



COVID-19 Third Sector Response Forum
Wednesday 6th January 2021
3pm – 5pm
Zoom Meeting

Present:

Claire Bernard (CB) (Chairperson)	CVS Falkirk and District
Laura Jamieson (LJ) (Minute Taker)	CVS Falkirk and District
Scott Malcolm (SMA)	CVS Falkirk and District
Alan Grey (AG)	Forth Valley Migrant Support Network
Allan Robertson (AR)	Social Security Scotland
Angela Bradley (AB)	Kersiebank Community Project
Angela Smith (AS)	Corra Foundation – Dawson Centre
Anne Montgomery (AM)	Dennyloanhead Community Centre
Annette Tonner (AT)	Community Focus Scotland CIC / The Social Grocer CIC
Barry Jordan (BJ)	LGBT Youth Scotland
Chris Grant (CG)	AbilityNet
Claire Houston (CH)	NHS Forth Valley
Donald Johnston (DJ)	Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Emma Murray (EM)	Dates `n` Mates Falkirk
Eve Winters (EW)	CVS Falkirk
Fiona Beaton (FB)	Langlees Primary School / Langlees Food Initiative
Geoff Reid (GR)	SACRO Forth Valley
Gilly McWhirter (GM)	Bo`ness & Blackness Community Response
Hannah Gray (HG)	Strathcarron Hospice
Ian Dickson (ID)	Falkirk District Association for Mental Health (FDAMH)
James Bell (JB)	LGBT Youth Scotland
Jennifer Cochrane (JC)	ROOTS
John Gibson (JG)	Wellbeing Scotland
John McGhee (JM)	Scottish Seniors Computer Club
Julie Ryan (JR)	Forth Environment Link
Kelly Smith (KS)	Dates `n` Mates Falkirk
Lesley MacArthur (LM)	Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership
Liz Nolan (LN)	Aberlour
Lorraine Ferguson (LF)	Dennyloanhead Community Centre
Lynne Boslem (LB)	Tamfourhill Community Hub
Lynsey Hansford (LH)	CVS Falkirk and District
Maggie McAlpine (MMc)	Central Advocacy Partners
Mairi Wright (MW)	NHS Forth Valley
Maria Ferrari (MF)	Cyrenians
Mark Meehan (MMe)	Falkirk Council Community Learning and Development (CLD)



Martin Allen (MA)
Martin Kenny (MK)

Forth Valley Sensory Centre
Royal Voluntary Service Forth Valley

Meghan Hendrie (MH)

Central Scotland Regional Equality
Council (CSREC)

Mhairi MacDonald (MMac)

Community Focus Scotland CIC / The
Social Grocer CIC

Miranda Wilson (MW)

Falkirk Council

Ruth ? (R)

Falkirk Safebase

Samina Ali (SA)

Rainbow Muslim Women's Group

Sandra Lyon (SLy)

The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)
Scotland

Sarah McHardy (SMc)

Families Outside

Sharron Linton (SLin)

Symington Drive Residents' Association

Steven Litts (SLit)

Cyrenians

Susan Docherty (SD)

Falkirk and Clackmannanshire Carers
Centre

Susan High (SH)

Strathcarron Hospice

Vivienne Malcolm (VM)

Solicitors for Older People Scotland
(SOPS)

Winnie Delaney (WD)

Aberlour

[Unknown]

Supported LTF

1. Welcome and Introductions

CB introduced herself, welcomed forum members present and advised the meeting was recorded via zoom. Due to the number of attendees, introductions were made via the Zoom chat function.

2. Issues Experienced Over Festive Break

CB asked the forum about the kind of support they needed as a result of the most recent lockdown restrictions and the post-festive period. The majority of members agreed funding was a significant issue.

Many of the food providers attending identified that, another of their main issues had been emergency referrals for individuals and families outwith their operational area. They spoke of the strain this put on their supplies, especially as they did not want to turn anyone away (particularly during the holidays). Discussion also took place about a small number of individuals unfairly using these services, which disadvantages other users, and how this could be addressed.

2.1 Resources Available

CB highlighted the new [Winter Support Fund](#), closing Monday 11th January, and the reopened [Volunteer Winter Expenses Fund](#).



During this discussion, it was highlighted that many of the food providers present didn't have contact details for others. They spoke about how having this would have been helpful during the holidays, as they could then have passed on referrals to more appropriate, or closer, providers.

CVS Falkirk staff explained that there is information broken down by area on the CVS Falkirk [COVID-19 pages](#); members found this useful, but also thought it would be good to have this in one document.

LJ also highlighted that "food provider" is now a category on the new [online directory](#), and invited all members to add their information [via the website](#) if they had not already.

Action: CVS Falkirk team to create and share one document with food providers' organisation contact details; all providers present agreed.

AT then spoke about [The Social Grocer CIC](#), noting that they were able to provide "ambient" products in bulk and toiletries and cleaning supplies, as well as food. While the Social Grocer typically provides food boxes (which have been well-received by food providers), AT is also happy to buy in bulk and allow providers to make up their own boxes. However, it is essential that they are informed ahead of time of the amount of food provision required, due to restrictions as a result of panic buying (induced by lockdown and Brexit). Enquiries can be sent by email: info@thesocialgrocer.co.uk

Action: AT to send CB and SM information on the Social Grocer.

Action: SM and CB to disseminate this information to members.

AR highlighted the [Best Start grants](#) for individuals through Social Security Scotland, and said that if an individual or family's income has been affected due to COVID-19 or furlough, they recommend signing up for Universal Credit, as it opens up access to other support.

Members also mentioned the [CashFirst](#) initiative from the Independent Food Aid Network, and its "Worrying About Money?" guide for Falkirk frontline staff and volunteers, and those experiencing financial insecurity, to more easily identify and access appropriate financial support and advice. The guide is available to [view or download as a pdf](#) from the CVS Falkirk website.

CB also spoke about the Community Link Workers (CLWs) available in each area:

- Central CLW (based at FDAMH): Chris Hardman, [FDAMH website](#), phone: 07889809875, email: chris.hardman@fdamh.org.uk
- West CLW (at Strathcarron Hospice): Donna Laidlaw, phone: 07815680755, email: fv.strathcarron@nhs.scot



- East CLW (at Cyrenians): Carl Storah, phone: 07960434908, email: CarlStorah@cyrenians.scot

2.2 Requests for Technology

Some food providers had also received requests for help repairing or replacing broken laptops, etc; they had been unsure how to source these. A number of members offered help in this area, including:

- AbilityNet
- Scottish Seniors Computer Club
- Families Outside, for anyone affected by imprisonment, as they may be able to help with technology or other funding for white goods
- Aberlour:
 - [Urgent Assistance Fund](#): LN noted that the fund is still open, though due to the rise in domestic violence cases they have prioritised these instances, and can only supply technology like phones and laptops where safety is an issue; however, applications for utilities (including white goods and internet bills) are rarely rejected, and have a quick turnaround of close to 72 hours. These grants do not affect any benefits received, and any member of the meeting will be accepted as a sponsor organisation. Those looking for further information can contact WD by email: winnie.delaney@aberlour.org.uk
 - [Get Help With Tech](#): WD mentioned the new UK Government initiative, where many of the UK's mobile and internet providers have pledged to provide an increase in mobile data for families with school aged children; this is available throughout the UK, and more providers are expected to join.

3. Volunteering Support

Some food providers noted they may need support recruiting volunteer drivers, depending on uptake in their services during lockdown. Both ROOTS and Falkirk Safebase offered their support in this, as did CB and LH on behalf of CVS Falkirk's volunteering team.

LH encouraged anyone needing volunteers to reach out, and she will work to match them with people who can help; contact LH by email: lynsey.hansford@cvsfalkirk.org.uk

CB informed members that Stirlingshire Voluntary Enterprise had requested help from Forth Valley Voluntary Sector Group in clearing paths and pavements in bad weather, and noted that this was something CVS Falkirk may also look into. Discussion took place around whether this could be something for young people to get involved with, possibly with an intergenerational angle.

LJ noted that Falkirk Council had published their gritting map for the winter weather, and added the link to the chat. The gritters' routes currently only



include main roads and bus routes, and is available on the Falkirk Council website:

- [gritting page](#)
- [gritting map](#)

3.1 Support for Volunteers

Food providers also raised that their volunteer drivers delivering parcels were sometimes struggling with the stories they heard from the people they deliver to. CB passed to ID, who spoke about FDAMH's training for volunteers (which can be offered virtually to all a group's volunteers), both in how to deal with these interactions at the time, how refer people on to different support services, and how to protect their own mental health.

FDAMH would be happy to run this training again, especially for new volunteers.

4. Other Concerns

Online: AG expressed concern about the amount of resources which are only available online right now due to COVID-19, as while this can make materials more accessible, it can also be a barrier for many, including those without internet access, those who aren't comfortable with technology or online, and those whose first language isn't English.

CB acknowledged this point, noted it had been raised to different partners, and that, while initiatives like Connecting Scotland are great, they simply won't be useful for everyone, and often take some time.

Fuel and Heating Poverty: Food providers highlighted that some of their increased numbers have come from people using their services who didn't need to during summer, because now they have had to prioritise their heating and electricity bills. In warmer weather, these bills are lower and they do not need support with food, but in winter, they cannot afford both and have to choose.

Discussion also took place around the impact of isolation, and on mental health in general, both at this time of year and due to the new lockdown restrictions.

Carers: SD then raised the point that unpaid carers often don't prioritise their own health and wellbeing, especially right now when they "don't want to bother the NHS", and are often suffering as a result. She informed members that many unpaid carers missed out on their usual respite over the holidays (with family members providing support) due to the restrictions; both she and CB spoke about how many carers will be approaching a year without respite now. Access to food and mobility is also a concern, due to the weather.



SD also spoke about confusion for carers regarding the vaccine; they are a priority group, but there has been many different, changing messages over a short period of time.

CB confirmed that CVS Falkirk will keep the Carers Centre as up to date regarding the vaccine as possible. Another member asked if volunteers and other third sector frontline workers (such as those running the food groups) would be categorised as a priority for the vaccine too; CB advised the CVS Falkirk team would find out, and keep people as updated as possible through the normal channels.

Action: CB to provide update on vaccine plan for Falkirk

5. Updates

5.1 Strathcarron Hospice: Connecting People Project

HG spoke about the Connecting People project, an offshoot of their befriending project adapted for COVID-19.

The project matches people together who would like to either phone each other or write to each other, and is open to everyone; people don't have to be associated with the Hospice to get involved. Matching is done based on people's interests, with people in their own neighbourhoods and communities. It is not a formal befriending volunteering project – the team have found that it is a lot more proactive to offer this help than to wait for people to come forward as needing help. It is also more mutual, based on people helping people, and beneficial for wellbeing of both parties.

Those looking to get involved, or for further information, should contact HG by email: Hannah.gray3@nhs.scot

5.2 AbilityNet

CG posted information about AbilityNet in the chat.

AbilityNet volunteers are still able to provide free tech help and training to anyone aged over 55 years old, or anyone with a disability, their carers and families. They also deliver free training and support to charities and not-for-profit organisations for staff, volunteers and clients (including those outwith their criteria), deliver free custom webinars, and are open to helping anyone they can.

For further information, please contact CG by email: chris.grant@abilitynet.org.uk

5.3 Dates 'n' Mates

CB invited KS to speak on the changes they had made to their service as a result of COVID-19.



Dates 'n' Mates has been able to open their service to across all of Scotland due to being completely online. Their normal local events and activities aim to provide social interaction for people with learning disabilities; as these have been postponed, they have moved to Zoom, though they have faced issues with many people not having access or knowledge.

They are now looking for volunteers to assist with the Zoom groups, as their participant numbers have increased exponentially. The team has been working on different outreach approaches, and while many people have been interested in joining the groups, there has been a barrier when waiting on references from those supporting those potential members.

They are also looking to work with other groups and organisations to organise speakers for their groups, and develop a more holistic approach to supporting their members.

While the majority of their activities are now online via Zoom, for those who struggle to engage this way, or cannot, Dates 'n' Mates offers phone support. KS noted this is an issue, and that they are often relying on parents to help people get involved.

For further information, please contact KS by email: kelly.smith@c-change.org.uk or find her on Facebook: Kellydnm.

5.4 LGBT Youth Scotland

BJ introduced JB as the new LGBTYS Forth Valley worker, who will be taking the lead for Falkirk and their [FK1INCLUDE](#) group, and informed members that LGBTYS is still running their services, though digitally, through their Discord servers and one to one support. He noted that during the last lockdown, they dealt with a rise in issues stemming from the fact that many LGBT young people had to return home (from studying, etc) and had to "go back in the closet", and they expected this to be the case again.

BJ also spoke about [LGBT History Month](#), which takes place every February, and [Purple Friday](#), the last Friday of February where people can show their support for LGBT communities by wearing purple; it is also LGBTYS' main awareness and fundraising day, where they encourage people to get involved, share pictures on social media, and "turn the map [of Scotland] purple". This year, the theme is "Pass the Torch", and while BJ acknowledged 2021's event would be very different, the team has planned some interesting activities, available at the link above.

5.5 Symington Drive Residents' Association



SLin introduced the association in the chat, and explained that they are a new group in Bainsford with a pantry due to open soon. They will also be offering free food parcels.

CB offered CVS Falkirk's support in anything they may need, as did other groups (including established food providers ROOTS, the Dennyloanhead Community Centre, Tamfourhill Community Hub, and Corra).

6. AOCB

6.1 COVID-19 Restrictions: Postcode Checker

LJ asked members if everyone is aware of Scottish Government's postcode checker, which will not only say what Tier that postcode is currently under, but what restrictions apply under that Tier. Some were not aware of the latter; the link was added to the chat.

Information on lockdown restrictions can be found on:

- the [Scottish Government](#) website
- the [Wellness in Winter](#) page (under "Scotland's Tier System and Restrictions")

6.2 Shielding Boxes

A member enquired if shielding boxes would be brought back for the new lockdown. LM was able to enquire during the meeting, and received a response: there are no plans to bring them back at the moment, though this may change depending on the ongoing situation.

6.3 Forum Meeting Times

CB and SM raised the possibility of changing the time of the forum meetings from afternoon to morning, or to different days; members fed back via the chat. To identify the best option, the CVS Falkirk team will send a Doodle Poll to members.

Action: CB and SM to send Doodle Poll to members with meeting times options.

6.4 MentiMeter Results

SM covered the results of the MentiMeter quiz from the last meeting. Key findings were:

- current priorities include communications, mental health, reducing isolation, and sharing resources and information
- preferred frequency is ever 4 weeks, or 6 – 8 weeks
- members' main take from the forums is the sharing of ideas and information, networking, and being able to speak to people with different areas of interest, different ideas, who they wouldn't normally encounter



**Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 20th, 3pm – 5pm
via Zoom**

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