



**COVID-19 Third Sector Response Forum**  
**Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2020**  
**3pm – 5pm**  
**Zoom Meeting**

**Present:**

Claire Bernard (CB) (Chairperson)	CVS Falkirk and District
Laura Jamieson (LJ) (Minute Taker)	CVS Falkirk and District
Alan Grey	Forth Valley Migrant Support Network
Claire Houston (CH)	NHS Forth Valley
Donald Park (DP)	Forth Valley Voluntary Sector Group
Duncan Hearsum (DH)	Dial-a-Journey
Fiona Welsh (FW)	Christians Against Poverty
Gilly McWhirter (GM)	Bo'ness & Blackness Community Response
Lynsey Hansford (LH)	CVS Falkirk and District
Martin Allen (MA)	Forth Valley Sensory Centre
Martin Fotheringham (MF)	CSREC
Miranda Wilson (MW)	Falkirk Council
Nicola Lockwood (NL)	Victim Support Scotland
Scott Malcolm (SM)	CVS Falkirk and District
Wendy McDougall	Healthcare Improvement Scotland

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

CB introduced herself, welcomed forum members present and advised the meeting was recorded via zoom. Introductions were made by forum attendees, along with background on their roles and what their organisation had been focusing on during the pandemic.

CB mentioned that Compassionate and Included Communities Forum had discussed the current period of uncertainty and looking at how the forums could work with and manage that going forward.

**2. Volunteering Support and Pop-In Sessions**

LH spoke with the forum about her role during COVID-19, supporting the local community responses along with the rest of CVS Falkirk. LH's role had mostly focused on matching groups and organisations with volunteers, wherever they were needed.

Now that many local groups are looking at resuming their services and activities in a safe manner, volunteer opportunities which aren't solely COVID-focused are becoming available. LH's role currently revolves around getting information out



around these opportunities, and supporting the organisations who are engaging with volunteers.

The Volunteering team is now structuring this support in a new, responsive way, with Zoom “pop-in” sessions, starting Friday 25<sup>th</sup> September. The aim is for these to be “whatever people need them to be”; people do not have to stay for the full session, and while the first part of the session will be active, LH will be available for anyone who wishes to speak with her.

The first session is likely to focus on health and safety, on policies, peer support and sharing resources. The sessions and format will be reviewed regularly.

Forum attendees are welcome to attend, and should contact LH for further information by email: [lynsey.hansford@cvsfalkirk.org.uk](mailto:lynsey.hansford@cvsfalkirk.org.uk)

CB also noted that attendees could contact CVS Falkirk for support at any time by email: [info@cvsfalkirk.org.uk](mailto:info@cvsfalkirk.org.uk) Alternatively, the office line is still manned: 01324 692000.

### **3. Wellbeing Fund Experiences**

#### **3.1 CSREC Activities**

MF spoke about CSREC’s experiences after receiving an award from the Wellbeing Fund:

CSREC got involved in later rounds, with activities over the summer. These mainly involved reaching out to BAME individuals and families to find out if they needed help or support; initial idea to help with shopping, fuel cards and SIM cards, phone top-ups, with small cash grants as an option (mirroring the national work of BEMIS Scotland).

Most requested the cash grant; MF referred to the “greater dignity” (described by Scottish Government) of sourcing what you need and want yourself rather than being provided a package that was chosen for you. (This also has an impact around food and culture.)

They are still receiving applications, even though fund closed a month ago. Highlighted how BAME groups disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and the pandemic; members spent time discussing this point where it crossed over into their own work. Much of the discussion involved online access: MF noted that a lot of services moved online during COVID-19, but that many people in BAME groups do not have internet access at home, or live in temporary accommodation where they cannot set up an internet contract, which increases the impact of isolation. Members discussed whether it would be possible to make more free wifi hot spots available, especially with library closures.



CSREC engaged with around 650 people. Their focus going forward will be how to engage with local authorities and highlight the issues this has raised (such as the lack of internet availability in temporary accommodation). MF noted that CSREC had also now reopened their office for limited hours, as much of their support is better in person.

### **3.2 Financial Support and Signposting**

CB returned to the point that people had preferred the cash grants, and a previous forum had discussed that that many people will have no experience with benefits, and will need financial help now, not later, especially with furlough coming to an end in October. CB has been speaking with the Independent Food Aid Network on their Cash First approach, to look at why people are presenting at food banks, and tackling those issues, connecting people with financial advice services (including CAB, Social Security Scotland, DWP). The focus is on income maximisation and appropriate local signposting.

CB then invited interested members to join a discussion group and speak with the Network on the Cash First approach. Bo'ness & Blackness Community Response, and Christians Against Poverty, would like to be involved.

Action: SM to pass GM and FW's contact details to Chelsea at the Independent Food Network.

Action: SM to link in with Gill Winters at Social Security Scotland re: above.

### **4. Food Provision**

CB informed members of the food group, which has been looking at emergency food provision to date (largely based around support from Falkirk Council's emergency food hubs), and that there are currently discussions taking place around what sustainable food provision could look like going forward.

SM mentioned that the organisations involved in the food group have currently planned up until December, with 6 options under consideration for going forward. The third sector will have input on how food provision will be structured through a survey, which SM will share when available.

### **5. Support Required**

CB asked forum members what it is they need as third sector organisations at this point in time; noted that at the last meeting, discussion focused on data and the need for "canny", different data.

Members then discussed different needs around data and presentation, both in regards to operations and reporting (especially disaggregated data), as well as what they currently see as their biggest needs or priorities until the new year (including signposting and helping ahead of time, language and other complex barriers, and issues for children and young people around the disruption to



school). GM and MF agreed to begin work on a template to gather data that works for everyone, which could be shared with members, to help put right structures in place.

CB clarified that discussions are taking place and completely anonymous feedback being sought; many of the concerns raised have been picked up by Falkirk Council, through contribution from the third sector, and will be fed back to Scottish Government as part of the social renewal work. There is also the Falkirk Plan currently under development, which Falkirk Council is keen to have third sector input on. CVS Falkirk wants to put the questions to forum members and pull together needs from there; this is their role as a third sector interface, to take this information and present it where it needs to be seen.

MW asked for this information to also be shared with the Forth Valley Care for People Group. CB noted that it is CVS Falkirk's aim to get the information out to as many public structures as possible.

Action: CVS Falkirk to pass information to the Forth Valley Care for People Group (via MW).

Discussion moved on to members' operations since COVID-19, those who were beginning to reopen their premises and services, and those who hadn't. Amongst those who had, there were comments on the impact of social isolation and fear amongst their service users, and how this had affected uptake and users' mental health.

One member mentioned users' difficulties in accessing their GPs; CB raised the Community Link Worker (CLW) programme, and informed members that there is a CLW in every health and social care locality in Falkirk (East: based at Cyrenians, West: at Strathcarron Hospice; Central: at FDAMH). Each worker is dedicated to the GP practices aligned to their locality, looking at those presenting at GP surgeries due to socio/economic issues, as opposed to medical, in order to signpost more appropriately and help them access relevant services.

- Central CLW: Chris Hardman, [FDAMH website](#), phone: 07889809875, email: [chris.hardman@fdamh.org.uk](mailto:chris.hardman@fdamh.org.uk)
- West CLW: Donna Laidlaw, phone: 07815680755, email: [fv.strathcarron@nhs.scot](mailto:fv.strathcarron@nhs.scot)
- East CLW: Carl Storah, phone: 07960434908, email: [CarlStorah@cyrenians.scot](mailto:CarlStorah@cyrenians.scot)

Action: CB to pass CLW details to NL, and East CLW details to GM.

CB directed members to the CVS Falkirk [COVID-19](#) and [Recovery](#) pages, along with the [Organisation Directory](#); anyone who would like to update their existing details should contact LJ by email: [laura@cvsfalkirk.org.uk](mailto:laura@cvsfalkirk.org.uk)



Action: SM to send members details of how to sign up to the Fairer Falkirk map.

Members also discussed ways to share their organisations' resources with each other (such as transport and venues for outreach sessions), and expressed that it was reassuring to hear that everyone is in the same kind of boat.

As a final point, CB raised the point of a second wave and local lockdowns, and asked how capable members felt, or if they would further support. Members agreed this would depend on what was asked or needed by communities, on funding (acknowledging there is likely to be less available than before), and on volunteer numbers and availability. There is also an ongoing concern about to get information out to those not online.

AG pointed out the importance of coming together as a community, and as community groups, in order to come through the pandemic.

**Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> October, 3pm – 5pm  
via Zoom**

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