagement with TSOs



Identifying and creating new opportunities

C - They noted that TSIs demonstrated:

- Flexibility and responsiveness
- Incredible speed of response
- A positive attitude
- Enormous commitment.

The scale and scope of the third sector response to Covid-19 has **raised awareness of the third sector and the TSIs**. But there are gaps in stakeholder understanding at both local and national level. TSIs need to do more work to highlight the role they play. The TSU could promote the existence and role of the TSI across the whole of government.

See TSI case studies in Appendix 2

The importance of local

The pandemic has highlighted the importance of local community led responses for rapid and tailored response to need.

TSIs are uniquely placed to **bridge the local with the national**. They have contacts with and knowledge of TSOs and community groups at both local level and across the whole range of policy areas. **They have links with statutory partners and a knowledge of the strategic context both locally and nationally**. They can act as a bridge between sectors, organisations and communities. **They have both an operational and strategic perspective**.



Pictured:
Groups supported by Stirling's TSI throughout the pandemic



Looking forward

The sector is critical to community resilience and recovery. They've been hit hard by Covid-19 and need to be supported. The TSI network is a logical and effective way of supporting local TSOs.

Future public services require different ways of working - involving citizenship, collaboration, design thinking. TSIs can help to support that.

Local stakeholders identified greater scope for TSIs to:

- improve the capacity of the third sector to demonstrate outcomes
- build the delivery capacity of the sector
- build their knowledge/capacity to operate as a strategic commissioning partner

But recognised that the scale/capacity of some TSIs will limit their capacity to support the increased involvement of the third sector.

Pictured: tsiMORAY's Covid-19 Website Portal. It contained a database of services that were accessible during Covid-19 and help for people who were shielding.



WELCOME TO THE TSIMORAY COVID-19 PORTAL

An area providing Moray's citizens, charities, community groups, social enterprises, and voluntary organisations with support, information and resources during the COVID-19 outbreak. Information on this portal will be routinely updated. For health information please refer to the latest NHS guidelines.

How Covid-19 has affected the third sector

The third sector played an important role in the emergency response to Covid-19

Many third sector organisations (TSOs) were able to respond quickly to emergency local needs such as helping with food distribution, digital access, advice, emotional and other support.

Covid-19 impact on the sector

Covid impacted differently on TSOs: whilst some kept going and adapted their services, others had to close part or all their services. New initiatives started. Lots of people volunteered.

Income has been affected and long-term sustainability is threatened.

Increased recognition of the value and role of the third sector

Stakeholders expressed:

- a keenness to sustain the levels of active citizenship
- greater understanding of the contribution and value of the third sector and
- a willingness to engage the third sector in renewal.

The pandemic has highlighted the importance of local community led responses and has encouraged greater community participation.

Increased needs for third sector support

Covid-19 highlighted and worsened inequalities

Covid-19 galvanised individuals and communities, many want to continue their involvement

Particular needs have arisen around mental health and digital access/ skills

Images from Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian's Third Sector Covid-19 Recovery Summit





TSI National Survey: Key Findings

1	The financial situation of social enterprises as a consequence of Covid-19 is perilous, and without urgent financial support, many will not recover.
2	Reduction in income from fundraising is threatening the future of voluntary organisations large and small, with half of these organisations experiencing a reduction in income from fundraising.
3	A key pinch point in the financial recovery of all organisations will be the cessation of the Job Retention Scheme.
4	Organisations have been entrepreneurial and adaptive during this period. Half of all organisations have changed what they do or have modified delivery support to their community/ service users.

TSI National Survey: Report (Published September 2020)

Volunteer first supported by tsIMORAY during Covid-19, and who they still continue to support.



TSI roles funded by TSU during the Covid-19 crisis at different stages: All roles still relevant, different balance and focus

	 Intelligence Two way flow of information about the sector and for the sector.	 Connect Leadership, vision and coordination to respond to need.
 Typical Activities	<p>Surveys Gathering intelligence through work Updates / newsletters Forums Input to strategic groups and discussions (local, national or regional)</p>	<p>Networks and forums Cross-sector coordination groups Directories of volunteers, services, and organisations Informal linking</p>
 Emergency Response: Increased Role	<p>Lots of info gathering about needs, activity and concerns More updates and bulletins Frequent meetings of coordinating groups</p>	<p>Cross-sector coordination groups Identifying gaps and linking groups and individuals locally Covid-19 specific directories to link people and volunteers to services More thematic groups / meeting more regularly</p>
 Transition to Recovery	<p>Feeding information about impact of Covid-19 on the sector into local, regional and national level so support needs can be recognised Showcasing the work of the third sector</p>	<p>Peer support to share good practice, knowledge and identify risk and opportunities</p>
 Renewal	<p>Using intelligence to reshape the agenda and think about new ways of doing things (see Voice)</p>	<p>Bringing people together to share ideas and plan action to reshape the future</p>



	 Voice Ensuring third sector voice is heard at a strategic level.	 Building Capacity Developing volunteers and organisational capacity to achieve positive change.
 Typical Activities	Forums for third sector Feed into local strategic groups Feed into national picture Reports to share learning Events and working groups	Training and one-to-one support Website resources Events, Projects Database of volunteers Finance / Payroll / HR Services
 Emergency Response: Increased Role	More focussed on needs thrown up by Covid-19 such as PPE and digital needs	Help to access emergency Covid-19 Funding
 Transition to Recovery	Highlighting and initiating action to address inequalities exposed or worsened by Covid-19. For example: digital participation, mental health support or opportunities for young people.	Help to rethink business models and re-start services (funding, managing volunteers, business planning, HR issues and scenario planning) Providing opportunities for peer support and learning
 Renewal	TSIs facilitated and engaged TSOs in debates about the future Working groups and discussions which focus on resetting our ways of thinking and working.	Joint projects to develop action and capacity around particular issues e.g. Kickstart

The role of TSIs in coordinating the emergency response

TSIs played a significant role in coordinating the emergency response

There was a focus on emergency needs such as food, isolation, medicine collection, parenting support.

TSIs worked within different structures, but all 6 TSI played a significant part in cross sector coordination of the emergency response.

What TSIs did

- Gained intelligence about community provision and needs of TSOs and communities
- Built directories of TSOs, groups, volunteers and services
- Identified gaps and found ways to support local groups and organisations to fill those gaps
- Matched lots of volunteers with opportunities
- Linked providers and groups to enable local coordination
- Fed knowledge into coordination groups
- Ran thematic forums and networks

Short term outcomes	Outcomes for people and communities	Long term outcomes
Improved cross sector collaboration	People at risk got better access to food, medicines shelter and other essentials	TSI partnership working and recognition has improved
TSOs and community groups are better able to respond to local need	People felt less isolated Digitally excluded people got access to IT Families were better able to cope	Stronger connection in communities Improved collaboration between third sector organisations locally and others
People in communities are better able to support each other and access support when needed		



What was important about the way TSI worked?

- Working in partnership with public and private sector
- Responded quickly and flexibly
- (prepared to change the way they worked and the hours they worked)
- Listening to those on the ground
- Timely two-way flow of communication
- Focus on practical support
- Working alongside people and supporting third sector orgs to take the lead in local responses to meeting need.

What helped?	What hindered?
<p>The urgency of the response enabled a strong shared purpose and a blurring of organisational boundaries</p> <p>Pre-existing relationships (within third sector and with public sector)</p> <p>Being trusted to get on with it (by the public sector)</p> <p>Funders being flexible with existing funding</p> <p>Emergency funding from SG and others</p> <p>Flexibility of staff teams</p> <p>Huge volunteering effort</p> <p>Presence of anchor organisations at community and district level (or neighbouring organisations who could step in with support)</p>	<p>The number of government initiatives and the range of Covid emergency funding made it challenging to keep on top of all the issues</p> <p>A national initiative to recruit volunteers without checking local needs and initiatives (ready Scotland), created work and raised expectations with potential reputational damage</p> <p>Level of resources within TSIs – funding has stood still for over 10 years</p> <p>Need to improve own websites and technology skills (in some cases – not all)</p> <p>TSIs working in isolation on similar issues</p>

The role of TSIs in supporting the third sector through challenging times

Covid-19 resulted in different support needs for TSOs

TSOs have been impacted by Covid-19 and have responded in different ways. Some paused their service, some adapted their services, some devoted their efforts to the emergency response, new community groups and initiatives sprang up. This has led to a raft of different support needs.

A TSI survey showed many third sector organisations are worried about long term sustainability. In turn, Covid-19 has led to greater need for third sector services for example increased inequalities, mental health issues, access to digital support.

What TSIs did

- Provide opportunities for peer support and learning
- Information and advice on reopening (and reclosing)
- Highlighting the role of the third sector
- Information and support regarding funding, managing volunteers, business planning, HR issues and scenario planning
- Identifying needs, for example, TSI survey
- Feeding concerns and support issues into local, regional and national discussions
- Help fledgling organisations and initiatives with governance and other issues
- Training and access to support around working digitally
- Applying for and managing local pots of funding

Short term outcomes	Long term outcomes for people & communities
TSOs are better able to adapt, sustain their work and support people	Better services for local people
TSOs and volunteers have improved skills, resources and knowledge to achieve positive change	Contribution to National Performance Framework and local strategies
Stakeholders are better informed by the successes and challenges of the third sector including volunteers	
TSIs and volunteers are better able to have their voices heard in strategic places	
The impact of Covid-19 on the financial health of the third sector	



What was important about the way TSI worked?

- Regular and timely communication with TSOs and partners
- Focus on practical support
- Focus on peer support and learning
- Transparency
- Collaborative approach

What helped?	What hindered?
<p>Funders being flexible with existing funding</p> <p>Emergency funding from SG and others</p> <p>Flexibility of staff teams</p> <p>On-line technology enabled more people to attend meetings</p>	<p>Some staff have adapted to technology better than others</p> <p>Lost trading income for some TSIs</p> <p>Recovery has not been straightforward (new restrictions in the autumn and a second lock down from December)</p> <p>Response has been within limited resources and with heavy cost to staff - sheer level of workload</p> <p>An increased profile has led to more requests for TSI, which is positive, but has implications for resources</p> <p>A cluttered landscape of Covid funding and initiatives</p>



The role of TSIs in renewal as we transition back to more normal times

TSIs are keen to involve the sector in discussion about how we can improve outcomes for people and communities post Covid-19

Covid-19 has exposed and deepened inequalities. It has also galvanised individuals and communities and enabled new partnerships and ways of working across sectors. This is an opportunity to think afresh about how we do things and to explore alternative models and ways of working.

TSIs can bring their knowledge of third sector and community issues, can bring people together to share views, ideas and plan action and can provide support to local initiatives.

What TSIs have done/ will continue to do

- Events to bring together people to share ideas and plan action to reshape the future
- Working groups on economic, environmental social and digital renewal
- Putting a spotlight on third sector role to parliamentary committees
- Capture learning around inequalities and learning from the pandemic: surveys/ reports
- Support the vaccination programme
- Working as a TSI network to highlight issues for example manifesto document
- Responding to new and emerging TSO training needs
- Projects to shape action in areas where inequalities or issues have been raised
- Helping TSOs, including social enterprises to develop new business models and access relevant funding

Priority Areas



Raising the Profile of
Third Sector Role



Access to Digital



Inclusive Economic
Growth



Tackling Covid Related
Inequalities



Community Empowerment



Mental Health



Priority Areas (cont.)



Climate Change



Youth Unemployment
& Volunteering



Human Rights
Issues

What was important about the way TSI worked?

- Listening and keeping an eye on local civil society issues
- Independent
- Unique position holding intelligence and connections across local and national agendas – able to feed issues raised by small/ local groups into policy discussions
- Working in collaboration across the network
- Creating a space for people to share and discuss and supporting third sector orgs to take the lead in local responses to meeting need.

What may help	What may hinder?
<p>Pandemic has highlighted importance of third sector and infrastructure bodies</p> <p>Greater exposure of extent and impact of inequalities</p> <p>Surge in people wanting to get involved in their communities</p> <p>Rise in community activity and connections</p>	<p>Lack of recognition and support for TSI by public agencies at local level</p> <p>Profile of TSI at national level</p> <p>Resources</p> <p>Systems may quickly revert back to old practices</p>

Local stakeholder views: Key Themes

In each area, **Arrivo Consulting** interviewed stakeholders nominated by the working group member. Below and on the next page, we summarise their feedback.

TSI Roles

Stakeholders feedback differed, but generally confirmed that TSIs played an important role and have made a difference.

Key roles included:

Planning and co-ordination

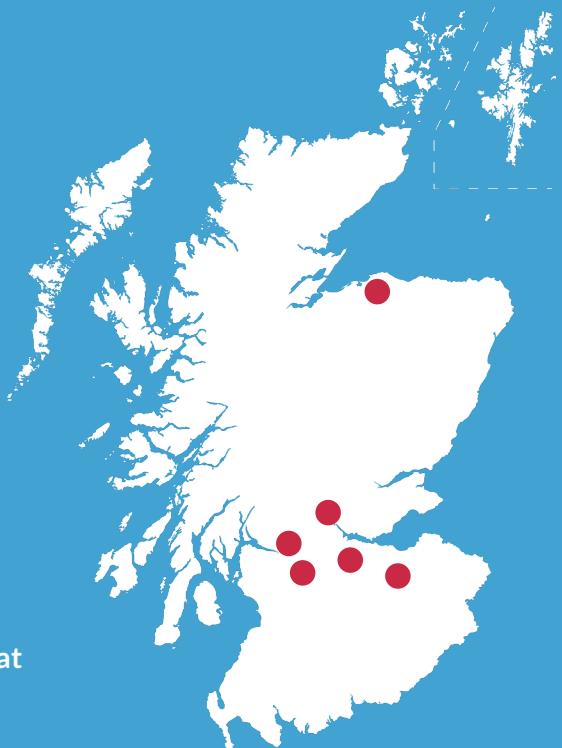
- providing intelligence on local services and collating information on issues/needs within the communities
- identifying gaps and developing new provision to fill gaps

Supporting the delivery of the emergency response

- practical support to existing organisations/supporting new provision
- matching volunteers and supporting organisations to use volunteers

Supporting the wider third sector

TSIs provided leadership to the sector and delivered information, connections and practical support to navigate the impact of the pandemic and to plan for recovery.





How did TSIs make a difference?

What's unique about TSIs



TSIs have reach and connections to the sector

TSIs have insight into the capacity of the third sector, and knowledge and relationships which enabled them to connect and harness the resources of the sector around the emergency response and renewal.



TSI have reach into communities

Enabled TSIs to access to information on need which informed the response.

Improved the effectiveness of delivery (reaching people who don't usually engage with services).



TSIs have identified/created new opportunities for third sector involvement in renewal

TSI are connected across partners and policy areas. They have made connections and created opportunities for third sector involvement in renewal.

- They spot opportunities for the third sector
- bring knowledge and expertise in third sector models
- They have development skills and capacity to develop new models and to operationalise them.



TSIs broker engagement with the third sector

As a 'trusted partner' TSIs provide partners with insight into the capacity and issues in the sector and improve their capacity and confidence to engage with the sector. As the trusted intermediary, TSIs have been able to bring partners and the sector together over issues, develop shared understanding of issues challenges, and facilitate the development of options and solutions.

Local stakeholder views: key themes (cont.)

How the TSIs worked

TSIs demonstrated:

Flexibility and responsiveness

- Flexed roles and responsibilities around needs and priorities
- They did what needed to be done!

Incredible speed of response

- Were 'ahead of the game' in planning and preparation for the emergency response
- Displayed incredible speed in their capacity to set up new structures/systems

A positive attitude

- A 'can do' attitude which gave confidence to the sector and to partners

Enormous commitment

- Positive attitude backed by enormous commitment to delivery
- TSI's response went 'above and beyond' expectations

Screenshot of
Voluntary Sector
Gateway West
Lothian's Third Sector
Strategy Group
meeting



What happened as a result?

The scale and scope of the third sector response to Covid-19 has raised awareness of the third sector and TSIs.

Increased awareness of need among all partners

There is a greater awareness and shared understanding of need in communities.

Increased recognition of the value of the third sector

The third sector has:

- increased the profile of the third sector,
- increased recognition of the role and value of the third sector, and
- highlighted the efficacy of third sector approaches.

Greater awareness of:

- the delivery capacity of the third sector,
- the reach of the third sector into communities
- the capacity of the third sector to sustain and build on the high levels of 'active citizenship' which were evident during Covid-19.

There is a greater understanding of how the third sector can support renewal, a greater confidence in the third sector and a greater willingness to engage the third sector in renewal.

Increased recognition of the value of the TSI

Stakeholders reported an increased awareness of the role and contribution of the TSI in engaging the third sector.



What happened as a result?

- In areas where structures for engaging the third sector are less developed, partners have recognised the need to develop local structures and reset relationships with the TSI
- In areas where structures and relationships are more mature, the Covid-19 experience has consolidated the role of the TSI as a strategic partner.

Pictured: Volunteer helping at from Start Up Stirling's Food Bank, a charity supported by Stirling's TSI.



Opportunities for the Future

Stakeholders reported that the Covid-19 experience has accelerated opportunities for further involvement of the third sector in planning and delivery of services. This also highlights the key role of TSIs in supporting engagement of the third sector.

What do partners need from TSIs to support the vision for the third sector?

Stakeholder identified that there was a key role for TSIs to:

- Improve the capacity of the third sector to demonstrate outcomes (and demonstrate how they contribute to partner priorities and outcomes)
- Build the delivery capacity of the sector
- Stakeholders also identified a need for TSIs need to build their knowledge/capacity to operate as a strategic commissioning partner.

Challenges for the TSIs

Stakeholders recognised that the scale/capacity of some TSIs will limit their capacity to support the increased involvement of the third sector.

Recommendations & Next Steps

Recommendations

This report will now be shared with the TSI network for their reflections and to identify next steps. We recognise that this work was undertaken by a small number of TSIs, over a short time period. The network might want to check if our findings match their experience and if they want to highlight different examples and issues. However the working group wish to make the following recommendations outlined below.

1

Recommendation 1: Celebrate the role of the third sector and volunteers during Covid-19

It's clear that local third sector organisations, supported by TSIs played a very important role in the response to Covid-19. The network should consider how they can celebrate this and if they might do this with national intermediaries, including SCVO.

2

Recommendation 2: Build awareness locally and nationally of the role and impact of TSIs

Covid-19 has raised awareness of the third sector and the TSIs. But there are still gaps in stakeholder understanding at both local and national level. TSIs could do more work to highlight the role they play locally.

The TSU should promote the existence and role of the TSI across the whole of government. They should emphasise the importance of engaging with TSIs when designing national programmes of support for the third sector as well as identifying other ways in which TSIs can support national policies and programmes.

Pictured: Cowie Rural Action Group who provided over 500 meals to elderly people during the pandemic. They were supported by Stirling's TSI.





Recommendations cont.

3

Recommendation 3: Invest in the capacity and reach of the third sector in local decision-making

Structures for involving third sector organisations and TSIs varied in strength and this affects the ability of the third sector to contribute to the making and implementation of local priorities. The TSI network and Scottish Government should consider how they can help local authorities and health and social care partnerships to get the best out of third sector relationships.

Local stakeholders identified greater scope for TSIs to improve the capacity of the third sector to: demonstrate outcomes, deliver services and be strategic commissioning partners. The network and Scottish Government should identify if there is appetite and funding for specific programmes to support evaluation skills and capacity building in specific areas (including strategic commissioning).

4

Recommendation 4: Build on the opportunities that have come out of Covid-19

The profile of the sector and TSIs has risen, the value and benefits of volunteering and community engagement is better recognised, the increased use of digital platforms has led to increased communication, sharing and coordination within the network. The network should consider how they maintain and build on this momentum.

5

Recommendation 5: Review Funding

Scottish Government and TSIs should work together to develop a strategy for future funding of TSIs, with the aspiration of ensuring that TSIs have sustainable capacity to respond to the increasing pressures they face. Adequate and fair resources are critical for supporting the third sector contribution to Scotland's recovery from Covid-19 and for achievement of many Scottish Government policies and priorities.

TSI Scotland Network is supported and funded by:
Third Sector Unit
Public Service Reform Directorate
The Scottish Government

For more information, please go to: www.gov.scot/policies/third-sector/third-sector-interfaces



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

Appendix A

Appendix 1: Examples of work undertaken by TSIs during different phases

A: Specific examples of work during the emergency response

Directing people to support (Glasgow)

GCVS set up and ran the Glasgow Helps helpline, getting other partners (Volunteer Glasgow, Glasgow City Council, Glasgow City HSCP and Scottish Fire and Rescue on board with supporting that work and the helpline up and taking calls within 10 days of lockdown). 2,013 people contacted that between April and September to be referred on to third sector and other sources of support.

Volunteering (West Lothian)

Over 1200 people from across West Lothian signed up to volunteer during the crisis. We created a volunteering database that allows us to manage and respond to requests from partners for volunteers. We have signposted individuals to our online Directory of Services which has details about all organisations providing help and support during the crisis.

Individuals have secured opportunities with a range of third sector partners including Carers of West Lothian, Safe Families, Food Train, NHS Lothian, The Larder and WL Foodbank. Individuals have been helping with food parcel deliveries to those in need, PPE supplies to carers, medicine pick-ups and support as ward helpers in St John's. It is hoped that individuals will be able to secure long term volunteering opportunities post Covid-19.

One particularly positive (and unexpected) outcome has been the number of individuals expressing interest in volunteering as trustees. To date, over 60 people have been sign-posted to third sector partners to help as trustees.

Brokering connections (Stirling)

Often, innovative locally driven responses were needed to mitigate the challenges of Covid-19.

Local social enterprise Recyke-a-Bike suffered significant financial losses due to the early stages of the pandemic. Despite bike sales being allowed throughout lockdown the loss of footfall and cessation of their training activities meant that the social enterprise was unlikely to survive. However, Recyke-a-Bike had assets that the community in Stirling needed, both during lockdown and into the future; staff with PVG checks, a fleet of vehicles and cargo bikes and a full scale catering kitchen. With the support of Stirlingshire Voluntary Enterprise (SVE) they brokered a relationship with the local authority where they could act as a community responder, doing shopping for vulnerable or self-isolating people and providing hot meals to other locally based community groups to distribute to people that needed them.

TSIs are ideally placed to take a systems view of the challenges being faced and connect organisations that can work together to make a difference.

Securing funding (North Lanarkshire)

Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire (VANL) is a member of a cross-sector C19 Community Food Group and secured significant additional funding to support the Lanarkshire Community and Food Partnership's core costs; emergency food provision costs; and a pilot project to support local groups providing food support to improve referrals to sources of financial support.

Working in partnership (Midlothian)

One of the impacts of Covid-19 was an increase in the number of people who were isolated, for example, because they were shielding. Volunteer Midlothian reshaped its befriending service to offer telephone support, and recruited additional volunteers. However, we quickly reached capacity for supporting additional volunteers. Midlothian Council and HSCP were extremely supportive and reallocated staff to be dedicated volunteer managers for the Fancy a Blether project. We were able to recruit volunteers to this from the Ready Scotland allocation, who were then directly managed by Council staff.

One of the results of the project, and other work around volunteering, was an interest from the HSCP in how it could further use volunteers to support its service. An application was made to the Integrated Joint Board, and funding identified for a one year project to demonstrate the impact of volunteering. A project worker has been recruited by the HSCP, and is situated in the NHS Lothian Volunteering Team.

She will continue to support the Fancy a Blether volunteers.

Coordinating Information about services and support (Moray)

With development officers based in localities, and with well-established networks, Moray were able to compile an 'essential information' bulletin/web site page within three days of lockdown which identified how services were changing, starting or stopping. This led to the formation of a new web portal for people to find out what community-led services or help was available. Statutory partners recognised its value and, at their request, tsiMORAY enabled information about public sector services to feed into this site.

This database was used at the local level but also to 'populate' the information held by the regional Assistance Hub. The collating, sharing and publishing of information continues.

B: Specific examples of supporting the sector through challenging times

Identifying needs of third sector orgs (Stirling)

Intelligence gathering through engagement with community groups was critical to understand the issues they were facing, and support them with practical advice. We surveyed our members regularly using survey monkey and help a variety of online forums throughout the period. Our first Zoom call to discuss the sector response in March had 80 people in attendance, and during the period we engaged with 120 organisations through our forums and community calls.

Networking and peer support (West Lothian)

We significantly increased the frequency of Third Sector Strategy Group (TSSG) meetings to every 2-3 weeks to share best practice, knowledge and identify risk and opportunities.

Practical advice and information (Glasgow)

- Collaborated with health improvement team to facilitate an online safety session for third sector and statutory services.
- Provide 2,500 third sector organisations with weekly coronavirus updates including lockdown, law changes and vital information.
- Delivered 11 Covid specific training sessions on HR to 86 participants, alongside an additional 32 free HR Surgeries.
- Developed a Post Lockdown Pack for organisations covering basics of managing staff and health and safety during Covid-19.
- Developed guidance to support the sector to access Small Business Support Grants from Glasgow City Council

Working with others to support the sector (Midlothian)

We have partnered with Midlothian Council's Economic Development team to offer joined-up business support to social enterprises.

We partnered with Health in Mind to apply for the Supporting Communities Fund to bring in investment in community-led mental health projects and mental health training for both staff and volunteers across Midlothian.

Forward planning (Midlothian)

The Scottish Government Routemap was a helpful guide to a situation that was constantly changing, and we strongly encouraged the sector to plan for what would happen at future stages of the movement out of lockdown. We did this through a guide to scenario planning aimed at helping organisations assess what resources they would need at each stage of the routemap, which we supported with online sessions. We are now helping organisations to consider the impact of having a vaccinated population.

More coordinated funding (Moray)

Moray Funders' Forum – catalysed by the need for a coordinated approach to distributing emergency funding, this forum consists of around 20 funding organisations that are either exclusively based in Moray or have an active interest in funding Moray. The Forum successfully provides a way for funders to network, learn, share information and hear about what is happening in Moray.

C: Specific examples of work around renewal

Third Sector Covid-19 recovery summit (West Lothian)

Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian (WSGWL) chaired an important partnership summit on 7 September to showcase the work of the third sector during Covid-19. The online event attracted 100 participants, including elected members, MPs, MSPs and a host of third sector partners. We circulated an Infographics report and two short videos about the event. The event received very positive feedback and wide-spread recognition of the importance of the sector in the economic and social recovery and the partnership approach required to create a new West Lothian.

Developing digital support (North Lanarkshire)

VANL has played a lead role in developing two new digital inclusion projects - Digital Friends and TechShare - for which VANL secured additional funding. These locally developed digital inclusion projects complement North Lanarkshire roll out of the national Connecting Scotland digital inclusion project - with which we are also actively involved - and are expected to continue beyond the pandemic.

Youth volunteering and employability (Midlothian)

Engaging with Kickstart and the Youth Guarantee to promote youth volunteering. Development of a consortium proposal/bid with other TSIs toward a supported volunteering model using a volunteer buddies.

Glasgow Examples

- Delivered an innovative programme of events with the key people behind big ideas that could help reshape our society. This series “Our World Reimagined” is [available to watch on our YouTube channel](#).
- Launched a new network focusing on “Building Back Better”, to support the sector to lead the regeneration work in the city.
- Took leadership roles on the city’s Economic Renewal Group and the Social Recovery Taskforce, including Chairing a new group to look at improving the relationship between the sectors.
- GCVS, Volunteer Glasgow and Glasgow Life (Glasgow’s culture and sport ALEO) have delivered a review of volunteering to identify our learning during Covid and how we should adapt in future.

Moray Examples

Moray Climate Assembly - during the pandemic tsiMORAY was invited to work in partnership with Moray Council on community engagement in relation to the development of Moray Council’s Climate Action Plan. In view of the gap between the plan’s focus on Council’s activities and its wider aspirations for Moray, tsiMORAY convened and facilitates the multi-sectoral Moray Climate Assembly and a smaller Moray Area Climate Action Steering Group ([more details here](#)).

Through the pandemic the impact of poverty in Moray has been more fully exposed; tsiMORAY also took a leading role in establishing Fairer Moray Forum Action Group and is co-chairing the group (in collaboration with Council).

Collated by Evaluation Support Scotland from larger case studies May 2021

Appendix A

2

Appendix 2: TSI Case Studies

Introduction

In this appendix we include a fuller case study from each of the TSI's involved in the working group.

We aim to showcase the roles played by each TSI against their own particular backdrop.

We have included:

Two full case studies from Midlothian (page 2) And Glasgow (page 16) – this includes all the information that each working group member was asked to collate.

The Glasgow case study, amongst other things, shows the complexity of coordination and support across a large city.

The Midlothian case study highlights the importance of partnership working and support, which builds on existing strong connections.

Two shorter versions from North Lanarkshire (page 29) and Stirling (33) summarise the context, roles played by the TSI and stakeholder feedback.

These case studies showcase two areas where public sector structures and relationships with the TSI and the third sector are strong and where the TSI was able to play a part both operationally and strategically.

Two shorter versions from West Lothian (36) and Moray (page 38), summarising the context and roles played by the TSI.

These case studies showcase TSI response in areas where structures and relationships were not as well developed. They show that the TSI still had important roles to play in supporting and connecting third sector organisations. They also show a transition to more positive ways of working with their public sector partners.

Midlothian TSI Case Study

Introduction

This case study was written as part of the TSI Covid Learning Project. 6 Third sector interfaces across Scotland answered a series of questions around their work during Covid-19.

As a result, we produced a summary report which outlined the roles played by TSIs during Covid-19, what was important about how they worked and what helped and hindered.

This case study might be of interest to:

- Local agencies In Midlothian who want to know how the TSI worked with others to address local Covid-19 issues;
- The TSI network to reflect upon their own stories and how they compare with Midlothian;
- Scottish government as a concrete example of how TSIs contributed during Covid-19.

What's the context for your area?

Midlothian is an area to the south of Edinburgh, in the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region. It is the fastest growing Scottish local authority with a population of 91,300. The area consists of a number of small market towns (including Bonnyrigg, Dalkeith, Penicuik and Loanhead), and a semi-rural area toward the south of the county.

Of the 115 datazones in Midlothian, thirteen are ranked (2016) within the 20% most income deprived areas of Scotland, seven are ranked within the 15% most income deprived and two are ranked within the 10% most income deprived.

The Midlothian TSI consists of two organisations, Midlothian Voluntary Action (MVA) and Volunteer Midlothian (VM) and a network of social enterprises, the Social Enterprise Alliance Midlothian. Although MVA and VM are separate legal entities and have separate Boards, they share a Chief Officer, and staff work closely together. The Midlothian TSI is part of the East TSI Regional Network.

The TSI currently has 20 posts, one of which is vacant. Of these,

- Seven staff members are funded by the Scottish Government to deliver the TSI Outcomes Framework activity;
- Four are funded by other sources for related work (engagement of older people and disabled people in community planning [HSCP], capacity building [MC] and Comms Assistant [Kickstart trainee, currently being recruited])
- Six staff are funded to work on projects supporting older people (funded by HSCP, Robertson Trust, and Lottery)
- Three staff are funded to work with young people (Midlothian Council and Lottery)
- One staff member undertakes community development work (Aspiring Communities and Midlothian Council)
- At the start of the lockdown we had recently recruited a Marketing Intern, who proved invaluable, but has now moved on.

For this case study we have focused on the activities of staff funded by the Scottish Government, and staff funded by Midlothian Council/HSCP who are working on capacity building and engagement. However, it should be noted that our direct service delivery greatly informed our Covid response.

The experience of moving services online, interpreting the Routemap and other SG Guidance in relation to the projects, and dealing with the concerns of service users and volunteers, gave us an invaluable insight into the support needs of the wider third sector.

All TSI staff worked from home over this period, with the exception of staff working in Woodburn and Central Dalkeith, one of whom was involved in the front-line volunteering activity, with the other two workers supporting older people.

The TSI had just started a process of re-branding, including developing a new website, when the pandemic hit. This had some implications for our Covid communications.

The Midlothian third sector is represented at all levels of community planning in Midlothian, including the Midlothian Community Planning Partnership Board. In the initial phase of Covid, the Board met weekly, focussing entirely on emergency planning issues. The number of meetings reduced as the pandemic continued. The Midlothian TSI also attended frequent meetings of the Care for People group, which deals with the needs of vulnerable individuals in emergency situations. The Care for People group also met weekly in the early stages of the pandemic.

Needs and challenges

People's involvement in local communities: There are highly active community councils, and community-led development trusts across Midlothian. There was only one formal Resilience Group at the start of lockdown.

Cross sector collaboration: The TSI is involved in a number of cross sector collaborations. For example, the Chief Officer sits on the Board of Midlothian Financial Inclusion Network, and the TSI hosts the MFIN Development Worker. MFIN brings together the Council, DWP, and the third sector advice agencies. MFIN and the TSI worked closely together to ensure up-to-date information was shared.

TSO ability to lead and develop shared agendas: The TSI has a number of forums which allows it to bring together third sector organisations around common issues. These include the Third Sector Forum, Midlothian Third Sector Children's Services Network, the IJB Reference Group and the Volunteer Managers' Forum.

TSO ability to respond to local need: The Red Cross is very active in Midlothian, with a local base, and a Community Reserves task force which was mobilised as a response to Covid. Midlothian Council Communities and Lifelong Learning team worked closely with the Federation of Community Councils volunteers to deliver a front-line Covid service delivering shopping and collecting prescriptions.

Extent decision-making is inclusive of third sector input: The third sector is represented at all levels in community planning, and the TSI Chief Officer chairs the Community Planning Working Group.

TSO ability to contribute to a strong and inclusive local economy: The third sector is a significant local employer and is well linked in to economic development activity.

Nature of relationships with statutory agencies: Relationships with the statutory sector is generally good, with partnership working with the Council, HSCP and DWP.

What did you do at different stages for the different roles?

	'Normal or planned'	Emergency response	Transition to recovery	Renewal
Intelligence	Have bi-monthly emails distributed on Training and on Funding. Distribution of information as requested from statutory and third sector agencies Daily Coronavirus Update to third sector	Work with funders to identify local organisations that they could distribute money to	Less frequent updates	Have recruited Comms Officer and will be recruiting Kickstart trainee to look at how we provide information going forward. We will also host a Napier University student to assist with online events
	Provide information about the local sector to community planning partners and other stakeholders as requested	Work with funders to identify local organisations that they could distribute money to	Fed back to Local Government Parliamentary Committee on Covid funding	Continue to feedback to statutory agencies about the needs of TSOs e.g. on office needs, digital
Voice	Represented TS on a wide range of community planning forums. Care for People met occasionally to ensure preparedness e.g. for bad weather	Attended weekly emergency meetings of the CP Board and weekly Care for People meetings	Meetings moved to three weekly, although returned to meeting more regularly due to second lockdown Representing Midlothian at the NHS Lothian Vaccine Inequalities meeting	Representing the third sector on the newly established Economic Renewal multi-agency group
Build capacity	Provide a range of support to organisations around accessing funding, governance and trouble-shooting	Immediate assistance to organisations to navigate emergency Covid funding	On-going support to organisations needing to rework business models and support in accessing appropriate funding	Support to make changes to be 'fit for purpose' moving forward e.g. having digital clauses in governing document
	Provision of an annual training programme – all face to face	Training session on HR issues (provided pro bono by HR Dept). 3 training sessions on digital youth work	Training for volunteers on supporting individuals with mental health issues Information session for third sector on vaccine	Training programme shaped by Covid issues. Online, and will develop further with Robertson Trust. Partnerships with other TSI trainers

	'Normal or planned'	Emergency response	Transition to recovery	Renewal
Build capacity cont.	Maintain a database of volunteering opportunities, actively promote volunteering youth/adult	Creation of specific guidance documents to support front-line volunteering Support around online volunteering Liaison with Ready Scotland volunteers	Creation of Volunteering Working Group: MC, MHSCP, Red Cross, TSI Passed Ready Scotland volunteers to the Red Cross Support to consider face-to-face volunteering restarting	Engaging with Kickstart and the Youth Guarantee to promote youth volunteering Development of a consortium proposal/bid with other TSI's toward a supported volunteering model using a volunteer buddies.
Connect	Have a variety of networking groups including TS Forum, Children Service's Network, Social Enterprise Alliance Midlothian, Volunteer Managers' Forum	Established Coronavirus Connect group, online peer support group for organisations	Regular meetings resumed online and Covid became standing item on agenda e.g. for Children's Services Network, Volunteer Managers' Forum	Organised a third sector economic renewal online event

What was important about the way you worked?

Our response to Covid was underpinned by the following principles:

Information first: We recognised from previous emergency planning situations (such as the 'Beast from the East') that our member organisations require timely and accurate updates about the situation. We prioritised getting a daily briefing out to the sector, which provided a two-way information flow, with people responding to the briefing with questions and concerns.

Practical support: As well as information, organisations required practical support to make the necessary changes. MVA's capacity building staff focused on ensuring organisations had access to funding and support with business planning, and Volunteer Midlothian staff supported volunteer-involving organisations to reshape their services.

Emotional support: The first lockdown was an incredible upheaval for everyone. There was limited knowledge about the virus, and how it spread. Organisations had to move to digital delivery overnight, and were concerned about the impact on vulnerable service users. The schools were closed, and parents in the third sector staff supporting home-learning. And everyone was concerned about the health of their families, friends, and colleagues. It was, therefore, important to focus on peer support, and we instituted the Coronavirus Connect online drop in. We also held a number of informal online peer support sessions for third sector and some local authority colleagues, enabling them to discuss the emotional and practical challenges of their roles during this time.

Partnership: We worked hard to ensure that the work of the TSI and the third sector was closely linked to the activity by the statutory sector and the community councils. We attended every emergency planning meeting, and established a new Volunteering Working Group to allow us to coordinate front-line activity with the statutory sector and the Red Cross.

We have partnered with Midlothian Council's Economic Development team to offer joined-up business support to social enterprises to support their survival or even growth during this period.

We partnered with Health in Mind to apply for the Supporting Communities Fund to bring in investment in community-led mental health projects and mental health training for both staff and volunteers across Midlothian.

We have partnered with local social enterprise, Made in Midlothian, to apply successfully for Creative Scotland's Youth Arts Small Grants programme, which will support artists to work with groups of children and young people most affected by Covid 19.

Forward planning: The Scottish Government Routemap was a helpful guide to a situation that was constantly changing, and we strongly encouraged the sector to plan for what would happen at future stages of the movement out of lockdown. We did this through a guide to scenario planning aimed at helping organisations assess what resources they would need at each stage of the routemap, which we supported with online sessions. We are now helping organisations to consider the impact of having a vaccinated population.

Concurrent events: Covid was not happening in a vacuum, and a lot of our work toward the end of the year was aimed at ensuring that the third sector was prepared to support clients if there were food or other shortages due to a combination of Covid, Brexit and bad winter conditions. We created a range of newsletters for third sector organisations, older people and disabled people in preparing for winter. We also produced a document outlining what the volunteering response would be to bad weather.

What did you do at different stages for the different roles?

In response to the Scottish Government's Emergency Capacity Boost we created a new outcome in our Outcomes Framework:

Outcome 7: To strengthen the capacity of third sector locally to support at-risk people manage pressures and demands created by Covid-19.

Covid-focused Activity	What outcomes did we achieve and for whom?
<p>Communications: Midlothian TSI has sent out regular Coronavirus briefing to people in the Midlothian Third Sector, and other stakeholders, with the first one going out on 16 March. By the end of December, 89 briefings had been distributed to 560 individuals.</p> <p>Information Provision: A Working Group from Volunteer Midlothian, CLL and MHSCP was established to ensure that community resilience volunteers have access to the guidance they require to support volunteers effectively. The following documentation was created:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Resilience Risk Register• Community Resilience Organisation Volunteer Coordinator Guidance• Community Resilience Volunteer Role Descriptions• Community Resilience Volunteer Agreement• Community Resilience Volunteer Induction• Community Resilience Health and Safety Guidelines• Scenario Planning Guide• Routemap to Face-to-Face Volunteering	<p>Outcome: The Third Sector, including volunteers, has better access to information</p> <p>560 individuals from TSOs, community councils and statutory agencies received the Coronavirus update</p> <p>Coronavirus Connect supported 26 staff from 18 organisations.</p> <p>Scenario Planning document used by other TSIs with their members.</p>

Covid-focused Activity	What outcomes did we achieve and for whom?
<p>Forums: As an immediate response to the virus, we established an online peer support group, Coronavirus Connect, which met weekly for eleven weeks with input from Midlothian HSCP.</p>	
<p>Local and Regional: The TSI was able to feed third sector concerns and successes (such as funding secured) into local community planning meetings. We were also able to raise issues at the Lothian and Borders Resilience Partnership Voluntary Sector Group.</p>	<p>Outcome: Stakeholders are better informed about the successes and challenges of the Third Sector, including volunteers</p>
<p>National: Through our regional reps, we fed issues into the national emergency response, and the national funders discussions. We gave evidence to the Scottish Government's Local Government Committee (along with two other TSIs) regarding the implementation of emergency Covid funding for the Third Sector. We were able to use our local knowledge to assist Corra in getting out 20 £2000 grants to local organisations.</p>	<p>This work benefited TSOs, funders, strategic partners and communities.</p>
<p>Emergency: Between April 20 and January 21, the TSI represented the sector at 16 Emergency Community Planning Boards, 17 Care for People meetings, and 4 short life working group meetings. The Chief Officer attended 6 regional TSI network meetings to support our resilience rep. We attended two Lothian and Borders Resilience Partnership Voluntary Sector Support Group. We attended mulit-agency working groups on economic renewal, Brexit, Youth Guarantee and Kickstart.</p> <p>Renewal: We provided third sector input to thematic working groups focused on economic recovery, including Employability and Economic Development. We met twice with NHS Lothian's Voluntary Services team during this period.</p> <p>On-going: It should also be noted that the community planning groups started to meet again from the spring to support their on-going work, with Covid often being a key agenda item.</p>	<p>Outcome: Third Sector organisations & volunteers are better able to have their voices heard in community planning</p> <p>This work benefited TSOs, funders, strategic partners and communities.</p>
<p>Funding: We provided one to one support to third sector organisations and social enterprises, helping them to apply for funding and to plan for alternative service delivery modes and cashflow scenarios. We signposted to additional support through relevant agencies including DTAS, Just Enterprise and elsewhere. Midlothian Voluntary Action is proud to be working in partnership with local social enterprise, Made in Midlothian, on a project that will support freelance artists to work with children and young people in Midlothian. Funded by Creative Scotland's Youth Arts Small Grants Scheme, the project will provide small grants to artists across a range of media to work with groups of children and young people who have been most adversely affected by the Covid 19 pandemic. We worked with Corra to identify local organisations requiring funding.</p> <p>Training: In the early days of the pandemic, we ran an HR seminar (provided pro bono by The HR Department) and ran three online digital youth work training sessions in response to demand.</p>	<p>Outcome: Third Sector organisations and volunteers have improved skills, resources, and knowledge to achieve positive change</p> <p>We have offered one to one support to over thirty charities, voluntary organisations and social enterprises.</p>

Covid-focused Activity	What outcomes did we achieve and for whom?
<p>Peer support: We ran online lunchtime peer support sessions with third sector leaders and local authority staff, focusing upon the emotional challenges of work during this period. We held a series of online thematic peer support meetings this week. We provided informal peer support to project managers and social entrepreneurs who are struggling with stress and anxiety due to the current situation.</p> <p>Digital: We continued to offer 1-2-1 support to organisations, enabling them to engage digitally with us and other partners. We worked with Midlothian Council and SCVO on the local distribution of Connecting Scotland devices. We organised a local information session and participated in the decision-making panel.</p> <p>Volunteering: The Scotland Cares campaign was launched at the beginning of April by the Scottish Government to encourage people to volunteer during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. A survey of prospective volunteers was sent out in late April to over 500 individuals and we received over 300 replies, a response rate of approximately 60%. From April to June we sent out 11 emails to this group and promoted six separate COVID-19 related volunteering opportunities plus other relevant information and resources. We know that around 30 volunteers were placed but we do not have exact figures, as we are not in control of the whole recruitment process and acted primarily as an intermediary organisation. Following on from this we promoted a number of other opportunities via email and later signposted the Ready Scotland volunteers to the Red Cross Community Reserves team. This enabled them to receive comprehensive training and to continue with short term Covid related volunteering on an as needed/responsive basis.</p>	
<p>We established a Volunteering Working group, bringing together the Council, MHSCP, British Red Cross, NHS Lothian and ourselves to coordinate volunteering activity. The group met twice during this period and now meets on a monthly basis. We attended two teleconference calls with NHS Lothian and Lothian TSI's to discuss the Lothian-wide volunteer response.</p>	<p>Outcome: Partnerships across the sector are strengthened</p>

Focus: Supporting disabled people in Midlothian to maintain good mental and emotional health and well being during the challenges of Covid-19

Midlothian TSI supports Forward Mid, a peer-led group of disabled people campaigning for full equality and the rights of physically disabled people living in Midlothian.

Forward Mid recognise that coronavirus has meant that we all need additional care for our mental and emotional wellness. With support from Midlothian Voluntary Action (MVA), Forward Mid produced a document bringing together useful resources for personal and community wellness.

Forward Mid sourced the material for the Guide, with support from MVA to design and distribute it. It was distributed to around 1000 people to be cascaded out. [GUIDE](#)

Focus: Partnership Working

One of the impacts of Covid was an increase in the number of people who were isolated, for example, because they were shielding. Volunteer Midlothian reshaped its befriending service to offer telephone support, and recruited additional volunteers. However, we quickly reached capacity for supporting additional volunteers. Midlothian Council and HSCP were extremely supportive and reallocated staff to be dedicated volunteer managers for the Fancy a Blether project. We were able to recruit volunteers to this from the Ready Scotland allocation, who were then directly managed by Council staff.

One of the results of the project, and the surrounding work around volunteering, was an interest from the HSCP in how it could further use volunteers to support its service. An application was made to the Integrated Joint Board, and funding was identified for a one year project to demonstrate the impact of volunteering. A project worker has been recruited by the HSCP, and is situated in the NHS Lothian Volunteering Team. She will continue to support the Fancy a Blether volunteers.

Challenges and Changes

National

Challenges	Changes
The Ready Scotland call out for volunteers was a well-intentioned initiative, but was undertaken without consultation with the TSIs. The result was that we received a year's worth of volunteers in one go, and were unable to place most of them.	The switchover to the use of Zoom for TSI Network meetings meant that it was possible to meet much more frequently, both as a national and a regional network. For the Midlothian TSI, this meant a much better understanding of how other TSIs operated, and improved relationships with TSI Network colleagues.
In the early days of the pandemic, it seemed that the national strategic resilience organisations did not have a good understanding of the role of TSIs, and what TSIs could offer. Provision of national guidance on volunteering could also have been provided more quickly. There may have been scope for third sector / volunteering specific guidelines in addition to CLD sector specific guidelines (which, along with the adult health and social care guidelines, were the main ones that we referred to or signposted other TS orgs to).	Indications of a stronger focus on volunteering as part of the recovery process (e.g. review and new actions for Volunteering for All, plus news of a support for volunteering fund for summer 2021).
The sheer number of Government initiatives, and the range of Covid emergency funding made it challenging to keep on top of all the issues that the local third sector should be aware of.	

Local

Challenges	Changes
The pandemic response highlighted some issues of misunderstanding the TSIs role amongst local strategic partners, particularly around the issue of volunteering. It also highlighted some issues around expectations of volunteers.	The Midlothian TSI was in the process of rebranding prior to the pandemic, and has now recruited a part-time Comms Officer. His work will be informed by the issues that have arisen out of Covid. We recently updated our Compact with Midlothian Council, with TRACK values (Together, Respect, Accountability, Creativity, Kindness)

Internal

Challenges	Changes
There were key issues around HR, with the illness then retirement of a key long-term member of staff. The requirement during lockdowns for children to be education at home impacted on staff capacity, and was a source of stress.	Moving forward, we will definitely be embedding a digital first approach, at least until the possibility of returning to a face-to-face environment arises.
There were challenges around moving over to digital delivery, with some staff and volunteers better able to do this than others.	

What will you do differently post covid?

End	Amplify
The Coronavirus Connect meetings were a response to concerns in the early days of the pandemic. This group was wound up and the issues it discussed were mainstreamed into other work.	We are hugely excited by the possibilities of increased use of digital, and are looking forward to the Robertson Trust Online Learning Platform. We intend to work with local TSOs to continue meetings and look at online support. However, we need to be aware of equalities issues, and make sure that we use accessible technology, and that there are alternatives to online provision. We are likely to continue some degree of homeworking.
Let Go	Restart
The new digital approach has led to us questioning our need for office space, and we will be closing one of our offices.	At the start of the pandemic, all our work was focused on Covid. However, over time our mainstream work has returned, and we have now picked up much of the work that was shelved.

What did you learn?

	What worked well?	What could be even better?
Your approach	<p>We were surprised by quite how much people valued our information provision, and have invested in this area.</p> <p>Our well-established relationship with key staff working for our statutory partners has been supplemented by new working partnerships.</p>	<p>Our existing websites lacked the flexibility to respond to Covid as we would have wished e.g. with a dedicated Covid Resources page.</p> <p>We need to have clearer information available for statutory partners about our capacity and approach.</p>
Others' approach	<p>The flexibility by grant funders was much appreciated and was a definite factor in local TSOs being able to continue.</p> <p>We were amazed and humbled by the willingness of individuals to step up and volunteer.</p>	<p>There were some excellent online resources made available, such as the SCVO Covid Hub. We received strong support from organisations such as the Befriending Network.</p> <p>The Ready Scotland initiative was a good attempt to capitalise on this willingness, but the lack of consultation meant that we ended up with huge numbers of volunteers for whom we didn't have roles, and there will inevitably be some reputational damage. The resources required to engage with the Ready Scotland volunteering initiative meant diverting staff away from other tasks that needed doing.</p>

Views of our Stakeholders

A consultant working on behalf of Evaluation Support Scotland interviewed some important stakeholders in Midlothian. The stakeholder interviews confirmed the key role that the TSI played in the local response to Covid.

The interviews also highlighted the strength of partnership working in Midlothian in response to Covid, with Council and TSI and HSCP working together to support and co-ordinate the community response. The response was described by one stakeholder 'as an example of real partnership - not a transactional relationship'.

There is very high level of trust and confidence in the TSI. Stakeholder responses demonstrated clearly that the TSI is recognised as an 'equal partner' in the partnership, and a partner that brings unique skills/experience to the partnership.

A key theme from this case study is:

The importance of relationships

The success of the partnership approach reflects the mature structures and relationships which exist in Midlothian. There has been an 'investment' in building structures and relationships and stakeholders have a very clear understanding of the 'value' of relationships. (ref: Recent refresh of the Concordat re-affirms the relationship and the principles on which they operate)

"Relationships are critical to our partnership working"

What was evident from interviews was the depth of relationships and the levels of trust which exist between partners/TSI in Midlothian.

Stakeholders demonstrated a nuanced understanding of the challenges in the role of the TSI, and an appreciation for the 'capacity' of the TSI to manage the 'tensions' in the role:

- The ability to hold the trusted partner relationship with partners but maintain the capacity to challenge partners (on behalf of sector)

The levels of trust invested the TSI were evident:

- The TSI was described as a 'critical friend' for partners and as a 'sounding board' for partners in third sector issues.

More Information

For more information on anything in this case study, contact Lesley Kelly, Chief Officer, Midlothian Third Sector Interface at lesley.kelly@mvacvs.org.uk

Glasgow TSI Case Study

Introduction

This case study was written as part of the TSI Covid Learning Project. Six Third Sector Interfaces across Scotland answered a series of questions regarding their work throughout Covid-19.

As a result, we produced a summary report which outlined the roles played by TSIs during Covid-19, highlighted what was important about the way they worked and what helped and hindered.

This case study might be of interest to:

- Local agencies in Glasgow who want to know how the GCVS worked with others to address local Covid-19 issues.
- The TSI network to reflect upon their own stories and how they compare with Glasgow.
- Scottish government as a concrete example of how TSIs contributed during Covid-19.

What's the context for your area?

Glasgow is the largest local authority in Scotland by people, with a population of around 650,000 people in the area. As the largest of Scotland's cities, it is a heavily urban area, and the economic and social centre of the wider Glasgow City Region.

The city is twice the size of any other local authority apart from that of Edinburgh, three times the size of Aberdeen, and more than four times the size of Dundee. It is also the most ethnically diverse local authority area in Scotland (12% at point of last census in 2011 but expected to have grown).

Glasgow has a high proportion of its data zones at the top of the SIMD league table. Critically:

- 18.9% of Glasgow's communities are in the 5% most deprived nationally.
- The only other local authority anywhere near that is Inverclyde, but it is significantly smaller. The effect of this is that 41% of all of Scotland's 5% most deprived data zones are in Glasgow.
- The impact of this is seen across all statistics. In particular, the area of Scotland has a particularly low life expectancy and, healthy life expectancy. While other local authorities face challenges associated with an older population, Glasgow has the lowest life expectancy and healthy life expectancy for both men and women.

The city is a major centre of higher education, resulting in a highly transient student population, particularly within the city centre areas.

It is the view of Glasgow CVS that these challenges are not adequately reflected in the Scottish Government TSI grant allocation to the city.

The TSI in the city is a partnership of Glasgow CVS, Volunteer Glasgow, and Glasgow Social Enterprise Network.

Glasgow TSI is part of both the Glasgow City Region group of TSIs (Glasgow, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, Inverclyde, Renfrewshire, East Renfrewshire, East Dunbartonshire, and West Dunbartonshire), and a wider West of Scotland network (that includes all of the above as well as East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire, South Ayrshire, Dumfries & Galloway and Argyll & Bute). However, during the

initial stages of Covid, a wider group was developed that also included the three Ayrshires, Argyll & Bute and Dumfries and Galloway.

GCVS employs 51 staff, however only eleven are grant funded by Scottish Government, Glasgow City Council and/or Glasgow City HSCP to carry out "Third Sector Interface" related work. The organisation has developed social enterprise activity to help mitigate insufficient grant income.

Needs and challenges (based around medium term outcomes)

People's involvement in local communities:

Like other areas that urban and deprived Glasgow has lower volunteering levels than the national average. However, this has been improved over the last decade through participation in large scale volunteering events such as the Commonwealth Games. The picture on Community Councils in the area is very mixed, but feedback from the sector suggests that whilst some are strong, others underperform or don't currently exist.

Cross sector collaboration:

There are good examples of cross sector collaboration in the city, but there are also some relationship challenges that have meant things are not as positive as they could be. Many of these challenges are historical and partners are working towards improving these. GCVS plays a critical role in building cross sector collaboration and has been leading in work around health and social care, mental health, children's services, and employability.

TSO ability to lead and develop shared agendas:

This aspect has been challenging. Many in the third sector feel that their voice isn't listened to, and the local authority would probably be honest and admit that in the past, they too often worked on the assumption that they needed to lead, rather than facilitate/ convene others work. GCVS facilitates networks in the city that aim to develop the capacity of the sector to lead agendas, and there are some successes in this, not least around children and family services.

TSO ability to respond to local need:

The third sector in the city is strong and is connected to the circa of 60 local communities in the city. This is critical as much public sector planning is done at a city level or in three geographic sectors. There are, however, areas of the city where third sector capacity is less developed, and the challenge of this has become apparent during Covid-19.

Extent decision-making is inclusive of third sector input:

This hasn't been particularly effective in the past, but it is improving – with senior officers within Council and HSCP particularly keen to ensure third sector is included. This will take time to fully embed. There are already some small examples of public bodies being willing to let go of power.

TSO ability to contribute to a strong and inclusive local economy:

This is a strong area for the city with innovative social enterprises and enterprising third sector organisations. The sector is a significant employer in the city, and there are excellent examples of organisations responding to market failure in communities. Third sector organisations also form a significant part of the city's delivery of employability, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and inclusion services.

Nature of relationships with statutory agencies:

Relationships are improving but remain complex. The scale of the city makes building relationships challenging for the TSI as it is often unclear where responsibility lies and where decisions are being taken. This was particularly challenging during Covid-19, as decision-making felt disbursed.

What did you do at different stages for the different roles?

Normal or Planned Work

- GCVS Finance and Payroll services continued to support 610 individual clients to manage their Independent Living Fund or Self-Directed Support payments, as well as 235 third sector organisations to pay their staff through their payroll service.
- The Everyone's Children project delivered the programme of activity, adapting it for online use and focused it towards supporting children, young people and families with challenges associated with Covid-19.
- Collaborated with HSCP colleagues on the Maximising Independence programme, an exciting and innovative piece of work in the city which looks at redesigning health and social care services with the involvement of third sector organisations.
- Supported over 200 organisations with HR Advice: significantly more than in a normal year. Many of these organisations faced challenges associated with responding to Covid-19.
- The capacity building team delivered a full programme of 74 events to over 800 participants.
- GCVS advocated the role of third sector organisations to Community Planning and the Health & Social Care Partnership through both formal structures and strong relationships.
- GCVS supported over 100 organisations on a one-to-one basis via surgeries with capacity building issues.
- Alongside Glasgow City Council, GCVS analysed and explained the impact of funding decisions associated with the Glasgow Community Fund, which contributed to persuading Glasgow CC to find an extra £4m to support some organisations that had been unsuccessful.
- Through launching a new online networking platform for the sector, GCVS created online spaces where networking can develop.
- Delivered regular e-bulletins, increasing the frequency of these to a weekly basis, to better respond to Covid-19 related information. These provided 2,500 third sector organisations with essential weekly updates.
- A planned, but new Health and Social Care Network ensured that third sector organisations in that field could network, and the sector's contribution to health and wellbeing issues were understood.

Emergency Work

- Organised two surveys of the sector (one at the start of lockdown in March 2020 and one in June). The June survey was taken up by the wider TSI network and resulted in a comprehensive piece of national work which is highly regarded in terms of an understanding of the impact of Covid-19.
- Delivered a series of eight "Covid Catchup" events so that third sector organisations in the city could connect and to identify challenges in the city. These included two generic events (one before lockdown began and one about two months in), as well as specific ones on mental health, digital inclusion, poverty, food, and children, young people and families.

- Made claims to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme on behalf of third sector employers in the city with a total value of more than £3m and provided guidance on making their own claims to a further 150 organisations.
- Developed the Glasgow Helps Directory (www.glasgowhelps.org), first as a pdf and then as a website, with over 600 services on it.
- Created guidance to support the sector in accessing Small Business Support Grants from Glasgow City Council.
- Set up and ran the Glasgow Helps helpline within days of lockdown commencing, with other partners (Volunteer Glasgow, Glasgow City Council, Glasgow City HSCP and Scottish Fire and Rescue) providing call handlers.
- GCVS' highly regarded Community Connectors programme expanded its work to support more older people. As part of that they adopted a new triage system and telephone-based model which delivered wellbeing calls to clients who are risk of being isolated, check-in calls to clients who are at risk of not having basic needs met and, coaching calls for clients in high-risk categories where coping strategies were needed to manage long term conditions and mental health. They also delivered advocacy or case coordination and made 324 onward signposts and referrals.
- Contributed to the pilot of SAMH mental health sessions for staff and volunteers across the city and a suicide prevention pilot, offering places for new online awareness whilst face to face sessions were not possible.
- Supported collaboration with health improvement team to facilitate an online safety session for third sector and statutory services. These have now led to discussions to create a good practice guidance for organisations providing support online rather than face to face.
- Facilitated the distribution of the Scottish Government Wellbeing Fund in Glasgow.
- Delivered Covid specific HR training sessions and surgeries for organisations in the city.
- Developed a Lockdown Pack for organisations covering basics of managing staff and health and safety during Covid-19.
- Worked with Glasgow City Council to use a collaborative design approach to responding to Covid-19, covering areas such as volunteering, digital inclusion, mental health, and food distribution. As part of this we:

Distributed over £600,000 of small grants on behalf of Glasgow City Council.

Worked with Glasgow Life and third sector partners to distribute nearly 1,000 PCs and Chromebooks and MiFi devices: complementing the work of Connecting Scotland.

Developed a city-wide volunteering programme to respond to people who had to self-isolate due to Covid-19.

- Supported Glasgow City Council in the development of a multi-agency hub to respond to people in need of help during Covid-19. This has become branded as Glasgow Helps and as well as GCVS and GCC includes participation from over 30 third sector organisations: DWP, Glasgow Life, Fire & Rescue, Police and HSCP.

- Led the Foundation Scotland/RRR Fund investment of £300,000 to the sector across Scotland in small grants delivered through the TSI network.
- Secured resources from the Stronger Communities strand of Scottish Government money for third sector organisations involved in supporting people's mental health and those organisations working to support people with pets during Covid-19 – both areas they identified as gaps in the city through the Glasgow Helps work and by listening to third sector organisations.

Transition to Recovery

- The organisation has used its own experience in running a conference centre to support other organisations with their plans for opening safely during Covid-19.
- Carried out and published research into the third sector's response to lockdown.
- Supported the sector to respond to changes in Glasgow City Council grants. The old programme finished at end September 2020 and a new grants programme began on 1 October 2020. This resulted in most organisations having a changed grant (existing, reduced, increased or new).
- Acting as a Gateway provider for the Kickstart programme, creating jobs for young people in third sector organisations.
- Worked with Glasgow City Council and Glasgow Life to launch a new volunteering programme as part of the Scottish Government's "Young Person's Guarantee", with 100 funded placements in the third sector.
- Fed into the Scottish Parliament's Equalities and Human Rights Committee's review of the funding of the third sector.
- Delivered a joint conference with Edinburgh VOC for the sector, supporting people to think about work beyond Covid-19.
- Launched a Community Lottery for Glasgow, which now has over 70 third sector organisations benefitting and over 1,500 weekly players.
- Launched a new Health and Safety service for third sector organisations across Scotland, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.
- Launching a new service funded by Glasgow City HSCP to support third sector organisations in the city to manage the mental health/wellbeing of their staff and volunteers.

Renewal

- Delivered an innovative programme of events with the key people behind big ideas that could help reshape our society. This series "Our World Reimagined" is available to watch on their YouTube channel - <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLROegpExP9x6GjAI83NYZwUndb8Ek6MGT>
- Took leadership roles on the city's Economic Renewal Group and the Social Recovery Taskforce, including Chairing a new group to look at improving the relationship between the sectors.
- Joined the Glasgow City Region Regional Partnership, with the ability to provide a community and third sector voice for this critical development work.
- GCVS, Volunteer Glasgow and Glasgow Life (Glasgow's culture and sport ALEO) have begun a review of volunteering to identify learning during Covid and how they should adapt delivery in future.

- Developed relationships with both Glasgow and Strathclyde Universities for training and research; partnerships that are already proving fruitful for both academia and the sector.
- Developing new approaches to responding to the city's challenges, such as, working to build better partnerships between public and third sector in mental health and suicide prevention.

What was important about the way you worked?

Relationships

Strong relationships across the third and public sector were critical. GCVS was a trusted as a partner to the public sector and as a source of information and support to third sector.

Listening

The information GCVS was able to gather from third sector organisations on the ground meant they were often able to have solutions to challenges before public sector colleagues were even aware the challenge existed. A great example of this was people struggling with pets during Covid-19 – they were able to get resource from the Supporting Communities programme to address the challenge.

Collaboration

The urgency of the crisis and their relationships meant GCVS were able to move key work significantly faster than normal. They found it easier than normal to share data, receive answers to decisions and secure resources. Public sector staff in the Council and in Fire & Rescue were taking calls on the helpline alongside GCVS staff in a matter of days – something that would normally require multiple extensive meetings, months of planning and extensive reports.

Flexibility

Like the whole third sector, the GCVS staff team have excelled at doing what has been necessary to support the city. GCVS and the wider sector benefited from that flexibility being demonstrated everywhere as well – for example how funders gave organisations freedom to do what they thought was right.

What difference did you make?

There are five key outcomes that GCVS have achieved in their work with the third and public sector:

- People and communities in the city are better able to support each other and access support when needed.
- The inequalities which existed and were widened by Covid-19 are recognised and responded to.
- Third sector organisations are able to adapt, sustain their work and support their people.
- Support services (regardless of sector) are well connected and able to reach communities.
- Opportunities are taken and lessons are learned to help us build a better Scotland post-Covid.

Challenges and changes

Challenges

There were some challenges on GCVS' journey.

During the early period of lockdown, they found it hard to navigate the city's decision-making processes. GCVS had a new Chief Executive and relationships were still forming when Covid-19 hit. Due to its size, the city has complex decision-making structures, and it was difficult to understand where decisions were being taken.

The scale of the city, and in particular its deprivation, made some of the work significantly more challenging than other TSI areas may have faced, simply because of the number of third sector organisations and distinct communities in the city. This was more acute due to comparatively low resource for Glasgow TSI.

Some of the national context also was not helpful for the city as a whole. The resilience partnership arrangements seemed to have poor understanding of Third Sector Interfaces, and their connections to third sector organisations seemed limited. This contrasts to those that would work with the third sector for short-term/localised challenges for things such as poor weather. While Scottish Government funding for the sector to respond to community need was welcome, the national approach to funding distribution resulted in more challenging coordination in the city.

There were also the practical challenges that many organisations faced with responding to Covid-19. GCVS handled most of these well, but sometimes the difficulties were apparent. For example, they held their first online meeting of the third sector on Microsoft Teams before lockdown had even been formally announced. The system was undeveloped compared to now, GCVS didn't have the proficiency they now have at running online events, and participants hadn't adjusted to online meeting etiquette.

Changes

Aside from the practical and obvious changes like using digital technology, GCVS saw two key changes: Firstly, their relationships with partners improved dramatically. These relationships had been improving anyway, but this was accelerated and GCVS saw a real understanding from public sector partners of the value of the sector and of GCVS' role in helping connect them to that.

Secondly, GCVS benefited from improvements to how the system works. People were willing to take risks, innovate and remove bureaucracy. Barriers to change were overcome and people worked together to solve the problem in front of them.

What did you learn?

	What worked well?	What could be even better?
Your approach	<p>Demonstrating clear leadership both within the third sector but also in public planning.</p> <p>Repeatedly listening to what the sector was telling them and responding to that.</p> <p>Giving their staff confidence and freedom to try new things and to take risks.</p> <p>Focusing on the city's current and emerging challenges.</p>	<p>GCVS' use of technology pre-Covid was inadequate for the pandemic and that created some challenges for them early on. While they adapted quickly, they still have some way to go to get the best out of digital approaches.</p> <p>GCVS maintain a significant amount of data about the third sector and communities which is valuable to their work. However, they could get better at analysing and sharing that data for greater impact.</p>
Others' approach	<p>Third sector organisations engaged with communities which brought so much value to the city.</p> <p>Local collaboration at a community level to respond to local issues better than city-wide responses.</p> <p>The flexibility of funders and decision-makers was helpful and where possible should be maintained post-Covid.</p>	<p>Recognition for the value of third sector organisations and TSIs (hence appropriate investment needed) in responding to the requirements of communities.</p> <p>Refocused commitment to the principles of localism.</p>

What will you do differently post covid?

End	Amplify
The Glasgow Helps telephone service was unique to the crisis and has ended and in future GCVS will be supporting Glasgow City Council's multi-agency hub, now branded as Glasgow Helps.	GCVS aim to develop their involvement in strategic approaches to designing of services and in distributing funding to third sector on behalf of other partners. Use of digital technology will be further developed, although this will evolve into a more hybrid approach to suit the needs of customers. They aim to continue to be flexible through how they encourage staff to work, including greater use of flexible hours and home working.
Let Go	Restart
Covid has been quite illuminating for GCVS in terms of what is important and so there are some internal processes they will let go of to be more flexible. GCVS anticipate being less focused on office space and have begun the process of reducing their total footprint by about 50%.	There was very little day-to-day activity that was stopped. There are however three key areas that GCVS planned to focus on that were paused during Covid-19. These are Equalities & Human Rights, Fair Work in the Third Sector, and Environment & Climate Change. GCVS are beginning to focus again on how they progress these.

Views of our Stakeholders

As part of this process an independent person was able to carry out interviews with key stakeholders in the city. These interviews have provided valuable insight into GCVS' role and how they are perceived. There are two key pieces of learning from this review:

Value

The value of work carried out by the third sector and volunteers in the city was clearly put in greater focus for participants in the survey. The effect of that has been a desire for greater involvement of the third sector in renewal.

"The third sector is central to the Manifesto in Glasgow, but Covid has put a greater focus on the third sector, has accelerated the recognition of the role of the third sector"

The role of GCVS in supporting and connecting the work of the third sector was recognised and warmly welcomed by participants.

Participants in the survey identified critical contributions from GCVS during Covid-19, including:

- Leadership was very visible and responsive as well as collaborative.
- Speed of response.
- Representation / coordination of third sector.
- Development capacity to develop solutions and to make things happen.
- Intelligence – bringing information from communities to inform priorities
- Communication and sharing.
- Capacity to bring people together (the sector and partners) around issues.
- Bringing a third sector perspective to development of solutions

"(GCVS) knows the key players in the sector/can bring the right players to the table"

Relationships and a Strategic TSI

Relationships are regarded as critical. There was a recognition from stakeholders that relationships between the third and public sector has not been good enough historically. It was noted that the work and approach of GCVS had resulted in improved relationships even before Covid-19 and that this improvement had been accelerated during the pandemic. These improved relationships were regarded as critical for better ways of working in the future.

There was recognition that a TSI acting as a trusted partner is needed to broker the improved relationships. GCVS was seen by strategic partners in the public sector as having the ability to broker relationships and partnerships across sectors, as well as having a strong understanding of the third sector and the developmental capacity to deliver solutions. The increased trust that these partners had in GCVS has subsequently built confidence to engage with the third sector and has created opportunities for greater involvement of the third sector.

"We worked together - real collaboration. That has forged relationships. We now have a level of comfort in working together that probably wouldn't have happened without Covid."

"The conversations GCVS hosted have elicited information, at exactly the right time"

North Lanarkshire

Background

Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire (VANL) is a Single agency TSI serving North Lanarkshire (NL). As of January 2021, VANL has 18 permanent staff, with four temporary staff in post and several Kickstart posts to be recruited during Feb.

The TSI has a strong, longstanding working relationships with Council and Health and Social Care North Lanarkshire (HSCNL).

North Lanarkshire Council provides some core funding for VANL (2020-21 £166K) and recognises VANL as a strategic partner. A new three-year SLA has been developed from 2021.

Health and Social Care North Lanarkshire doesn't provide core funding to VANL but invests in the sector through the Community Solutions Programme, which is managed/delivered by VANL.

The TSI sits on an impressive range of cross sector partnerships around:

- Children's services
- Community justice
- Community learning and development
- Digital
- Health and social care (including sub groups mental health, drug use. Green health)
- Resilience
- Volunteering

Role of TSI during Covid-19

VANL is recognised as a key partner in NL and was central to NLs response to Covid-19 from the outset. VANL had key roles in **planning** and in operationalising the response:

Planning - VANL

- sits on the Lanarkshire Resilience Partnership.
- provided key information, intelligence and data to Gold command that informed decisions.
- provided input at strategic level to inform recognition of need, and development of solutions.

Operational Level

VANL facilitated and supported the the CVS/TS operational response with support from the Council through the Community Solutions programme. VANL staff supported referrals from the Council COVID-19 Helpline to sources of community support.

80 CVS organisations mobilised in spring 2020 to support the immediate COVID-19 emergency response, with VANL providing information, guidance and support where needed.

VANL also:

- Played a key role in the volunteer effort in liaison with NHS Lanarkshire and the council
- Provided intelligence on need/issues and produced data on scale of response
- Produced information for the sector
- Provided Information/advice and active support on funding, including securing additional funding for the sector

Stakeholder views (as collated by Arrivo Consulting)

Strong, enthusiastic and very visible leadership

- ability to co-ordinate sector
- positive 'can do' attitude – giving confidence to others working with them
- demonstrated commitment: went 'above and beyond' (staff working 12 hrs/ 7 days a week etc)

Supportive partner

Staff and board are very vocal on importance of partnership working, advocate for the work being done and the value of partners.

Reach into sector

- Unique capacity as 'trusted intermediary' with ability to facilitate connections and act as 'broker'.
- Engagement structures in NL are mature, and VANL's reach into the sector and engagement with the sector is very good.

"Incredible insight into local need and provision - they could tell us what was available at a very local level"

"We relied on VANLs knowledge and connections, their ability to bring the sector together"

Professionalism in process and presentation

"They have also built the professionalism of the sector – they have built the monitoring and evaluation capacity of Community Solutions organisations - the capacity of Community Solutions organisations to provide data during response was critical to demonstrating the level of activity and 'value' of the sector"

Expertise

- expertise in third sector models, partnerships
- examples of 'what works' from other areas etc.
- experience of putting ideas into action.

Profile of sector as result of Covid response

Although the third sector and the TSI were already highly valued, stakeholders reported that the learning from the Covid response had influenced the positioning of the third sector/TSI in North Lanarkshire. There is a greater awareness of need in communities. Elected members are more aware of sector/what they can deliver. There is greater recognition of the value of some third sector approaches and a growing awareness of the uniqueness of the offer from the third sector.

"There are just some things that they can do better than us"

"Third sector organisations can reach people who don't engage with [statutory sector] partners"

There are also improved relationships at operational level:

- VANL/NLC/HSCP now developing locality based teams to support communities engagement on locality based planning
- Intend to support the sector to take leadership roles in planning/representation at locality level

Renewal: The work around the Covid response has accelerated some of the work that the Council/partners were already developing with the TSI.

Post Covid, North Lanarkshire Council has reviewed the poverty strategy (which had been completed pre-covid). This has resulted in a repositioning of third sector within the strategy.

There is now a greater recognition of the different roles/value of the third sector. e.g. recognition of delivery capacity of third sector but also that third sector can engage/identify people that statutory sector partners can't. A better appreciation of the efficacy of third sector approaches

Learning from the Covid experience

The Covid experience has highlighted the capacity that had been built as a result of the investment and confirmed the value of long-term investment in the third sector

- The Anchor Organisations which had been supported through Community Solutions had the capacity and reach to mobilise rapidly.
- The Community Solutions organisations also had the skills/capacity to do monitoring and reporting
- The data which the organisations was able to produce (via VANL) on the activity delivered during the emergency response has been critical in demonstrating the value of the third sector, but has also informed partners on the levels of need in communities.

"The infrastructure was critical – the infrastructure that has been built over years through Community Solutions really paid dividends."

Stakeholders also reported that the Community Solutions organisations provided partners with an infrastructure for 'reaching into communities' to address need. Community Solution infrastructure enabled Council to 'reach people who fly under the radar (don't engage with statutory services) and resulted in greater reach, greater ability to meet need in communities.

The information for this case study came from a larger case study written by VANL and was informed by stakeholder interviews held by Arrivo Consulting.

Background

Stirlingshire Voluntary Action is a single agency TSI with 11 members of staff (8.75 FTE). TSI has strong and historic working relationships with Stirling Council. The Council provides funding to TSI under a 3 year SLA, focussed on how SVE can support the delivery of key Council priorities in the Stirling Plan).

"Stirling gets good value for money from its investment in TSI"

Strategic and operational connections

- Recognised as key and active partner in strategic planning structures (CPP, Exec Board, Senior Officer GP etc)
- Vice- chairs Community Justice Partnership.
- Positioned to ensure that TSI can influence key strategies and represent the sector on key partnership initiatives etc
- Third Sector voice in City Region Deal work
- SVE is involved in lots of joint work with Council eg a key partner in Stirling Alive with Volunteering

Integrated Joint Board

- The TSI is a respected partner in the Health and Social Care Partnership. While there is a strong commitment to engagement with the third sector, the structures for engagement with third sector are still under development, and there is a need to further embed the TSI in HSCP decision making structures.
- HSCP is working toward the development of a strategic commissioning model, which will position the TSI as a strategic partner in the commissioning process.

Overview of TSI roles in coordinating the emergency response

Stirling Council was responsible for the shielding population. They set up a Community Support Programme to respond to need at community level. TSI played key roles in developing and **operationalising the approach**.

Stirling Council set up a Management Team to manage the Community Support Team. This was jointly led by senior Managers from Council and a TSI lead. It was responsible for planning /co-ordinating the response. But it also provided **peer support group** during crisis.

"Council and TSI CEO could have robust and supportive discourse about what was working/ what wasn't."

The Community Support Team included Council and TSI staff and worked in each locality to support local organisations and **co-ordinate** the response.

- Calls came into the central help-line
- Sent out to local community support team
 - triage system to identify what services required
 - connected the 'ask' to the local groups who could deliver

One area didn't have coordinated local 'community response' organisations so **TSI set up a virtual hub** to connect 'asks' with volunteers.

Council and TSI also shared lead on **volunteering** as there were different elements to co-ordinate:

- local portal (TSI)
- managing Ready Scotland volunteers (TSI took this on)
- staff volunteering (Council led)

TSI involvement with IJB/HSCP response: The TSI was also involved in the HSCP extended Management Group to plan/co-ordinate services over the emergency period (Included GP, Social Work, Nursing Lead, Operational Heads of Services, and TSI).

Critical role of TSI was **intelligence** which informed decision making:

- providing information on what third sector services were available in localities
- providing intelligence info on need in localities/communities

Another key role the TSI played was in providing **information and support** to the sector to navigate the challenges of operating during the pandemic.

Stakeholder views (as collated by Arrivo Consulting)

Respected partner

- highly credible
- able to challenge partners/raise challenging issues in professional manner

Knowledgeable partner

- Demonstrates breadth and depth of knowledge across such a range of policy issues/operational area
- Brings external perspectives, intelligence from national and regional connections to strategic planning meetings.

Leadership

- The TSI CEO and Board are highly visible as sector leaders
- TSI CEO demonstrates leadership/is a good role model to sector

Reach

- Has reach into the sector and into communities through its engagement
- Brings intelligence from sector

Voice/advocate for the sector

- Good engagement with the sector /respected by the sector
- Partners have confidence that TSI has reach/respect of sector and can therefore represent the sectors voice
 - Partners have confidence that when TSI raises an issue, it is important/authentic

Profile of sector as result of involvement in Covid response

Pre-Covid, there was a strong recognition of the role/value of third sector in Stirling, so the Covid experience has probably not changed perceptions greatly (rather it demonstrated /affirmed the value of the sector). But it is recognised that the TSI went '**above and beyond**'.

Elected members identified 'growth funding' to make a one year uplift in funding to TSI in recognition of role and impact of the TSI during the pandemic.

At operational level, closer joint working between the TSI and the Council's Community staff have **improved relationships** and paved way for better ways of working in future to maximise the use of resources across both teams.

The Covid experience has not significantly changed the involvement of the TSI in renewal. Stakeholders reflected that the third sector was already involved in planning and in delivery of services, and that there was already recognition of the sector within local plans etc. However the HSCP identified the need to move from crisis intervention to **early intervention/prevention**. There is potential for the third sector to play a huge role, given support and resources.

Messages to Scottish Government

Council and HSCP stakeholders identified key messages for Scottish Government:

- TSIs need to be recognised/valued for what they do
- TSIs need to be resourced properly if they are to act as a strategic/operational partner in transforming the landscape of delivery organisations / delivering better outcomes for people in Scotland

There are challenges in Stirling due to the scale of the area/level of funding for the TSI - stakeholders recognised that the TSI needed to be resourced to speed up the rate of change.

The information for this case study came from a larger case study written by SVE, informed by stakeholder interviews held by Arrivo Consulting.

West Lothian

Background

Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian (VSGWL) is a small single agency TSI, covering support to the third sector, social enterprises and volunteering in West Lothian. There are 8 staff (5 p/t).

Structures for involving the third sector and relationships with partners are not as mature as in some other areas.

- Relationships with West Lothian Council.
- The TSI sits on the IJB, but structures for engaging with the third sector are not as mature as in some other areas

However, more recent efforts by the TSI to rebuild relationships with the West Lothian Council have been critical to building trust in the TSI and have been successful in repositioning the TSI as a key partner/collaborator in the emergency response.

TSI role in supporting the emergency response to Covid-19

During the emergency TSI had a key role in

- Providing **intelligence and support** to the sector
 - VSGWL created a **Covid-19 Resource information hub** for the third sector with links to an online Directory of Services, and information on volunteering, health and well-being resources and funding opportunities.
 - VSGWL was also very active on social media to sure important news and funding opportunities were communicated quickly.
- Providing **intelligence about the sector** to public agencies (for example the Council's community response team)
- **Coordination of volunteering opportunities**
 - Over 1200 people from across West Lothian signed up to volunteers during the crisis. WVSGWL created a volunteering database to manage and respond to requests from partners for volunteers. Volunteers were placed with Carers of West Lothian, Safe Families, Food Train, NHS Lothian, The Larder and WL Foodbank. Individuals have been helping with food parcel deliveries to those in need, PPE supplies to carers, medicine pick-ups and support as ward helpers in St John's.
 - An unexpected outcome has been the number of individuals expressing interest in volunteering as trustees. Over 60 people have been sign-posted to third sector partners for trustee roles.

Angela Constance MSP submitted a Parliamentary Motion highlighting the surge in volunteers and congratulating VSGWL on their work. The Motion was supported by several MSPs from all parties.

TSI involvement in renewal

The third sector response to Covid-19 has raised the profile of the third sector amongst public sector partners, leading to a greater understanding of the value of the third sector and what they can offer.

The role and contribution of the third sector to the emergency response was celebrated at the *Third Sector Covid-19 Recovery Summit*.

This was an on-line event organised by the TSI to showcase the work of the third sector during Covid-19. The online event attracted 100 participants, including elected members, MPs, MSPs and a host of third sector partners. The event received very positive feedback and wide-spread recognition of the importance of the sector in the economic and social recovery and the partnership approach required to create a new West Lothian ([Recovery Summit Report](#))

The TSI involvement in the emergency response has also raised the profile of the TSI. This can be evidenced by the greater involvement in TSI and third sector in recovery planning.

During the emergency TSI had a key role in

- Third sector offer to support in vaccination roll-out has been taken up by the HSCP.
- TSI is now more involved in policy areas where it might not have previously been an obvious partner.
 - For example, the TSI has been involved in developments around Kickstart/Youth Guarantee as there is a greater recognition of the role of volunteering in building employability in young people.

The information for this case study came from a larger case study written by VSGWL.

The context for TSI involvement in Covid response

tsiMORAY is a single agency TSI. It currently has nine staff working on 'TSI' business as well as a member of staff building on the work of a small team previously tasked with delivering the Moray LEADER Programme. Until October 2020, tsiMORAY also employed five community development workers, deployed at locality level throughout Moray, who played a key role in supporting the community-led response to the pandemic.

Although the TSI has a 'place' on Community Planning Partnership and strategic planning groups, strategic relationships with Moray Council have not been strong. There is no Council investment in tsiMORAY.

At the operational level, relationships with the Community Support Unit in Moray Council are not well developed – there has been a lack of clarity over roles/responsibilities of the TSI and Community Support Unit in supporting communities which has strained relationships and constrained partnership working, although this has started to change following joint working during the pandemic and recent changes of personnel at Moray Council.

Similarly, the TSI has a place on the Integration Joint Board for health and social care, but initially during the pandemic, the Board met less frequently and decisions were delegated to senior officials, resulting in a lesser voice for the third sector. There is no IJB investment in tsiMORAY.

By contrast, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) has funded tsiMORAY since 2012 and views the TSI as a key delivery partner in the area. Relationships with HIE are strong. The characteristics of this relationship are long term, engaged, robust and with clarity of expectation.

"Trusted partner relationship"

TSI role in supporting the emergency response to Covid-19

Grampian NHS set up an Assistance Hub - an online portal to provide information on local services and to match requests for assistance and offers of assistance. The Hub operated across Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray.

At the local level Moray Council set up a Resilience Group to co-ordinate the local response. The TSI was invited to join. The Group was responsible for:

- identifying needs and local resources to meet need
- co-ordinating support to local groups/communities involved in delivery of emergency response
- feeding information into assistance hub about local services/provision
- identifying need/issues/linking with Scottish Welfare Fund etc

The key contribution of the TSI

Coordinating Information about services and support (Moray)

With development officers based in localities, and with well-established networks, Moray were able to compile an 'essential information' bulletin/web site page within three days of lockdown which identified how services were changing, starting or stopping. This led to the formation of a new web portal for people to find out what community-led services or help was available. Statutory partners recognised its value and, at their request, tsiMORAY enabled information about public sector services to feed into this site.

This database was used at the local level but also to 'populate' the information held by the Hub. The collating, sharing and publishing information continues.

Development support local communities providing emergency response

TSI staff in local communities provided direct support to the community anchor organisations which were providing frontline services during the pandemic, for example by holding and facilitating online meetings with smaller community self-help groups and acting as a key conduit enabling information to flow both horizontally (between groups) and vertically (between communities, specialist tsiMORAY staff and public services).

TSI role in supporting the sector

Filtering intelligence

tsiMORAY staff sieved through the huge volume of information pouring in, locally and nationally, to extract the key information (and inspiration) most relevant to the local third sector, and to present it in readily accessible form through newsletters, press releases, website posts and emails, as well as through meetings.

Access to funding

Access to funding was facilitated not only through the timeous circulation of relevant and current information, but also through hands-on support for – often collaborative – funding bids and the direct distribution of third party funds to local groups and initiatives.

Supporting volunteer management

Recognising the changing nature of volunteering to more informal and fluid ways, and the limited experience of many newly-formed groups in managing and supporting volunteers, tsiMORAY produced short videos and guidance for both new and experienced volunteer coordinators, as well as sharing links to learning materials and opportunities produced by national and international volunteering agencies. tsiMORAY also directly engaged with the 865 volunteers who stepped forward to help during the first wave of the pandemic.

Connecting and supporting peer learning

The TSI had already developed and introduced online networking tools, and was able to adapt rapidly to the changed circumstances. It responded to the increasing need for connection between groups by increasing the frequency of much-appreciated forums' and networks' meetings.

In the words of a local participant: .

"The Children & Young People third sector forum is not only a meeting I enjoy because of its positivity and spirit of collaboration, but also because it's the main way I have of catching up with all my third sector colleagues. I always leave the meeting feeling inspired by the sector's commitment to our young people. As a direct result of the Forum, we are currently working with Quarriers to deliver a programme for young carers and are working with another partner on a proposal for supporting mental health and wellbeing."

Or, put more simply by the chair of a local community anchor organisation:

"I think everyone is and should be indebted to you and tsIMORAY for doing what you've done. Thank you."

TSI role in supporting renewal

Joint working over the Covid response has improved relationships between tsIMORAY and the Community Support Unit at the operational level and increased awareness of and confidence in the TSI within Moray Council.

"We have developed positive relationships with the TSI.... feels like there is a platform for moving forward"

This has been evidenced through increased involvement of the TSI in other renewal activity

- The TSI is now involved in building a database of all children services (as part of Children's Services Plan). This is a 'new' collaboration – TSI might not have been involved if the COVID work hadn't taken place.
- TSI also took a leading role in establishing Fairer Moray Forum Action Group and is co-chairing the group (in collaboration with Council).
- Moray Climate Assembly - during the pandemic tsIMORAY was invited to work in partnership with Moray Council on community engagement in relation to the development of Moray Council's Climate Action Plan. In view of the gap between the plan's focus on Council's activities and its wider aspirations for Moray, tsIMORAY convened and facilitates the multi-sectoral Moray Climate Assembly and a smaller Moray Area Climate Action Steering Group more details [here](#).

More coordinated funding

Moray Funders' Forum – catalysed by the need for a coordinated approach to distributing emergency funding, this forum consists of around 20 funding organisations that are either exclusively based in Moray or have an active interest in funding Moray. The Forum successfully provides a way for funders to network, learn, share information and hear about what is happening in Moray.

The information for this case study came from a larger case study written by tsIMORAY, and was informed by stakeholder interviews held by Arrivo Consulting