
Review of the Third Sector Response to Covid-19 in Falkirk

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Executive summary

This research

- explores the scale and impact of the third sector response to Covid-19
- identifies the critical success factors about the approach to understand what worked and why
- provides lessons for the partners to inform the future.

Background

The response to the Covid-19 crisis in Falkirk took a multi-agency approach that garnered the skills, resources and commitment of individuals, communities, third sector organisations, local businesses and the partner agencies to provide access to food, medicines and essential services to meet the needs of the people and communities of Falkirk.

Falkirk Council and partners took an enabling role, setting up the infrastructure that supported and enabled third sector organisations and underpinned the co-ordination of the diverse range of services provided.

The delivery of emergency services was carried by third sector organisations.

Delivering the emergency response

The scale, scope and speed at which the third sector response to the covid19 crisis was remarkable.

56 third sector organisations were listed on the Support for People directory offering a range of support to vulnerable people.

Falkirk Council's Support for People (SFP) service made **1,705** referrals to third sector organisations (104 referrals to statutory services).

The most immediate and overwhelming need was **access to food**.

- Of the 2,336 requests for support to the SFP line, 1,572 (66%) required food

Over **20** third sector organisations were directly involved in the provision of food through the Emergency Food Project:

- third sector organisations provided emergency food to **15,953** households in total (in the period 6 Apr-31 Aug)
- At the peak of demand (end May 2020), organisations delivered emergency food to **1,055** households in one week
- From June to end August, an average of 773 households per week were receiving food through the emergency food project.

The total cost of food provided was **£192,310**. Falkirk Council provided an additional **£78,000** from the Food Fund (Scottish Government Allocation) so food providers could supply more fresh food.

However, this only represents one element of food provision. Additionally, third sector organisations provided cooked meals/hot food, provided children's lunches and offered a range of other support to address needs in the community.

Differentiating food access and food poverty

A key strength in the co-ordinated approach was that Falkirk developed a specific service to address food **access** for people who could afford food but could not get out to the shops because they were shielding. This reduced duplication and over-supply.

- Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) engaged **97** volunteers who supported 748 households, providing **4,378** essential shopping and medication deliveries, and carrying out **7,095** 'safe and well' checks for vulnerable people.
- As demand grew, Safebase stepped in to provide additional capacity and handled a further **107** referrals. **27** volunteers delivered over **300** shopping trips and made over **400** welfare calls.
- Stenhousemuir Football Club did shop and prescription deliveries for **120** elderly and at-risk households and carried out **2,699** shopping trips/pickups.

Beyond food approach

Organisations didn't just provide access to food, medicines and essential items: They provided a range of additional services to meet the emerging needs of the communities they served. Many organisations set up services specifically to address social isolation such as regular telephone calls or telephone befriending.

By developing relationships with supported people, third sector organisations identified other needs and **underlying problems** and developed **local solutions** as well as referring clients to other support services.

Case studies in the main report provide more examples of the activities and impact of organisations involved in the emergency response.

Volunteering

The public response to the Covid 19 crisis was overwhelming:

- In the first three weeks **403** people registered with CVS Falkirk to volunteer
- A further **914** individuals registered their interest through Scottish Government Ready Scotland/Scotland Cares campaign

CVS Falkirk set up a dedicated volunteer centre to manage the response:

- **249** volunteers were signposted to local opportunities
- **159** volunteers were placed with local organisations

CVS Falkirk administered a volunteer expense fund to reduce the burden of volunteer admin on third sector organisations:

- **18** organisations benefited, claiming expenses for **78** volunteers
- Volunteer expenses (nearly £28,000) show volunteers covered **62,000** miles

A challenge was that the supply of potential volunteers was greater than demand. CVS Falkirk has successfully managed the 'over-supply' and has maintained positive engagement with **916 people** who are still interested in volunteering in future.

Funding the emergency response

CVS Falkirk set up a dedicated team to maximise the **leverage of funding** into Falkirk. A total of nearly **£1million** was levered into third sector organisations in Falkirk to support the delivery of the emergency response and to support the sustainability of the sector.

Challenges

The front-line response (access to food, medicines etc) was delivered by over 20 organisations, with **different experience and capacity**. Overall, they were very successful at scaling up to meet the needs of the community but there were some challenges including:

- Lack of joint working/ collaborative responses to address common challenges.
- Challenges in transitioning approaches from the provision of 'emergency relief food' to a supporting recovery /addressing food poverty.
- Different approaches and capacity to identify and reach the most vulnerable

CVS Falkirk developed a network to bring the organisations together to develop collective approaches, but it was perhaps premature. There was a mixed level of capacity and interest in collaborative approaches and in co-producing longer term approaches to food poverty.

Learning from challenges

- **Building capacity for the next phase**

Planning for recovery/next phase requires a **better understanding of the drivers of food demand** and the populations who are vulnerable in order to inform future approaches and identify other services needed in communities.

This means partners may wish to consider how they better support organisations to **target** the most vulnerable groups and support them to **gather and share information** about the drivers of food poverty.

- **Building capacity in the longer term**

The challenges in co-ordination have highlighted a gap: There was no strong network / infrastructure to support organisations to develop collective approaches or enable collective decision making. Partners may wish to consider investment in third sector infrastructure in the longer term to build the capacity of individual organisations, and to build capacity for collective approaches which would improve co-ordination in future.

- **Other gaps in third sector infrastructure**

The challenges in co-ordination also highlight another gap in third sector infrastructure in Falkirk – and an opportunity for the development of **'anchor organisations'** to coordinate community responses at the local/geographic level.

Anchor organisations are strong local organisations which have the capacity to develop and coordinate activity in their communities. Typically, they have strong links to their communities and can stimulate high levels of voluntary activity. They are well placed to spot the talent and opportunities in their areas and have the resources and creativity to nurture and exploit those.

Stenhousemuir Football Club demonstrated the role of an anchor organisation during the Covid 19 crisis.

- **Use of Council buildings and other assets**

The closure of Council buildings was a barrier to local service delivery. Partners should carry out an analysis of the supply of buildings and other resources so they can be better used to support communities to effectively tackle the next phase.

Meeting the needs of vulnerable people in the community

While the emergency response focused on ensuring access to food, prescriptions and essential items, there is a raft of third sector organisations delivering other services to meet the needs of vulnerable people in the community. The third sector adapted their service models to continue to provide support to their service users, but also flexed their delivery to meet the increased levels of need and fill gaps in provision left by contraction of other services.

Lockdown meant third sector organisations had to 'close their doors' and cease all normal activities for service users but they made immediate plans to provide ongoing support to their service users in other ways. The third sector in Falkirk focused on:

- **Developing new ways to deliver services**

Organisations adapted quickly and creatively to find new ways to continue to deliver existing services.

- **Addressing social isolation**

Organisations added additional levels of contact (care calls and telephone befriending) to address social isolation and mental health of service users.

- **Extending services to new client groups/new needs/filling gaps in provision**

Organisations flexed their remits and extended their services to work with new client groups, to meet additional needs and to fill gaps resulting from contraction of other services.

Critical success factors in the response were:

- **Focus on needs of service users**

Third sector organisations responded by putting the safety and needs of the people they supported at the core of their response. Their responses were driven by **'what we can do'** rather than **'what we can't do'**.

- **Speedy adaption of technology**

Organisations responded with incredible speed and agility not only to using technology to work from home but to deliver services.

- **Strategic leadership and collaboration**

Third sector organisations did not rush to develop new services. Organisations took a strategic response, identifying what others were doing and looking at where they could best use their resources and expertise to meet need. As a result, they **avoided duplication** and maximised the use of resources to meet needs.

Learning

Value of the third sector

The approach has demonstrated the value of the third sector and of community led approaches to supporting people in the community.

Value of third sector infrastructure

The third sector response was supported by a strong and pro-active Third Sector Interface. CVS Falkirk played a critical role in enabling the co-ordination of the sector's response.

Learning from challenges

- **lack of communication and information from the public sector** created a 'vacuum around vulnerable people'
- **slower adoption of technology among statutory partners** that made joint working more difficult
- **the digital divide:** although there were great successes in moving services on-line, the experience has highlighted the need for further investment in access to technology for vulnerable people
- **sustainability of third sector organisations:** while the flexibility of funders was critical to enabling third sector organisations to flex their delivery models and outputs, partners should be aware that organisations that generate income from trading and contracts have been hit hardest by the crisis. This could jeopardise the sustainability of these organisations in the longer term.

The learning from the enabling approach

The approach has proven successful. Third sector organisations mobilised the resources of communities, volunteers, and local businesses to ensure that food, medicines and essential supplies were provided to people in need in Falkirk during the Covid19 crisis.

The approach was not only successful in delivering essential services. By supporting local organisations to deliver these services, the approach adopted by partners in Falkirk did not fund 'food delivery' but rather a food-led approach to supporting communities.

The approach has **built the capacity of local organisations, increased community involvement** and **built the capacity and resilience of communities** in Falkirk.

It has resulted in:

- **Increased access to support for vulnerable people in the community**

The approach has demonstrated the level of support that can be delivered by volunteers and 'added value' of community led support approaches.

- **Increased engagement in the community and increased social capital**

Third sector organisations harnessed the resources within communities to support people in the community. The approach increased the number of people who were contributing to their community and the ways that people are involved in their community.

- **Increased the capacity of local organisations and communities**

The approach has built the capacity of existing local organisations but also built new capacity in communities.

The approach has also **highlighted the appetite for community involvement**

The public response showed people want to be involved in their communities and are motivated by helping others. This suggests a need to reconsider traditional 'community engagement' activities and for partners to consider more community led support models as vehicles for engagement.

Learning about the partners' role in the enabling approach

The enabling role required partners to work differently. It required partners to change what they did, but also how they worked with the third sector.

Trust

The Council and partners demonstrated trust in the Third Sector Interface – CVS Falkirk – and in the third sector to deliver.

Supporting the third sector to deliver

Partners worked together to provide support to third sector organisations but also unlocked their own resources and acted quickly to unblock 'barriers' and broker solutions to challenges facing the third sector in the delivery of services.

Co-ordination of the approach

The partners developed the infrastructure to co-ordinate service delivery but left the delivery of services to the third sector.

Changes in practice

The drive to 'do whatever was needed to get things done' drove changes in processes – partners made quicker decisions and simplified procedures (reduction in red tape).

Partners worked together to solve practical problems – they were not planning together. This has accelerated collaborative working practices.

Introduction

The response to the Covid-19 lockdown in Falkirk has already been recognised for the innovative multi-agency approach which garnered the skills, resources and commitment of individuals, communities, voluntary organisations, local businesses and the partner agencies to provide lifeline services to meet the needs of the people and communities of Falkirk during the crisis.

The approach was striking due to the role of the partner agencies as 'enablers', for the level of partnership and collaboration between partner agencies and with the third sector, and the scale and scope the involvement of the communities and the third sector in the direct delivery of services to meet the needs of the people of Falkirk.

Purpose of the research

The purpose of this research was to explore the scale and scope of the third sector response to Covid-19 and to consider the impact of the response on the communities and on the third sector organisations.

The research also explored the co-ordinating structure and processes to understand what worked and why and to provide lessons for the partners which could inform the future.

The methodology

The findings of the research are based on interviews with a sample of third sector organisations involved in the response, and with key stakeholders involved in the co-ordination of the response.

We reviewed information, minutes of meetings and reports which were produced by partner organisations.

It is important to recognise that the research has not been able to produce a data set showing the activities and outputs delivered by the community and the third sector response to Covid-19. While information has been collected by individual organisations to record their activities during the crisis, organisations have collected different data and so it is not possible to aggregate data across the sector. It should also be noted that for those in the frontline of the relief effort, many of which were entirely volunteer-run organisations, data collection was not to the fore.

The purpose of the interviews was not to gather quantitative data on activities and outputs during the pandemic, but to gain a broader understanding of the how the third sector responded, and to explore how the co-ordinating infrastructure enabled the third sector response, with a view to understanding the issues and challenges and the learning for the future.

It is important to note that while the interview programme with third sector organisations was extensive, the findings are based on interviews with only a sample of organisations and may not represent the experience of every organisation in Falkirk. We invited 28 third sector organisations to participate. 20 responded to the invitation to participate.

We have used examples and case studies throughout the document. This is not intended to single out particular organisations as examples of good practice, but rather to provide practical examples for demonstration purposes.

Structure of the report

There are three key sections of the report.

- **Delivering the emergency response** – this section reviews the activities and impact of those third sector organisations directly involved in the delivery of the emergency response – those delivering services to ensure that people in Falkirk had access to food, medicines and essential supplies.
- **Supporting people in the community** – this section reviews the role of the third sector organisations that deliver services to support vulnerable people in the community. It demonstrates how third sector organisations adapted their service models to continue to provide support to their service users, but also flexed their delivery to meet the increased levels of need and fill gaps in provision left by contraction of other services.
- **The learning from the enabling approach** – this section summarises the impact of the enabling approach and the learning for partners about their role in enabling.

Background information

This short chapter provides an overview of the infrastructure which supported the third sector response. This is provided as context for readers who are unfamiliar with the 'Falkirk Approach'.

Overview

The Scottish Government tasked local Resilience Partnerships with the duty to set up local responses to ensure that people, in particular those most at risk (shielding) had access to food and essentials during the crisis.

Falkirk Council and partners did not take a 'top down' approach to delivering services to meet the emergency response but worked in partnership with the community and third sector organisations which were developing responses to meet the needs of their communities.

The partners took an enabling role, setting up the infrastructure which supported and enabled the community/third sector organisations and underpinned the co-ordination of the diverse range of services provided.

However, the frontline delivery of key services - the access to food, medicines and essential services - was carried by community and third sector organisations.

The infrastructure

Key elements of the enabling infrastructure included:

The Support for People Service

The Council set up the 'Support for People' (SFP) service in response to the request from the Scottish Government. The Scottish Government's requirement for Humanitarian Assistance Centres was focused on meeting the needs for access to medicine, food and basic supplies of those people most at risk from Covid-19 (those in the shielding category).

Falkirk Council extended the remit of the Support for People service to provide access to food/medicine and essential services for all people affected by Covid-19, but with those in the shielding category a priority.

The service was implemented in two days (launched on March 25th) and staffed by a team of 60 Council staff working from home.

The service was proactive and succeeded in contacting approximately 7,000 people on the shielding list to check on their welfare and find out what services they needed.

There was a widely advertised telephone line (and web form) which operated initially 7 days a week to take requests for information and for help.

The SFP service operated as a triage system for enquiries, identifying the services required and routing the referrals to the relevant provider.

The Co-ordinating Group

A Co-ordinating Group was set up to co-ordinate the response. The group consisted of officers from the Council, HSCP, CVS Falkirk and two third sector organisations. The Co-ordinating Group was critical to the development and delivery of the response:

- supporting development of the SFP service
 - developing protocols to respond to the different levels of need

- co-ordinating the delivery of services on the ground
 - supporting and enabling the development of the 'supply' of services on the ground to meet the needs.

Covid-19 Emergency Food Project

In response to the massive increase in demand for food and at a time when third sector organisations were experiencing scarcity in supply, Falkirk Council set up an Emergency Food Project to secure a reliable supply of food and essential non-food products.

Falkirk Council negotiated bulk supply of food/essential goods from a supermarket chain and set up three Emergency Community Food Hubs (one in each locality) which took in bulk supplies from the supermarket chain and from Fareshare (food procured by the Scottish Government). Food was then distributed out to the third sector organisations who were delivering emergency food supplies in the communities.

The Emergency Food Project was co-ordinated by Falkirk Council, Community Learning and Development (CLD). From a standing start, CLD staff operationalised the project in less than two weeks (started 6th of April 2020).

A total of 21 third sector organisations across Falkirk were involved in providing emergency food.

Delivering the emergency response

During the lockdown period, Falkirk's third sector responded with incredible speed and commitment to meet the needs of people in their communities.

This chapter reviews the activity those third sector organisations directly involved in the delivery of the emergency response - delivering services to ensure that people in Falkirk had access to food, medicines and essential supplies.

Review of the third sector response

Speed of response

The speed at which the third sector responded to the Covid19 was remarkable. Recognising the impact of Covid19 on their communities, many community-based and third sector organisations had been gearing up in the period prior to the lockdown and had already started to develop services to support older and more vulnerable people in the community.

Many organisations were taking a 'leap of faith' in that they started to deliver services before they had secured funding and before any of the emergency funding measures had been put in place. The earliest responses relied on the financial and human resources of the local organisations, their ability to mobilise volunteers and on their local connections and their ability to harness the resources within the community - gathering donations from local people and businesses, collecting food from restaurants which were being forced to close - to provide food for those in need.

"The voluntary sector fed Falkirk for the first two weeks"

Scale of the response

The scale of the response to Covid-19 from communities was unprecedented. In total, there were 56 third sector organisations listed on the Support for People Directory. These organisations offered services including emergency food, hot meals delivery, shopping and prescription collections, emotional support, health support, befriending, rights information and advice.

The emergency response was delivered by a range of third sector organisations which varied in size, capacity and core function. The breadth of organisations involved included volunteer run community-based organisations, local charities, larger third sector service providers and social enterprises.

Alongside the response from existing community and voluntary sector organisations, the Covid-19 crisis elicited responses from individuals who recognised the challenges that their communities were going to face and wanted to do something to help.

While some individuals wanted to volunteer with existing organisations, others saw gaps in their own communities and wanted to develop new capacity to meet the needs. CVS Falkirk provided dedicated advice and support and developed innovative approaches which got new organisations up and running in a very short time. In the space of two weeks, there were three new community-based organisations delivering services in their areas.

Falkirk Council CLD provided practical support to new and existing organisations to develop and scale up their capacity to deliver emergency food.

Scope of the emergency response

The most immediate need which was identified by the communities and through the Support for People service was access to food (66% of the requests for support to the SFP line were for food).

By early April, there were over 20 third sector organisations providing access to food across the three localities in Falkirk.

The third sector organisations were diverse in scale and capacity and developed different approaches to meeting needs in their area. Many did not have staff and were entirely run by volunteers.

- Some were existing food projects (pantries, foodbanks, etc) which scaled up to meet the increased demand for food
- Some were existing third sector organisations that expanded their role and services in response to the Covid 19 crisis
- There were also new organisations that were set up in response to the emergency which had never provided food before.

While access to food was a priority for third sector organisations involved in the emergency response, organisations developed different approaches and services:

Some of the organisations extended their provision to include hot food/ready cooked food.

- In some areas, third sector organisations harnessed the skills and resources of local hotels who prepared cooked meals which were distributed to people to supplement food parcels.
- In other areas, local volunteers were cooking food/preparing hot meals in community kitchens or at home for distribution in the community.

Some food providers were also involved in distributing school lunches (through their teams of volunteer drivers), and others in providing/supplementing lunches for children and their families.

Many organisations developed delivery services, using volunteers to distribute food to people in the community.

In some areas the emergency response organisations became a key mechanism for getting information and resources out to vulnerable people, e.g. information on other services and recipe cards to make nutritious meals were included in food parcels.

Many of the organisations involved in the emergency response developed new and additional activities to respond to the needs of the communities they served:

- Some organisation provided activity packs children or activity booklets for adults aimed at addressing boredom.
- Some organisations set up services specifically aimed at addressing social isolation: some provided regular telephone calls (care calls) to isolated people in the community, others offered telephone befriending and mental health peer support.
- In several areas, the emergency response organisations collected donated clothes and toys for families in need.
- One organisation made up and delivered hygiene and activity packs to elderly and isolated people in the community.
- In one area a volunteer set up a library - books were collected and then quarantined and redistributed along with food and shopping parcels

While some of the emergency response organisations also offered shopping/prescription pick-ups in their local area, the Co-ordinating Group had identified that there was a need

for this service on a Falkirk-wide basis to address the needs of people who had limited access to food because they couldn't go out shopping as a result of shielding or vulnerability (i.e. people who could afford to buy shopping)

- Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) was engaged to provide a backbone service for shopping/picking up prescriptions. This provided a Falkirk-wide service, ensuring that referrals for vulnerable individuals could be met safely.
- As demand for this service grew, Safebase stepped in to provide additional capacity.
- Stenhousemuir Football Club was already providing this service in Stenhousemuir/Denny.

Impact of the third sector response

It is not possible to quantify all of the activity and outputs delivered by third sector organisations involved in delivery of the emergency response.

However, we have provided six case studies (see Appendix 2) which demonstrate the scope of activities delivered by six different organisations involved in the delivery of the emergency response. The case studies also provide data on the outputs delivered and examples of the impact.

Additionally, data from the Emergency Food Project provides a snapshot which demonstrates the number of households which were being supported with emergency food provision (but note that these figures only represent the scale of food provided through the Emergency Food Project and will underestimate the total number of households supported over the period.)

There were 21 third sector organisations directly involved in the provision of food through the Emergency Food Project

- The Emergency Food Project provided food for 15,953 households (from April 6th and August 31st).
- At the peak of demand, (end May 2020) 1055 households received emergency food in one week.
- From June to end August, the numbers of households requiring food fluctuated between 700 and 800 with an average of 773 households per week.

The total cost of the food provided through the Emergency Food Project was **£192,310**.

Falkirk Council provided an additional £78,000 from the Food Fund (Scottish Government Allocation) to support food providers to improve supply of fresh food.

As noted, this data underestimates the total number of households supported, as third sector organisations were already supporting people prior to the development of the Emergency Food Project, using their traditional sources of supply plus increased donations, and food from closing restaurants.

Many of the organisations also levered funding for food provision from the Scottish Government Emergency Funding and other emergency funds which contributed to food provision as well as to delivery of additional services. (See Appendix 1 for total funding levered into third sector organisations in Falkirk.)

Beyond food

While the emergency response focused on delivering essential services - access to food, medicines etc - third sector organisations developed a range of additional services to address the emerging needs in their communities.

Additionally, by developing relationships with those who were receiving food and other services (through care calls, garden gate visits etc), organisations were able to identify other needs and refer people into other services.

- Data collected by Falkirk Council CLD showed that 16 of the 21 organisations involved in delivering emergency food had signposted people to other services and support.
- This included signposting people to the SFP line, to welfare benefits and debt advice, health and wellbeing support, domestic abuse services, drug and alcohol services, and to adult support and protection services.

Summary and learning

Third sector organisations involved in delivering the emergency response demonstrated an incredible feat of commitment, sustained energy and resourcefulness to scale up their operations to meet the needs of people in their communities.

They demonstrated their strong local connections and capacity to harness the resources in their own communities – enabling volunteers, local businesses and individuals to contribute their effort and resources to ensure that food, medicines and access to essential supplies were provided in communities.

Their local knowledge and connections gave them the capacity to reach into the community and provide support to people who may not otherwise have been reached.

While the emergency response was food-led, most organisations had a 'beyond food approach' and responded to a range of needs that they identified in communities, either directly by providing additional support and services themselves, or by linking people with other services and support.

By funding and supporting local organisations to scale up, the approach adopted by partners in Falkirk built the capacity of local organisations and ensured that the approach did not fund 'food delivery' but rather a food-led approach to supporting communities.

While some Local Authority areas commissioned large national organisations with no links to the community to deliver food to vulnerable people, the approach in Falkirk has delivered added value through building the capacity of the community organisations but also building the links and connections within communities and the links between local organisations which will sustain beyond the period of the crisis.

The speed and scale of the response inevitably meant that there were some practical challenges:

- some issues were identified with the quality and suitability of the food being distributed
- some concerns were raised that the food being delivered was of poor nutritional value.

The scale and scope of the response also meant that there were some practical challenges in the co-ordination. The front-line services were delivered by over 20 organisations, each with different capacity, experience, resources and approaches.

However, despite these challenges, third sector organisations demonstrated incredible commitment, creativity and resilience in rising to the challenge of meeting need for food, medicines and essential supplies during the Covid 19 crisis period.

Critical success factors

While the commitment, resourcefulness and energy of the third sector organisations involved in the delivery of the emergency response are of course at the heart of the success, this section explores the factors which enabled, supported and co-ordinated the approach.

Coordination of the response

The critical success factors in the co-ordination of the emergency response were:

- **The Support for People Line**

The Support for People Line was pivotal in the co-ordination of the services. The SFP line created a central portal for access to services, a triage system to identify and match needs to services

- The service was proactive and succeeded in contacting approximately 7,000 people on the shielding list to check on their welfare and find out what support they needed.
- The contact centre provided a centralised portal for requests for services.
- The SFP services triaged the calls, identifying needs and signposting and referring people to the appropriate service.

SFP received over 6,927 calls/requests for support in the period from 25 March to the end July.

Of that number, 4,836 requests required information or advice, but a further 2,091 people required support (translated to 2,336 requests for support as some people need more than one service).

The SFP service made 1,819 referrals on to services, of which 1,705 were referrals to third sector organisations (and 104 to statutory services).

- **Managing the supply of services to meet need**

CVS Falkirk carried out a mapping exercise to collate information on the range of services being offered by third sector organisations across Falkirk.

The mapping exercise was a key resource in the co-ordination of the response. It highlighted where there were gaps in provision and enabled CVS Falkirk to work with new and existing third sector organisations to upscale/extend provision to ensure access to food and essential services in each community.

The mapping exercise was the basis for the development of the Support for People Directory, which was used to direct requests for services to the appropriate provider. Falkirk Council CLD supplemented the mapping by researching information on other sources of help and support which was being offered by national and local businesses (practical information on home shopping /delivery/payment mechanisms etc) as well as offers of support from local businesses, many of whom made offers of services to support vulnerable people in the community.

A key strength in the co-ordination of the approach was that Falkirk developed services for shopping/prescription pick-ups. Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) was engaged to provide this service on a Falkirk wide basis. Falkirk therefore had a differentiated approach to meeting needs of those who needed access to food (help to get shopping) and those who needed emergency food as a result of poverty. This helped to reduce duplication and over-supply.

- The Support for People service made 1,705 referrals to third sector organisations
- Of this, RVS received 683 referrals to provide shopping/prescription pick-up services
- This accounted for 40% of all referrals made by the SFP service.

Partners provided support to third sector organisations

Partners were very quick to mobilise their own resources to support third sector organisations to upscale their capacity to deliver the emergency response.

- Falkirk Council and HSCP launched the Covid-19 Community Action Fund within three days. This fund enabled local organisations to access funding before any of the Scottish Government emergency funds had been developed.
- Partners made their physical resources available e.g. the Council provided premises so organisations could scale-up their food provision and used their procurement capacity to purchase fridges and freezers.
- Partners on the co-ordinating group used their influence to lever in other services /departments to support the third sector organisations (e.g. Environmental Health, Health Improvement).
 - NHS Forth Valley Health Improvement teams created food hygiene courses for organisations involved in food provision and produced recipe cards to distribute with shielding food boxes and emergency food parcels.
 - Environmental Health services supported food providers to develop and follow appropriate health and safety rules.
- CVS Falkirk had a team dedicated to supporting new organisations to set up and found innovative ways to get new organisations up and running in weeks rather than months. (See case study 2: Falkirk Responders/Westfield Park Community Centre)
- CVS Falkirk also supported organisations to apply for funding to support the delivery of new services.
- Falkirk Council CLD provided direct support to organisations involved in the emergency food project to build their capacity and scale up delivery.

Marshalling the volunteer offer

The Covid 19 crisis elicited an overwhelming public response.

- In the first three weeks 403 people registered with CVS Falkirk to volunteer.
- A further 914 individuals registered their interest through Scottish Government Ready Scotland/Scotland Cares campaign.

At the same time, local third sector organisations needed new volunteers to scale up their operation.

Recognising the challenge for small organisations of recruiting, managing and inducting new volunteers, CVS Falkirk set up a dedicated Covid-19 Response Volunteer Centre to recruit and screen volunteers, and reduce the barriers to engaging volunteers for local organisations. The Covid-19 Response Volunteer Centre also helped new and expanding organisations with policies/procedures/volunteer management.

CVS Falkirk signposted 249 volunteers to local opportunities, and directly placed 159 volunteers with local organisations

"A lot of our existing volunteers were older people – because of shielding that wiped out about 70% of our previous capacity. CVS was getting volunteers and ensuring they had the right skills which cut a lot of the admin for us."

CVS Falkirk administered a volunteer expense fund to reduce the burden of volunteer admin on third sector organisations:

- 18 organisations benefited, claiming expenses for 78 volunteers.
- Volunteer expenses (totalling nearly £28,000) show that volunteers covered 62,000 miles.

This was particularly helpful for organisations that recruited large numbers of new volunteers, and for volunteer-run organisations that did not have the administrative capacity to organise volunteer expenses.

"Brilliant – we wouldn't have been able to do it without that!"

(However, it should be noted that some organisations didn't register for the volunteer expenses scheme, so these figures do not represent the total number of volunteers involved in delivery of the emergency response.)

There was a challenge in managing the sheer volume of volunteer interest. In reality, the supply of potential volunteers was greater than the demand and the data from Ready Scotland did not get passed to CVS Falkirk until mid-April, by which time most of the organisations had geared up.

However, CVS Falkirk has successfully managed the relationships with those who registered an interest and has managed to sustain their interest in volunteering. As a result, there are **916 volunteers** who are still keen to get involved.

Securing food supply

The Council mobilised its resources quickly to secure a supply of food. The Emergency Food Project secured the supply of food at a time when third sector organisations were experiencing scarcity from their traditional sources (Fareshare, local shops and supermarkets, donations).

Issues and challenges

The scale, scope and speed of development of the emergency response inevitably led to some challenges at the operational level.

Co-ordination of the Food Network

There were over 20 organisations delivering emergency food across Falkirk. Organisations were very diverse in terms of capacity, scale and experience. Although all were focused on addressing the need for food, organisations worked autonomously, and their approaches were developed independently. While there are many examples of collaboration between food providers at the operational level (sharing resources when stocks were low etc) there were no structures in place to support collective action/collaborative approaches to address common problems.

CVS Falkirk set up a Food Network to bring together the organisations involved in the emergency food project to identify common problems and develop collaborative responses.

There was mixed buy-in from the food providers to the attempts to develop more collective approaches. While the attempt to foster a collaborative approach to the purchase of fresh produce resulted in the development of the Social Grocer, the network struggled with collective decision making and to develop further collaborative approaches.

This has highlighted a gap in the infrastructure. There was no strong network / infrastructure to support organisations to develop collective approaches or enable collective decision making.

Data

The speed of development and focus on upscaling delivery capacity means that there has been a lesser focus on collecting data. As a result, it is difficult to fully quantify the activities and outputs delivered by the third sector.

Transitioning from emergency provision to recovery

As lockdown restrictions began to be eased, the 'need' for food was changing and partners began to consider the transition toward recovery.

There were challenges for some of the organisations around transitioning from the provision of 'emergency relief' towards a different approach to food provision which was about addressing the longer-term issues of food poverty.

Targeting

The organisations involved in delivering food have been very successful at scaling up delivery capacity, but there were some challenges around targeting:

- identifying and reaching the most vulnerable
- extent to which local organisations had been able to differentiate between food access and food poverty needs.

Information sharing

There is a need to better understand the drivers of food demand and the populations who are vulnerable, in order to inform future approaches and identify the other services which are needed to support sustainable communities.

However, there were challenges for some of the organisations involved in provision of food in gathering that information and sharing that intelligence with partners.

This has highlighted a need to build the capacity of the food network to be able to engage in the developmental process and the need to support the sector to develop more effective targeting.

Learning points for partners

Central co-ordination

The central infrastructure developed by the partners was successful in providing over-all co-ordination - ensuring access to essential services across all three localities in Falkirk and that there were services to meet differentiated needs.

In comparison, a review of third sector activity in Glasgow¹ during lockdown highlighted that a lack of central co-ordination resulted in duplication of food provision (several organisations providing food to the same people). The report also highlighted that the lack of a 'shopping service' had resulted in over-supply (i.e. people who could afford to buy food being provided with free food).

Challenges in co-ordination at the operational level

While the partners tried to engage the Food Network in developmental processes (collaborative approaches during the emergency response and developing longer-term approaches to food poverty), it was perhaps premature to expect a newly formed network of organisations at different stages of development and different contexts for involvement in food provision to be able to engage in collaborative decision making.

- Collaboration takes time and requires trust and respect.

¹ Beyond the Covid Crisis: Lessons from lockdown, Glasgow Third Sector Interface, September 2020.

- Organisations had different capacity and interest in developing collaborative approaches
 - Some of the organisations had developed specifically in response to the 'emergency' situation and were operating on a 'crisis relief' model.
 - Some of the organisations have less experience/understanding of food insecurity in the context of poverty and inequality.
 - Organisations operated autonomously and had less interest in a more strategic/Falkirk wide approach.

Building capacity for the next phase

In moving to the next stage, it would be useful to be able to gather appropriate data on outputs but also on the demographics of need and demand.

Partners should be cognisant of the capacity of organisations for data collection (many of the third sector organisation were volunteer run) and the context in which they are operating.

However, partners may wish to consider how they better support emergency response organisations to target the most vulnerable groups and support them to gather and share information about the drivers of food poverty to inform approaches to recovery/development of services to meet future needs.

Building capacity in the longer term

The challenges in co-ordination have highlighted a gap: There was no strong network / infrastructure to support organisations to develop collective approaches or enable collective decision making. Partners may wish to consider investment in third sector infrastructure in the longer term to build the capacity of individual organisations, and to build capacity for collective approaches which would improve co-ordination in future.

Other gaps in third sector infrastructure

The challenges in co-ordination also highlight another gap in third sector infrastructure in Falkirk – and an opportunity for the development of '**anchor organisations**' to coordinate community responses at the local/geographic level.

At the practical level, the lack of anchor organisations in Falkirk disadvantaged the area in terms of access to funding as The Supporting Communities Fund was distributed through Anchor Organisations

However, the value of anchor organisations, beyond their capacity for financial leverage is that they have the capacity to develop and coordinate community responses. Typically, they have strong links to their communities and can stimulate high levels of voluntary activity. They are well placed to spot the talent and opportunities in their areas and have the resources and creativity to nurture and exploit those.

Stenhousemuir Football Club demonstrated the role of an anchor organisation during the Covid 19 crisis. (Also see Case Study 3 for further details of the Stenhousemuir Football Club's community help initiative.)

Stenhousemuir Football Club demonstrated how a strong locally led organisation could harness local resources, could develop new initiatives based on knowledge of local needs, and support and co-ordinate other community-based activity in the area.

The Club secured small grants from the Falkirk Council, and from the Scottish Government emergency funds, which supported them to provide these essential services, but the Club had decided to deliver the initiative before any funding had been announced. It was a 'leap of faith' but demonstrates the importance of having strong, independent locally led organisations which have resources (financial reserves) and

the organisational capacity to manage and co-ordinate the efforts of volunteers and other local resources.

The Club also demonstrated the value of an 'anchor organisation' in providing a local infrastructure and support to enable local people to develop and deliver new initiatives (harnessing more volunteer skills and resources and further benefiting the community:

- libraries were shut and many people did not have the resources to buy book, so a volunteer set up a local lending library – using her own stock of books and donated books which were quarantined, then re-distributed.
- while the idea came from the volunteer, she wouldn't have been able to implement it without the resources of Stenhousemuir football club who provided premises and collected and distributed the books while they were delivering food.
- Another volunteer recognised that lots of people were spending more time in their gardens during lockdown and provided bedding plants from their own resources. These were distributed to families in need alongside food and meals which were being distributed by SFC.

Use of Council buildings and other assets

Although organisations who were part of the Emergency Food Project reported that they had been able to access Council buildings to expand their service provision, there are wider issues about the blanket closure of Council buildings. One local organisation (not part of the Emergency Food Project) which had been delivering a food project from a Council building was forced to stop providing food to local families when the Council building shut down. The partners should carry out an analysis of the supply of buildings, transport etc and consider how they can be better used to support communities to effectively tackle the next wave.

Supporting people in the community

While the emergency response focused on ensuring access to food, prescriptions and essential items, there is a raft of third sector organisations delivering other services to meet the needs of vulnerable people in the community.

As Council buildings shut and many health and social services were temporarily closed, access to these services was limited for many vulnerable people.

However, the majority of third sector organisations that deliver services to vulnerable people in the communities across Falkirk didn't close. Within days of the lockdown (and frequently within a day), they had adapted their service models and were continuing to provide support to meet the existing needs of their service users, to respond to the increased levels of need which were the direct result of lockdown, and to fill gaps in provision left by contraction of other services.

We interviewed a sample of organisations whose services support people with mental health issues, learning difficulties, people suffering from abuse, vulnerable families, vulnerable young people, people with disabilities, etc.

These findings are based on interviews with that sample and cannot hope to reflect the experiences of all third sector organisations in Falkirk. However, the findings highlight approaches and themes which are representative of the third sector response.

Review of the third sector support for people in the community

While the lockdown meant that most third sector organisations had to 'close their doors' and cease all normal activities for their services users, organisations made immediate plans to provide ongoing support to their services users in other ways.

The third sector approach to service delivery in response to the challenges of lockdown can be summarised by their commitment to their service users and an attitude which focused on **'what can we do'** rather than **'what can't we do'**.

As the key priority for most organisations was to continue to provide services for their clients, the majority of funded organisations did not furlough staff.

However, note that the decision to furlough staff was also frequently affected by funding issues. Where organisations were grant funded, they were able to maintain staff posts. Organisations dependant on generated income - those who generate income from room lets and cafes, etc, and those who generate income from contracts which are performance related suffered a drop in income 'overnight' which forced them to furlough staff.

Most third sector organisations already had the technology to enable them to move quickly to a 'working at home' model. In many cases, organisations were re-established in 'home offices' within a day or two.

The priority for most organisations was to find out how they could maintain contact with services users and what their immediate needs were.

"On the first day of lockdown we contacted every one of our service users to find out how we could keep in touch – who had access to the internet, who had a telephone – and what we could do for them."

"We developed a Covid-19 risk plan for every person."

The priorities were:

- to adapt service delivery to continue to meet needs of service users
- to address the immediate issue of social isolation that the cessation of activities/lockdown would have on people who were already socially isolated.

Adapting service delivery

The restrictions on mobility and face-to-face contact resulted in immediate development of telephone and on-line delivery methods.

Although some people/organisations reported that they struggled to learn new IT skills, the speed at which the sector responded was impressive.

For some organisations, the use of technology allowed them to directly transfer existing activities/services online:

- some started to deliver their existing training programmes online,
- some 'moved' group activities which had previously been held in person online,
- others found ways to carry out direct services like counselling/advice and intensive family support online,
- some switched to regular online 'check-ins' instead of group activities.

For many organisations, it was the first time they had considered using methods other than face-to-face contact to deliver services.

Immediate priorities were to ensure supported people had access to technology and to support them to use it safely.

"We all became IT trainers for a while."

Access to technology not only gave services users direct access to services, but also opportunities for contact with others (friends/family, etc.) to address isolation.

Although telephone/online delivery became the 'new normal,' it's also important to point out that many third sector staff and volunteers were going out to check on service users through 'garden gate visits' and while delivering activity packs, technology or other essentials.

Combatting social isolation

Recognising that many service users were already socially isolated, and that lockdown would increase their isolation, organisations also prioritised setting up systems to ensure that service users had regular human contact.

Many organisations set up regular care calls or telephone befriending services, often using their existing volunteers to provide this service from home.

There were lots of examples of creative use of technology to address social isolation, giving people opportunities to connect with others and to participate in new activities, for example:

- quiz nights and Netflix parties for children and families,
- online cookery classes, with staff or volunteers delivering packs of food to participants to enable them to participate.

"The online stuff really worked – we got people learning new skills [young men learning cooking], we got people connecting with new people [from our services in other areas], and we got people taking leadership roles – teaching other people things on-line."

The high level of contact with services users also meant that organisations were able to identify other needs and support users to access other services and support.

Mobilising volunteer resources

Many of the models of service delivery in the third sector are based on volunteer-led support. While 'normal' volunteering activities stopped, the third sector mobilised its volunteers to provide care calls and telephone befriending to support vulnerable and isolated service users.

The capacity of the third sector mobilise volunteers and to 'flex' models of delivery to continue to support people in the community during the covid19 crisis had demonstrated the effectiveness of community led approaches.

Flexing models of delivery to support people in their communities

Strathcarron Hospice delivers the Compassionate Neighbours and Compassionate Communities projects (Living Right up to the End).

Through these projects, trained volunteers support people in the community through befriending, through one-to-one support and by delivering groups which help supported people to connect to other people and resources in the community.

Although the Covid19 crisis meant that all face-to-face contact through befriending and groups had to stop, there were over 150 trained volunteers who continued to provide support in the community. While the model of support changed, the volunteers continued to support members in the community during lockdown usually by telephone or digitally. People who attended the community-based groups were also 'connected' to each other by telephone so that they could maintain social contact and per support. Many of the volunteers (those not in the shielding category themselves) also provided vital services to the people they supported such as dropping off shopping, running errands and 'garden gate' chats.

Strathcarron Hospice also put together a tool kit to provide basic training/guidelines on how to support people in their own communities. The toolkit was shared with other volunteer-engaging organisations to promote the practice of supporting individuals at the neighbourhood level.

Extending services to new client groups

Third sector organisations that found themselves with under-used resources reached out to other organisations and re-directed their resources to support new client groups.

While some organisations saw an increase in demand for services, a surprising finding was that some supported people managed better than expected and demand for some services fell.

For example, one organisation delivering mental health support experienced a reduction in take-up of service from users, but also a reduction in new referrals to the service (driven by a drop-off in referrals as GPs, nurses, etc. were closed and not referring to services).

The organisation responded by using its skills and resources to support other groups who were directly affected by the covid-19 crisis, including front-line workers and volunteers involved in supporting vulnerable people, and key workers.

FDAMH, Falkirk's Mental Health Association

Training for front-line staff and volunteers

Staff and volunteers on the front-line were being exposed to levels of mental health problems among the people they were supporting that they had previously not encountered.

FDAMH designed and developed an online mental health awareness programme which was delivered to over 250 staff of voluntary and statutory sector partners (including staff from the SFP line).

This provided staff and volunteers on the front line with skills and techniques to meet needs among the people they were supporting, but also provided them with some self-care techniques (building resilience among the staff and volunteers).

Extending services to new client groups

FDAMH also reached out to offer counselling and support to new client groups affected by the crisis.

- FDAMH offered to provide support to front-line workers who were affected by the stress/trauma of responding to the crisis.
- FDAMH reached into the community and made connections with new groups and organisations. It has provided services for new client groups that had not previously accessed services.

Extending reach and remit to meet needs

New ways of working have also enabled deeper reach into communities and found organisations stretching their remits to meet emerging needs.

A youth organisation was doing 'garden gate visits' with vulnerable young people (as well as telephone support and online activities to address boredom and isolation). As a result of going to children's homes, project staff and volunteers also got the opportunity to check in with parents and families. As a result, the project has extended its reach to working with the families of the young people it supported.

- 26 families were supported further with weekly phone calls or visits from the project volunteers.
- Through the visits and more in-depth conversations, the project also identified the needs of families. Many were struggling financially, unable to purchase essential items and were anxious about utilities payments, etc.
- The project made a successful application to Children in Need and was able to provide vouchers to the families to purchase essential items. £3,300 of vouchers were distributed to families Falkirk.

Other organisations reported extending their remits to respond to new needs, sometimes as a result of contraction of other services.

Development of new services

Only a small number of organisations that we spoke to had developed entirely new services to address needs associated with Covid-19. Two new advice/support lines were developed. Both reported a lower take-up of services than originally anticipated.

Impact on the third sector

• Benefits of technology/new models of service delivery

Many organisations have been surprised by the effectiveness of online delivery. They recognise opportunities to reach more people and are looking to extend digital services in future.

Organisations also highlighted additional benefits of the forced adoption of technology:

- Networking and communication

The use of zoom for networking meetings has enabled very high levels of attendance at networking meetings.

- Governance/decision making

Organisations reported that getting their board 'onto zoom' had made it easier to organise board meetings, which enabled speedy decision making during the crisis.

- **Better knowledge/connections across the sector**

The levels sharing of information and resources means that many organisations are reporting better knowledge of existing resources (than prior to lockdown) and increased connections with other organisations.

- **Increased profile and levels of engagement with the community**

Some organisations saw an increase in demand or extension of their remits due to contraction of other services. As a result, organisations have also reached new people in the community and have developed new relationships with referral agencies/partners. Some reported that an unforeseen outcome was that they had increased their profile with the community and with partners.

- **Improved partnerships with statutory sector**

Where third sector organisations worked with/already had good relationships with statutory sector partners, they reported improved levels of partnership. The shared imperative to 'make things happen' gave greater impetus for change and resulted in speedier decision making and 'slimmed down' bureaucracy.

Summary and learning

The response demonstrated the instinctive approaches of values-driven third sector organisations to put the needs of the people and communities they supported at the centre of their decisions, and to work collaboratively and creatively to support them.

The speed of the response has demonstrated the and agility and adaptability of the sector. It also demonstrates the strength of leadership within the sector, as well the commitment of staff and volunteers

Organisations took a strategic response, identifying what others were doing and looking at where they could best use their resources and expertise to meet need.

Third sector organisations collaborated, shared approaches and co-ordinated their use of resources to extend the reach of services to meet the needs of the communities they served.

While we had anticipated that the third sector response to Covid-19 would result in the development of new services, the reality is that most organisations have not changed what they do but have changed how they do it.

Experience from other areas² suggests that a lack of information about 'who was doing what' resulted in many third sector organisations responding with best intent to meet the needs of their service users and communities, but that this resulted in duplication of services.

² Beyond the Covid Crisis: Lessons from lockdown, Glasgow Third Sector Interface

In Falkirk, third sector organisations did not rush to set up new services and avoided duplication. This is probably due to the high levels of co-ordination and partnership working across the third sector in Falkirk.

The third sector in Falkirk focused on:

- **Developing new ways to deliver services**

Organisations adapted speedily to 'working from home' but also adapted quickly and creatively to find new ways to continue to deliver existing services.

- **Speedy adaption of technology**

Although some organisations said that they struggled with IT, they responded with incredible speed and agility not only to using technology to work from home but to deliver services.

- **Addressing social isolation**

Organisations recognised the impact of lockdown on social isolation and mental health, added additional levels of contact (staff carrying out care calls, but also mobilising volunteers to carry out care calls and telephone befriending) and created opportunities for people to stay in contact with each other (access to technology, making sure people had phone credit, etc.).

- **Extending services to new client groups/filling gaps in provision**

Organisations flexed their remits and extended their services to work with client groups they hadn't previously worked with or to address new needs, sometimes as a result of contraction of other services.

Critical success factors

Focus on needs of supported people (values driven organisations)

Third sector organisations responded by putting the safety and needs of the people they supported at the core of their response.

Third sector leaders and staff showed remarkable energy and resilience, but also commitment to service users that went above and beyond the normal call of duty.

"We were taking calls at all hours, in the evening, because that's when people needed the support."

Strategic leadership - 'staying in lane'

Organisations did not rush to set up new services. However, third sector organisations were agile and 'moved in to fill gaps' and meet additional needs. This was done in a co-ordinated way. Organisations contributed where they had expertise and resources to offer but did not try to do everything. As a result, they avoided duplication and maximised the use of resources to meet needs

Co-ordination and partnership working

Respondents reported that information and communication underpinned co-ordination and partnership working at the local level.

The role of CVS Falkirk was pivotal in producing information, but also in developing processes to enable the sector to communicate and share information. There was a high level of engagement in the Covid19 Response Forum set up by CVS Falkirk.

At the strategic level, the information enabled third sector organisations to make decisions about their own strategic priorities during lockdown.

"When I went to the first forum, I realised that others were doing emergency food provision, so that meant that we could focus on social isolation."

At the operational level, the information resources enabled third sector organisations to access support for vulnerable people.

"They did really well, pulling information on lots of community support together – I felt really well-informed – that meant we knew where to get practical support, for our users – we knew where they could get emergency food, and we knew what other services we could get for them."

Funding

Access to 'emergency' funding has been important to service providers to purchase technology for services users to enable them to transfer to online delivery models.

Some have accessed emergency funding to purchase technology and to fund activity packs, etc. for service users.

However, probably the key to sustaining the levels of support to the community has been the flexibility of funders. Funding partners have honoured funding agreements even though services (as originally planned) have not been delivered. Statutory funders, trusts, and charitable funders have offered complete flexibility to respond to need at the local level.

While access to funding and flexibility in the use of funding has clearly been an enabler, it is important to recognise that there have been significant challenges for organisations that generate income (from trading and contract income). While emergency funds such as the Resilience Fund have provided some support, the uncertainty about future activity (and therefore income) means that the sustainability of some of these organisations is in jeopardy.

"Without the Resilience funding we wouldn't have been able to keep the staff on."

A strong Third Sector Interface (TSI)

The third sector response was supported by strong and proactive leadership by CVS Falkirk.

The strategy for supporting the sector recognised two key elements in supporting the third sector response, and the staff team was redeployed into two teams:

- Volunteer Team - marshalling and managing upsurge in interest from people who wanted to help (volunteers)
- Community Response Team focused on building the capacity of new and existing organisations to respond, with staff dedicated to different localities

CVS Falkirk played a critical role in enabling the co-ordination of the sector's response. In the week before lockdown, it had already set up the Covid-19 Response Forum. It also developed an Information Hub which provided the sector with:

- mapping templates identifying all of the community/third sector services responses and resources in each area/community
- information about funding opportunities
- a library of resources, guidance and support information.

Third sector organisations reported that access to information and communication were critical to partnership working and co-ordination of activity.

"The CVS really upped their game – good leadership - they were co-ordinating this stuff at a time when it looked like nobody else was. They streamlined the

information out to the sector – they made it easy to see what was happening, accessible information about funding.....”

CVS Falkirk provided dedicated support to help organisations lever as much funding as possible from the Scottish Government Emergency funds and from trusts and charitable funders.

Additionally, CVS Falkirk levered in a further £100,000 into Falkirk through the Supporting the Community Fund which would not otherwise have been made available to local organisations

- this was an important source of funding as it funded 3 months running costs for third sector organisations involved in delivering the response

CVS Falkirk also worked proactively to maximise local organisations’ access to the Small Business Grant Fund:

- a total of £290,000 was levered into local 20 local organisations which supported the sustainability.

It is estimated that over £1,000,000 has been awarded directly to third sector organisations in Falkirk to enable them to deliver services related to Covid-19. See Appendix 1

Issues and challenges

Lack of communication and information from public sector

Many organisations contrasted the speed of response in the third sector and the levels of communication between the third sector with a lack of communication from the statutory partners in the early phase of lockdown.

There was no information about which services were operating or how to contact them. Council facilities and services closed. Organisations reported that the lack of information created a ‘vacuum’ around vulnerable people in the community.

“Everyone just disappeared for a few weeks for our clients.”

As a result, third sector were ‘filling the gaps’ and trying to meet needs that were out with their remit.

“People were coming to us because we were there. We answered the phones. [In the early phase] statutory services just weren’t answering the phone. People couldn’t get the services they needed. For the first couple of weeks, we couldn’t do our normal service - we ended up picking up everything.”

Technology

There was a slower adoption of technology among the staff of public sector service providers and a lack of a shared platform (the third sector used Zoom).

The barriers to sharing information (infrastructural/technological barriers) made joint working more difficult.

Third Sector organisations recognised the different constraints that affected the work practices of officers in public sector organisations, but there was a feeling that *“it did sometimes feel as if they were hiding behind protocol.”*

Learning points for partners

Value of the third sector

The approach has demonstrated the value of the third sector and of community led approaches to supporting people in the community.

Third sector organisations made a humble plea for greater recognition by the statutory sector.

The approach has highlighted:

- the scale and scope of services delivered by the third sector,
- the agility and adaptability of the sector,
- the strength of leadership within the sector, as well the commitment of staff and volunteers

Organisations took a strategic response, identifying what others were doing and looking at where they could best use their resources and expertise to meet need.

Many of the models of service delivery in the third sector are based on volunteer-led support. The capacity of the third sector to mobilise volunteers and to 'flex' models of delivery to continue to support people in the community during the covid19 crisis has demonstrated the effectiveness of community led approaches.

The role and value of third sector infrastructure

The third sector response was supported by a strong and pro-active Third Sector Interface. CVS Falkirk played a critical role in enabling the co-ordination of the sector's response.

The approach has demonstrated the importance of third sector infrastructure in building the capacity of the third sector, and in co-ordination of the third sector.

Sustainability of third sector organisations

Partners should be aware that organisations that generate income from trading activities (activities which had to stop) have been hit much harder by the crisis and this could affect sustainability of these organisations in the longer term.

Research shows that at a national level³ the sustainability of income generating third sector organisations is most at risk.

At the local level, there is also uncertainty for organisations that deliver contracted services for the Council (employability). As these contracts are paid on results, the ceasing of activity affected income streams.

There is uncertainty around the timing for re-starting contracted work and therefore about the level of income which can be generated this financial year.

Recognise the extent of the digital divide

The crisis period demonstrated the power of technology to transform service delivery. Falkirk Councils digital strategy already recognises the need to drive for further digitisation, but third sector organisations highlighted the extent of the digital divide. There is a need for further investment in technology and in support for vulnerable people to be able to use the technology.

³ The state of the sector: Covid19 and the Sector, Social Enterprise Scotland, September 2020

Learning from the enabling approach

What was the impact of the approach?

The approach has proven successful. It mobilised the resources of communities, third sector organisations, volunteers, and local businesses to ensure that food, medicines and essential supplies were provided to people in need in Falkirk during the Covid19 crisis.

However, the approach was not only successful in delivering essential services. By supporting local organisations to deliver these services, the approach adopted by partners in Falkirk did not fund 'food delivery' but rather a food-led approach to supporting communities. The approach has built the capacity of local organisations, increased community involvement and built the capacity and resilience of communities in Falkirk.

Increased access to support for vulnerable people in the community

The approach delivered more than food and essential services. Organisations involved in the delivery of the emergency response did not just deliver food and medicines but provided on-going support to vulnerable individuals, provided help and support directly but also connected vulnerable people to other services to meet their needs.

The approach has demonstrated the level of support that can be delivered by volunteers and the 'added value' of community led support approaches.

Increased engagement in the community and increased social capital

Third sector organisations harnessed the resources within communities to support people in the community. The frontline services were delivered to a large extent by volunteers, but also engaged local business and individuals. The approach increased the number of people who were contributing to their community and the ways that people are involved in their community.

Local people were providing support to other local people - the approach has increased connections between people in the community and connectedness within communities.

Increased the capacity of local organisations and communities

The approach has built the capacity of existing local organisations but also built new capacity in communities.

- New community-based organisations were set up to respond to the crisis, creating new capacity to provide support to the community over the longer term.
- Organisations have built their capacity to support their communities and identified new needs and new opportunities to develop services to meet those needs.

(See case studies at Appendix 2 for examples)

Highlighted the appetite for community involvement

Hundreds of new volunteers were involved in the frontline delivery of services - and many have continued their involvement.

The approach has demonstrated the appetite for community involvement. The public response demonstrated that people do want to be involved in their communities and are motivated by helping others.

CVS Falkirk set up a dedicated volunteer centre to marshal the response from individuals wanting to help.

- In the first three weeks 403 people registered with CVS Falkirk to volunteer
- A further 914 individuals registered their interest through Scottish Government Ready Scotland/Scotland Cares campaign

While the supply was greater than the demand (Ready Scotland data came through in April and most of the local third sector organisations had geared up by then) CVS Falkirk has successfully managed the 'over-supply' and has maintained positive engagement with **916 people** who are still interested in volunteering in future.

It is also interesting to note that people volunteered to do things, not to go to meetings!

Prior to the Covid19, the Council had been exploring ways to improve engagement with communities, and among the issues it was exploring was public apathy for involvement.⁴

The experience (backed Carnegie Trust research which shows that volunteering is the most effective for of public engagement)⁵ suggest a need to reconsider traditional 'community engagement' activities and consider more community led support models as vehicles for engagement.

Learning about the partners' role in the enabling approach

In a time of crisis and of great uncertainty, and against a backdrop of pressure for the statutory sector to 'lead' the response, Falkirk Council and its partners did not take a command and control approach but rather pursued an asset-based approach which recognised the strengths of communities and third sector organisations to reach those in need in communities and to deliver essential services. Partners saw their role to enable not take over.

This role required partners to work differently. It required partners to change what they did, but also how they worked with the third sector.

Trust

The Council and partners demonstrated trust in the Third Sector Interface – CVS Falkirk.

- Falkirk Council and partners engaged with the Third Sector Interface as a full partner in the co-creation and coordination of the approach.
- CVS Falkirk played a key role in liaison between the third sector and the partners to co-ordinate the approach.

Partners also trusted in the third sector to deliver services and supported and enabled the third sector organisations to scale up.

⁴ Enabled Communities - renewal following Covid19, Committee paper, October 2020, Falkirk Council

⁵ The Enabling State: The Carnegie Trust

- many people (44%) feel they have too little control over the public services they receive.
- Standard public sector approaches of inviting people to make a complaint or to attend a public meeting were seen as largely ineffective avenues to realising change.
- that volunteering is considered the most effective form of public engagement.

"it's amazing what trust does – it just created momentum. They [partners] put their trust in us, and let us get on with it"

Supporting and enabling the third sector response

Partners worked together to support and enable the third sector organisations to deliver the emergency response.

Partners provided access to funding and development support for local organisations, but also unlocked their own resources and acted quickly to unblock 'barriers' and broker solutions to challenges facing the third sector in the delivery of services.

This included the provision of physical resources such as buildings, using the Council's procurement capacity, and leveraging skills and support from other partners/departments to enable the third sector to deliver.

Co-ordination of the approach

The partners focused on the co-ordination of service delivery but left the delivery of services to the third sector. The Support for People service and the Co-ordinating Group were critical to the co-ordination of the emergency response.

Changes in practice

The enabling approach also produced changes in the way that partners traditionally worked. The drive to 'do whatever was needed to get it done' drove changes in processes – partners made quicker decisions and simplified procedures (reduction in red tape).

The level of partnership working required to deliver the emergency response has accelerated collaborative working practices:

- A significant factor in fostering collaborative working practice was the partners were actually working together to solve practical problems – they were not planning together.
- The solution to problems relied on finding whoever had the skills or resources to make it happen. As a result, there was blurring of the lines between statutory sector and third sector, and between professional and volunteer. This created a more level playing field for collaboration.
- The collective imperative to 'make it happen' meant that people stepped out of predetermined roles and organisational and status barriers were removed.
- The sense of facing unknown challenges together and of being 'all in this together' generated a clear sense of working together to address a shared problem but also engendered a greater tolerance. People were more willing to assume that others were operating with 'best intentions' which created trust and removed barriers to working together.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Funding summary

This table provides an estimate of the funding which was levered into third sector organisations through dedicated Covid19 emergency funds.

Note that this estimate is based on information published on funders' websites and will not represent all of the funding available to organisations or communities as:

- some regional/national third sector organisations made 'national' applications meaning the sums available in Falkirk cannot be tracked,
- some organisations raised funding from other independent trusts and charities (e.g., Children in Need Emergency Essentials Fund, Martin Lewis: My Coronavirus Fund) which have not published their awardees.

Note that not all of the funds directly supported new 'activity' associated with responding to Covid19, but rather at the sustainability of third sector organisations.

- The Resilience Fund was aimed at supporting the sustainability of organisations rather than new activity.
- The Small Business Grants Fund was also not linked to delivery of activity. Any small businesses of any description qualifying for Small Business Rates Relief (rateable value of less than £15,000) on the 11th of March 2020 were eligible.

Source	Amount	Number of awards	Scale of awards
Covid-19 Community Action Fund (Falkirk Council/HSCP)	£44,334	45	Small grants – most under £1,000
Scottish Government Funds: *Wellbeing Fund	£192,593	40	
Scottish Government: Supporting Communities Fund (3 Anchor organisations)	£155,600	CVS Falkirk: awarded £100K - distributed to 21 orgs. receiving <£4,500 Stenhousemuir: awarded £41,350 – distributed to 3 local orgs. Corra: awarded £12,250	
Foundation Scotland: RRR Fund	£79, 912	20	
Big Lottery Awards for All	£88,006	11	<£10K
Falkirk Food Fund (food purchase/social grocer)	£78,000		
Scottish Government: Resilience Fund	£203,655	16	Grants from £1K to £79K
Small Business Grant Fund: Administered by Falkirk Council	£290,000	20	6 grants of £25K, 14 grants of £10K
	£1,052,188		

* Excludes the £45,518 allocated to CVS Falkirk as part of the ringfenced TSI Fund

Note that some organisations received awards from multiple sources, so the number of awards is greater than the number of supported organisations.

Appendix 2: Case studies

Case study 1: Royal Voluntary Service (RVS)

RVS delivers 'Supporting your Recovery' an approach to addressing social isolation and health and wellbeing among older people which is based on volunteers providing direct support to individuals in the community, but also on helping them to connect to other people, activities and services in the community.

The service was about to start in Falkirk (funded by the HSCP) when the pandemic hit. RVS accelerated the start-up of the project to provide a Falkirk-wide response to meet the need for shopping/prescription pickup for vulnerable people identified through the SFP line.

What did RVS deliver

RVS provided the backbone service in shopping/collecting prescriptions for the most vulnerable people identified through the SFP service. RVS received 683 referrals from SFP.

RVS matched volunteers to people who needed services (collecting shopping and prescriptions) and also carried out care calls/wellbeing checks to ensure that supported people were safe and well and to find out if they had other needs.

97 volunteers (60 of whom were recruited directly in response to the crisis) were involved in delivering the services to individuals in the community.

The services that volunteers provided varied from 'one-off assistance' to providing longer term support to those requiring weekly food and medication deliveries and emotional support.

Volunteers also supported people to sort out practical problems such as housing issues, maintenance problems and household administration, but also signposted people to services to address mental health, addiction issues and domestic abuse.

As a result, vulnerable people have been getting regular support and access to other services.

Volunteers supported 748 households, providing 4,378 essential shopping and medication collections and deliveries, and carried out 7,095 'safe and well' checks to vulnerable people.

While it is impossible at this stage to quantify the impact of this service during the pandemic, examples of the impact on individual lives demonstrate the value of the service: an elderly man with diabetes (isolated with no family support) had previously struggled to self-manage his condition and had had repeated hospital admissions. With regular delivery of his medication, and someone 'checking in on him' on a regular basis, his health was better during the 'lockdown period,' and it was the longest period that he sustained without a hospital admission.

The emergency situation has uncovered /highlighted the level of needs in communities:

- RVS was continuing to support 150 people at the end of lockdown as there was no other support in place to meet their needs.

The approach demonstrated the capacity of communities to meet those needs:

- RVS recruited 60 new volunteers to deliver community-led support during the crisis, and
- one third of those volunteers have expressed interest in continuing to volunteer with RVS.

It has also demonstrated the capacity of the third sector in its ability to marshal and manage a vast volunteer effort (RVS co-ordinated delivery with only two paid staff), and highlighted the value of community-led approaches, in terms of cost of delivery and capacity to deliver health and wellbeing outcomes that contribute to the strategic objectives of the HSCP.

Case study 2: Falkirk Responders/Westfield Park Community Centre

New organisations were set up to respond to the crisis. These have resulted in sustainable capacity within the community.

A small group of individuals contacted CVS Falkirk to find out how they get involved in supporting their community. They were concerned about access to food in the community and wanted to help. They were an un-constituted group (three individuals), and they had no premises or funding.

CVS Falkirk matched the new group with an existing third sector organisation, Westfield Park Community Centre. The organisation has premises (the building had been closed due to Covid-19), organisational infrastructure (constituted organisation, bank account, and financial systems and procedures for receiving and paying out money) and experienced staff with development capacity.

The organisations worked in partnership:

- Westfield Park opened the building,
- the development staff at Westfield Park Community Centre used their skills to make funding applications and set up financial systems to 'hold' the funding on behalf of the new group,
- the new group, Falkirk Responders focused on the delivery of services to people in need in the community (providing food and a telephone befriending service).

Outcomes

CVS Falkirk enabled a new group of volunteers to 'get started' in a matter of weeks to provide support to the community.

Falkirk Responders provided:

- emergency food parcels and ready cooked meals
- children's packed lunch boxes
- baby foods and pet foods
- mental health self-management packs
- offers to do small errands – posting letters etc

The group also provided a 'listening ear' phone line which offered informal support for people who were suffering from social isolation and peer support for people suffering from mental health issues.

The new way of working also created new opportunities for Westfield Park Community Centre.

- It enabled Westfield Park to contribute its skills/resources to the emergency response.
- The new partnership gave Westfield Park new links with other organisations in Falkirk and with funders.

- It demonstrated different ways of working with other organisations.
- The food initiative brought new and different people from the community into the building, which has increased Westfield Park's connections and reach into the community
- It identified a need in the community (around food insecurity).

In recognition of the need to address food insecurity in the community, Westfield Park Community Centre has taken the decision to develop a longer term a food project.

They have developed a food pantry, which is now up and running. It is being delivered by 2 volunteers. The pantry currently provides access to food for 55 members from the local community.

Case study 3: Stenhousemuir Football Club

Stenhousemuir FC was the first organisation to set up a dedicated 'community help initiative' aimed at offering support those in their community affected by the pandemic.

While the organisation's core business is a professional Football Club, the Club has always had a strong connection to the community and a social purpose. It delivers a range of activities to support the wellbeing of the community – predominantly through engaging young people through sport and supporting health and wellbeing.

It is an example of an organisation that pivoted to respond to the need created by Covid-19. The impact has been that the organisation has recognised that it can play a bigger role in supporting the community and is developing longer term plans to meet need in the community.

When the Scottish Government announced on 13 March that football games were suspended, the directors took a speedy decision to develop a community help initiative.

With an initial vision to support the older and more vulnerable members of the community with shopping and errands, the Club had set up set up a 'helpline' run by a volunteer director in the week before lockdown.

From a relatively small start, with 20-30 volunteers supporting approximately 20-30 older people a day, the scale of the need escalated over the course of the pandemic.

The community initiative was supporting over 350 vulnerable households at the height of the pandemic and involved approximately 200 volunteers.

Services and support included:

- shopping and prescription deliveries to 120 elderly and at-risk households
 - a total 2,699 shopping trips/pickups were carried out,
- the delivery of over 900 school lunches a week to children qualifying for free school meals
 - 11,532 lunches were delivered in total
- producing 250 free home cooked meals a week
 - a total of 4,530 meals were delivered to vulnerable people in the community over the period),
- distributing a total of 1,504 food parcels over the period.

It is estimated that nearly 24,000 volunteer hours were given to support the community.

The Club not only used its own resources creatively (skills of directors, access to volunteers) but also marshalled other resources in the community.

- A local chef who provides catering for the Club cooked meals which were distributed to vulnerable families.
- Volunteers carried out care calls/telephone befriending to isolated people in the community (identified through the helpline).

The Club also supported other local initiatives to scale up their capacity.

- There is an existing Food Pantry in the area, KLSB Community Food Pantry. KLSB was delivering emergency food parcels in response to need in the community.
- Stenhousemuir Football Club did not duplicate the service provided by KLSB but supported KLSB to upscale their operation.
- SFC levered £5,000 of new funding into KLSB through the Supporting communities Fund (SFC was recognised as an anchor organisation and was invited to apply to the Supporting Communities Fund)
- SFC supported KLSB by accessing volunteers to increase capacity to deliver the food parcels.

Impact on SFC

The Community Support Initiative has increased the Club's connections in the community. Although the Club supported nearly 350 families (and was still providing services to nearly 100 households at the end of lockdown), the Club recognised that there are more people in the community that it didn't reach, and this has highlighted levels of unmet need in the community.

The Community Support Initiative has reinforced the Club's vision as a 'community resource' and its commitment to extend its role in the community.

Moving forward, the Club is looking to extend some of the services and activities which it provided through the Community Help Initiative. It has recognised on-going needs in the community and is preparing to:

- tackle social isolation/promote positive mental health in those affected by loneliness,
- bring people together to talk and form friendships through a Blether Together initiative.

Case study 4: Rainbow Muslim Women's Group

Rainbow Muslim Women's Group (RMWG) was established around 20 years ago predominantly as a social group for women from the Muslim community in and around Falkirk. It was constituted as a charity 3 years ago.

Prior to Covid-19 the group was providing a small foodbank, mainly supporting refugee families.

During the pandemic, the group wanted to ensure that nobody in the community was in need of food and scaled up their activities. By the end of the emergency project, the Muslim community accounted for only 30% of total referrals, with 70% coming from other vulnerable people in the community.

The group had around 50 volunteers in total, 20 of which were involved 'full-time' throughout the emergency period.

The RMWG not only responded to demand for emergency food in the area 7 days a week, but also supported other food providers by sharing resources.

RMWG was also supported by other local organisations – clothing which had been collected by Bo'ness Community Response was distributed by RMWG.

As a result, RMWG has better links and connections with other groups and organisations in the area.

The scale and scope of their services included:

- extending the reach of food provision into wider community
- donation of food and resources to Orchard Hotel, who made cooked meals for distribution
- distribution of cooked food to people in homeless units
- collecting donations and resources from local shops and businesses
- supporting other food providers with donations (Falkirk Responders)
- providing activity bags for children in the community
- responding to isolation and loneliness among older people
 - Elderly members of Carron Connections had been unable to meet during lockdown and were isolated in their own homes.
 - RMWG provided 64 'goody bags' and did 'socially distanced' chats at the door.
- delivered hygiene packs to all the residents at Strathcarron Hospice and to the resident at Castings House (supported housing for older people)
- taking a collection of toys which had been collected by The Unity Group, a charity in Edinburgh, and distributing it to families in need.

The group received support from CVS Falkirk and from the Council to scale up their operation:

- CVS Falkirk supported the group to identify funding sources and to apply for funding.
- Falkirk Council CLD staff provided support to help RMWG to expand their food provision and provided to access new premises to operate from – until that point, one of the volunteers had been storing donations in her living room!
- The Volunteer Expenses Fund (administered by CVS Falkirk) reduced the burden of admin on volunteers.

Case study 5: Braes Storehouse

Background

Braes Storehouse is a relatively new volunteer led foodbank (established August 2018). Families access support via referrals from local agencies. It is a relatively small foodbank, with capacity to support around 10 referrals at a time. Families are supported for a period of 6 weeks (which can be extended at request of referral agency).

In the first year of operation, Braes Storehouse supported 48 families:

- 5 required emergency food (over a weekend)
- 43 received food for 6-12 weeks.

Response to Covid 19

At the start of lockdown, the foodbank was inundated with referrals. At the same time, they faced challenges with food supply, as Fareshare food became scarce (excess from supermarket was scarce due to panic buying), and the foodbank was unable to bulk-buy at supermarkets as they faced the same restrictions in supermarkets as the public (restricted to buying only 3 of each item).

The foodbank put out a Facebook post asking the Braes community if they could all donate even 1 item and leave their donation at the local collection point. They were overwhelmed by the response from the community.

The local Post Office also set up a collection point for us in their shop and a 10-year-old girl set up yet another collection point for us in her garden! The Braes community really got involved.

However, at the point that demand for food was ramping up, the capacity of the foodbank was really limited. The foodbank operated from a very small building and due to social distancing restrictions, they couldn't bring volunteers into the foodbank. Additionally, volunteers who were themselves older/shielding could not offer support during lockdown. For the first 8 weeks, the foodbank was delivering food 6 days a week with only 2 volunteers.

Scaling up

The foodbank had to change how it operated in order to help as many households as possible.

- stopped the 6 week food delivery programme and started preparing substantial emergency food bags along with toiletries and household items every Wednesday, with top-ups offered every 2/3 weeks.
- Joined the Emergency Food Project and received food from Falkirk Council which provided food, toiletries and household items every. This extra food, especially the frozen food, enabled the foodbank to meet the increased demand for food.
- The foodbank continued to receive donations from the community at the 3 collection points.

The foodbank also secured funding from INEOS Community Grant and other funders which has allowed it to expand into new premises and to purchase new fridges/freezers. Another community-based group supported their efforts by fitting out the new foodbank premises

The additional space meant that volunteers could be reintroduced safely.

What did Braes Storehouse deliver?

The number and source of referrals shows the extent of demand.

In the entire year 2018-19, the first year of operation, Braes Storehouse had 48 referrals and supported 48 families.

In 2019-20, (year 2) Braes Storehouse has had 111 referrals, of which 80 were during the lockdown period (i.e. in response to Covid 19).

- 42 referrals came from the Support for People line alone.
- An increased number of referrals from other local groups and agencies

The number of agencies referring to Braes Storehouse also increased over the lockdown period.

As a result, the foodbank supported 80 households during lockdown and many of these households came back multiple times for top-ups.

Impact on the organisation

The impact of the pandemic is that Braes Storehouse has increased its profile (from being relatively unknown in the area it now has 452 local followers on Facebook) and has developed new connections with other local organisations and local businesses.

Braes Storehouse has also recruited new volunteers who are involved in the current operation of the foodbank, and they now also have a reserve list of volunteers who can be called upon to assist when demand for the foodbank is busier than usual e.g. Christmas.

Case Study 6: Camelon Community Hub

Camelon Community Hub is new organisation which had only started operating in early March 2020.

At the start of the pandemic, Camelon Community Hub recognised that the Covid 19 crisis would have a huge impact on access to food, especially for vulnerable people in the community.

Following an early meeting with CVS Falkirk, they realised there were no other foodbanks operating in the Camelon area so decided to create a foodbank to meet the needs of those individuals and families who were facing food poverty.

They also started a breakfast club for children in the local area, but the closure of schools as a result of the pandemic meant that the breakfast club was short-lived.

Harnessing the resources of the community

In the initial stages, and before any funding had been made available, Camelon Community Hub started the foodbank using the resources of the founders, of the local community and by harnessing the resources of local businesses.

They started by collecting food from shops and which were closing down (supported by Safebase who was collecting food from city centre shops and restaurants).

Local shops and the people in the community also rallied round with donations.

The founders of Camelon Community Hub were also using their own money to purchase additional food from shops to make up emergency food parcels.

Camelon Community Hub also used their connections in the business community to support the community:

- they were able to borrow fridges from local businesses to store the food.
- they also worked in partnership with two local hotels who prepared nearly 10,000 cooked meals over the lockdown period.

The initiative also engaged the local community in supporting those affected by food poverty:

- The local school was providing lunches for children, but many children couldn't go out to get them. With the help of volunteers from Camelon Juniors Football Club, the Hub started to deliver school meals to children every day.

- Even after the School stopped providing lunches, Camelon Community Hub continued to provide lunches for vulnerable children, and also provide breakfast foods for vulnerable children.
- Volunteers at the Hub prepared and delivered 1,000 lunches a week for children. Local people were doing home baking to supplement the lunches
- At one point, when Camelon Community Hub was running out of breakfast cereal for vulnerable children, they put a message out on their social media page – by the next day, people from the community had donated 200 boxes of cereal.

Support

- CVS Falkirk provided development support and helped Camelon Community Hub to apply for funding from the Scottish Government Emergency Funds.
- Falkirk Council provided access to food through the Emergency Food Project

Impact

Over the period of lockdown, Camelon Community Hub supported a total of 465 households. It provided:

- Approximately 10,000 meals, prepared and cooked by 2 local hoteliers
- At the peak of demand, Camelon Community Hub was providing 140 food packs per week to families in the area. As restrictions eased this number reduced, to around 60-80 families per week.
- Prepared and delivered 1,000 lunches a week for children.
- A volunteer cycled around the communities at Easter handing out chocolate and 800 Easter eggs to children.

In total Camelon Community Hub did over 4,000 deliveries of food over the lockdown period.

As the lockdown restrictions lifted, Camelon Community Hub started to support individuals and families to reduce their dependency on the emergency food service and helped them to access other services.

At an organisational level, Camelon Community Hub also looked to adapt and develop new services to meet the emerging needs in the community.

- As charity shops and the community tip were shut, Camelon Community Hub set up a donations hall to gather donations.
- Toys, clothes and furniture items were upcycled and made available to those in need.
- Camelon Community Hub supported the local Women's Aid with donations of clothes and toys (provided 100 children's packs)
- Camelon Community Hub also supported the Eid Celebrations in Falkirk.

The future

The involvement in the emergency response has built knowledge of local needs and built connections with the community and with other organisations and groups in the area.

Camelon Community Hub is now well embedded in the community and has plans to develop its support to the local community. The organisation has recently opened a charity shop in the area and is looking to link with other organisations to develop new initiatives to support the community.

Appendix 3: List of consultees

Kay Pearson	Barnardos
Gilly McWhirter	Bo'ness & Blackness Community Response Group
James Lawder	Braes Storehouse
Iain Goodall	Camelon Community Hub
Jennifer Sherlock, Debbie Jupp	Committed to Ending Abuse
Annette Tonner	Community Focus Scotland
Angela Smith	Corra
Jen Kerr	CVS Falkirk
Claire Bernard	CVS Falkirk
Victoria McRae	CVS Falkirk
Tariq Mamood	CVS Falkirk
Lynda Ross-Hale	Cyrenians
Duncan Hearsum	Dial a Journey
Laura McKenzie	Falkirk & Clackmannanshire Carers Centre
Kenny Gillespie	Falkirk Council
Sally Buchanan	Falkirk Council
Mark Meechan	Falkirk Council
Michelle Brown	Falkirk Council
Natalie Moore Young	Falkirk Council
Lesley McArthur	Falkirk HSCP
Angela Price	FDAMH
Martin Allen	Forth Valley Sensory Centre
Dave Bremner	Go Youth Trust
Claire Strong	Neighbourhood Networks
Rhonda Archibald	NHS Forth Valley
Samina Ali	Rainbow Muslim Women's group
Martin Kenny	RVS
Richard McLennan	Safebase
Jamie Swinney	Stenhousemuir Football Club
Susan High	Strathcarron Hospice
Margaret Pow	Westfield Park Community Centre