

COVID 19 Recovery Plan Consultation Sessions – key points

What worked well

- Good the way volunteers were quick to respond to the crisis and support those in most need in their communities.
- Where there were existing anchor organisations set up in communities it was easier and quicker to manage the effort – they already had the systems in place to process grants, reporting procedures and insurances etc
- Good networks have been built in communities – groups found the Locality COVID-19 meetings useful and want to continue and develop these.

What could have been better

- Problems with GCAH – largely down to the lack of understanding of the geography of Moray. Would have been better if the GCAH was the provider of information and guidance leaving each local authority to co-ordinate support on the ground.
- Issues with GDPR – volunteer groups were not able to target support on the ground as effectively without knowing who was most in need. There were also GDPR issues between agencies as well as with the volunteer groups. In some cases it was felt that if the person needing help was simply asked if their details could be passed to a volunteer group that would have helped.
- Response from Moray Council was felt to be slow at the start – better communication and guidance would have helped the volunteer groups at the start of lockdown
- Issues with IT – access to equipment, ability to use the IT and connectivity (broadband and cost) There were also challenges for parents who were home-schooling alongside trying to work from home. Lack of IT and broadband issues where there were several members needing to work online.
- There needs to be a recognition when volunteer help stops and professionals need to take over. There is a need for clear information, guidance and contacts for volunteer groups to use to deal with and refer cases of concern and assurance that cases have been responded to after.
- Many of the cases on the ground were not strictly COVID-19 related – but pre-existing issues around poverty, mental health and care have been and continue to be uncovered by volunteers during the response to the pandemic.
- There needs to be better partnership working with community groups and community planning partners – particularly when dealing with situations where there are multiple issues requiring a partnership approach.

- Need for a proactive approach as people are sometimes reluctant to make the call to get help and need support to do this so they get the benefits and services they need.
- Clear pathways of support for the hard to reach most at risk - Volunteers came across some very vulnerable families with language barriers – eg families in low paid/high rent situations, refugee families.

Looking ahead -

- Need to identify spaces which can be accessed at short notice without red tape for co-ordinating the volunteer response should there be a lockdown situation in the future
- Need for information to be circulated on where people can get advice and support ahead of the end of furlough and anticipated redundancies.
- Need for clear consistent guidance and support from the Council with reopening facilities – halls, toilets etc.
- Maintain the connections with the volunteer groups. The role of established local organisations eg Community Councils & Associations and Development Trusts was recognised. They played a key role in mobilising themselves quickly and managing the effort - they have the advantage of having existing processes and procedures to manage and account for any funding and to ensure that volunteers are supported.
- There are now problems in some areas where tourists have flocked post lockdown. Local infrastructure is not fit to cope with litter and waste. Investment required to cope with the increase in numbers.