



**COVID-19 Third Sector Response Forum**  
**Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2021**  
**3pm – 5pm**  
**Zoom Meeting**

**Present:**

Tariq Mahmood (TM) (Chairperson)  
Laura Jamieson (LJ) (Minute Taker)

CVS Falkirk and District  
CVS Falkirk and District

Alan Grey (AlG)

Forth Valley Migrant Support Network

Ania Sandland (ASa)

Outside the Box

Arlene Graham (ArG)

Roots

Barry Jordan (BJ)

LGBT Youth Scotland

Dave Cameron (DC)

Avonbridge Hall

Derek Allison (DA)

Falkirk Foundation

Jennifer Cochrane (JC)

Roots

Jessie-Anne Malcolm (JM)

NHS Forth Valley

Margaret Coutts (MC)

Falkirk and Central Scotland Samaritans

Maria Ferrari (MF)

Cyrenians

Martin Allen (MA)

Forth Valley Sensory Centre

Martin Kenny (MK)

Royal Voluntary Service Forth Valley

Sandra Lyon (SL)

The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) Scotland

Sara Burns (SB)

Forth Valley Sensory Centre

Vivienne Malcolm (VM)

Solicitors for Older People Scotland (SOPS)

**Apologies:**

Claire Bernard (CB)

CVS Falkirk and District

Jane Watt (JW)

Victim Support Scotland

Margaret McGowan (MM)

Scottish Care

Scott Malcolm (SM)

CVS Falkirk and District

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

TM introduced himself, welcomed forum members present and advised the meeting was recorded via Zoom. Introductions were made via the Zoom chat function.

**2. Review of Previous Minutes (Wednesday 26/5/2021)**

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the previous meeting, proposed by AlG and seconded by ASa.

**3. “Where You Are Right Now, and How Can We Help?”**

TM invited attendees to speak about where their group or organisation is in their journey to reopening, and any opportunities or challenges encountered, or support required from the CVS Falkirk team. He also asked them to speak about their experiences of the forum so far (including anything they would like to see continue, or change).

In response to attendees' comments, TM noted that the forum's driving force is its members, as a collective, and that its continuity came from their input.

### **3.1 Forth Valley Migrant Support Network (FVMSN)**

FVMSN has completely re-opened and is operating as normal, including their Denny outreach surgeries on Fridays. Their current focus is the EU Settlement Scheme and supporting people applying for settled status, with the deadline for applications being Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> June.

ALG would like to see the forum continue to facilitate the space and environment for groups to come together, and for them to support each other. Ideally, this would be through a blended approach, both online and in-person meetings, though ALG did highlight that he and others are able to attend more meetings held online easier.

### **3.2 Falkirk and Central Scotland Samaritans**

Falkirk Samaritans has started training volunteers again; they currently have 9 volunteers who have successfully completed the first part of their training, the "core" training, and are now being matched with mentors to help them gain the experience they will need going forward. They are looking forward to restarting outreach in communities, and are working on the relevant risk assessments for this.

MC also extended her and Samaritans' thanks to CB, SM and the entire CVS Falkirk team for the work they have done in keeping the local sector together to serve the community, connected and able to respond, during the pandemic.

### **3.3 Royal Voluntary Service Forth Valley**

RVS' services haven't changed throughout the pandemic (the only area which has had to adapt is their on-ward service, for obvious reasons, though they have moved to community support). They are still supporting people returning home from hospital, and older people experiencing isolation and loneliness, while trying to link these people back into their communities and other local services.

As a result, the forum is very important for MK and his team, enabling them to learn and pass on information on the services available, as well as networking with those services, and providing opportunities to collaborate and work in partnership. MK said he is delighted with the CVS Falkirk team and enjoys working with them, with a strong relationship.

### **3.4 Forth Valley Sensory Centre**

MA described the forum as really useful, as the Centre has made good links with different organisations, some of whom are now using the Centre, for various different things. One of the key things they have taken from the forum is that introduction.

The Centre was planning to reopen in August, and are pleased to have timed it well enough that they should be ready for Scottish Government's [planned lifting of restrictions](#) on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> August.

There are 2 new projects starting at the Centre:

- an employability project, focusing on potential employers and employees (from all age groups)



The project aims to support people the workplace, but also smaller employers around what they should be doing in terms of equality, and how they can employ people with sensory disabilities. This project is particularly geared towards smaller organisations, with only a few people and no HR department, helping them be more aware of the small changes they need to make to come inline with the Equality Act.

MA called this an “education process”, letting organisations know what’s available to support them, and trying to reduce any fear around employing people with disabilities, especially with the amount of assistive technology available. This should be starting over the next few weeks.

- their energy redress project, [“Making Sense of Climate Change”](#)

This aims to help people understand their own carbon footprint and impact on climate change, and help them save energy, with support around how to reduce their costs and access what’s available.

There are similarities to their previous Climate Challenge Fund project, which achieved the Warmer Home Discounts for a number of people, and helped access double-glazing, new boilers, insulation, for people not aware they were entitled to that help.

SB is the new Project Co-ordinator, and is happy to give talks and workshops to groups, virtually and hopefully in-person soon; groups interested, or with any questions, should contact SB by email: [saraburns@forthvalleysensorycentre.org](mailto:saraburns@forthvalleysensorycentre.org)

SB noted that just because the project has a specific focus doesn’t mean they can’t explore different possibilities. Her first meeting has already been very useful, and helpful in learning more about Forth Valley.

### 3.5 TCV Scotland

TCV is back to around 80% operational delivery; they are currently recruiting for voluntary [Volunteer Officers](#) (with applications closing at 5pm on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> June), CJS trainees, as well as full and part time positions.

### 3.6 Falkirk Foundation

This is DA’s first time attending the forum, and his second month in his new role as Chief Executive at Falkirk Foundation.

DA spoke about the foundation’s aims and activities, and noted that their work is about “so much more than football”, describing football as “the hook to keep people engaged”. They aim to build confidence and communication skills (along with others) in the people they support, and provide space for groups such as the Blind Club to meet, while also running their own projects and support groups around mental health and wellbeing, and employability.

These include partnering with [Time to Tackle](#), which provides a safe space for men over 16 years old to address their mental wellbeing, and [The Changing Room](#), which is a structured 12 week programme (funded by Movember) for men aged 30 – 64 years old to “tackle mental health on their home turf”.



DA also spoke about the [Off the Bench programme](#), which has reopened for referrals until Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> August, with space for 15 – 20 young people who have committed (or are likely to commit) offences, or engage in anti-social behaviour, to take part. MF highlighted that one of the people she supports has been taking part in Off the Bench, and has “blossomed” as a result; MF will be referring more of the young people she works with, as she thinks it is a really good programme.

DA hopes to learn more about the groups in Falkirk and how they can work together and learn from each other, and see the forum as a way to do that.

### **3.7 Roots**

Roots’ main development and focus during COVID-19 has been their foodbank. They are currently working to restart their other activities, including a summer programme funded by Get Into Summer, where they plan to promote health and wellbeing, and bring people together (particularly those from low-income families).

At the time of the meeting, Roots had been awarded funding and were waiting on confirmation that they could hold their summer programme – this has since been received, and they are now looking for [volunteers to help with the programme](#), which will be compliant with all current guidance and restrictions.

JC and ArG are happy to link in with everyone; for them, the forum allows them to link in with multiple other groups and bodies; they find it useful to hear what everyone else is doing and what’s relevant to their different areas of work.

They also spoke about the support they have received from CVS Falkirk around funding (and support around the restrictions and guidelines, which they feel hasn’t come from other agencies). This includes highlighting funds they weren’t aware of, and funds with simple or streamlined applications.

JC stressed that they find the forum to be a good way to link into other groups and organisations to support people – “and that’s how it should be. Working together as a group, not as individuals.”

### **3.8 Avonbridge Hall**

Avonbridge Hall is open for lets, but DC mentioned it is proving difficult to get people to complete risk assessments, or adhere to them. They do however have a choir which will be using their outside space.

They are also looking to work closer with Falkirk Council in the future, working on updates to the building. Currently, they are running outdoor summer activities and free lunches once a week throughout summer, with funding from Fairer Falkirk. Ideally, they would like to develop something for older people facing isolation in their rural area – possibly a lunch club once they can reopen the Hall fully.

For DC, the forum has been “great”, bringing awareness of other groups in the area and funding opportunities. (Specifically, DC was directed to the forum by the Fairer Falkirk team, and through support from the CVS Falkirk team was able to secure funding to keep their free food programme going, from January through to Easter, “which was just amazing”.) He also spoke about the moral



support available from the forum, especially for groups being run by volunteers: “it’s just good to see what people are managing to do with sometimes nothing, sometimes little, sometimes despite other stuff. It’s really good, it lifts your spirits.”

DC would also like to keep the forum going, and agrees with AIG that online is so much easier. He also suggested the possibility of groups working similarly could use the forum as an opportunity for physical workshop sessions or a conference, to visit each other’s area and share learning.

### **3.9 Cyrenians**

The café at Arnotdale House in Dollar Park has now reopened completely – other than this, Cyrenians’ services in Falkirk have operated as normal throughout the pandemic (if slightly adapted).

Cyrenians has also brought on new staff, with an Outreach Worker working specifically with people through justice services, and a Digital Inclusion Officer, who will be working closely with the Outreach Worker. These new posts reflect recent changes to the justice services.

MF described the forum as “invaluable”, and spoke about the different connections and interactions she had been able to make as a result of the forum. She did note that she misses the Safer Communities Forum, but wouldn’t like this forum to stop.

“The fact that we’re all able to be sitting here, and there’s people here from as wide as Bo’ness to Avonbridge to Bonnybridge, I think it’s amazing that we’re all able to sit down. It feels “pure Forth Valley” in its entirety, which is great.”

### **3.10 SOPS**

VM spoke about her experiences and perception of the forum as a “quasi-commercial” partner of the sector, praising the sector for the speed and quality of its response to the pandemic and lockdowns.

SOPS has been running throughout the pandemic – like others, they had to adapt, though due to the nature of their services, they had to get legal permission to adapt those services. The Later Life Centre in Falkirk has been open since July 2020, and their solicitors have been able to go into people’s homes (in accordance with guidance) as essential workers.

For VM, being involved with the sector and CVS Falkirk has been a privilege, but it has also helped their firm and their solicitors be more socially responsible, and helped the people they work with too. She also enjoys the forum, and thinks occasional in-person or blended meetings would be beneficial.

### **3.11 LGBT Youth Scotland**

There have been a number of changes, nationally, for LGBT Youth Scotland, and they are currently recruiting for a number of positions. Their services are all running, though online, via their Discord server. This includes their youth groups, community youth space, and online Moodle – they are working on content for this with young people, to complement their one to one work. They are also consulting with young people on meeting face to face again, though this involves a lot of work in order not to out anyone attending meetings or groups in person, and on their Coming Out Guides.

During June, there were around 200 [Pride Picnics](#) (in place of Pride events). Locally, BJ and his team are working closely with Police Scotland in Forth Valley to rebuild young people's relationship with the police, which is often strained regardless of whether they identify as LGBT+.

For BJ, online forum meetings work well, as he covers such a large area; these meetings give him an overview on Falkirk and Forth Valley, which he can then pass on to his team.

### **3.12 Outside the Box**

Outside the Box (OTB) is currently running 2 projects in Falkirk: Permission to Dream (peer support for people with poor mental health), and Falkirk Food Connections (peer support around food). Most groups are being held in-person again.

The Falkirk team is also looking at setting up a brand new, independent organisation, which will have a broad focus on wellbeing. The new organisation will take over current OTB projects in Falkirk and start new ones, all around peer support with mental health and wellbeing.

### **3.13 NHS Forth Valley**

JM described the forum (which she has been part of since the Community Care and Health Forum first met) as a "wonderful place to meet people and get involved in what's going on locally", which she plans to continue to attend.

[A new masterplan for Falkirk Community Hospital](#) is being developed, thanks to money released by Scottish Government to look at how existing services can be improved and developed. JM encouraged everyone to submit their views when the time comes for public input.

Additionally, JM highlighted that [rapid lateral flow device \(LFD\) test kits are now available from pharmacies](#) across Scotland for people without symptoms of COVID-19, and stressed the importance of testing even if you have no symptoms.

### **3.14 CVS Falkirk**

LJ shared that CB and SM were both looking at ways to integrate a blended meeting approach for those who could and would prefer to meet in-person, and that they were very keen to continue the forum. This could also possibly involve points from the Falkirk Plan; however, this depends on what the final plan looks like.

A further update on this will hopefully be available at the next meeting.

## **4. Funding**

### **4.1 SGN Gas Outage Funding**

TM spoke about funding available through SGN for the 5 communities affected by the December 2019 gas outage ([initial post](#) and [update](#)); CVS Falkirk is working closely with SGN to make sure this benefits the communities in ways that are suited to their needs.



At the moment, the current plans are to formulate a small grants programme of around £3,000, possibly awarded through a public voting similar to participatory budgeting; the CVS Falkirk team will keep members informed once this has been finalised.

#### **4.2 EGECL Community Fund**

Earl Gate Energy Centre Limited has launched their new Community Fund, to help as many third sector organisations in the local communities as possible.

The Community Fund is open to organisations in 5 specific Falkirk Council wards (Carse, Kinnaird and Tryst; Grangemouth; Falkirk North; Lower Braes; Bo'ness and Blackness), and aims to help organisations build stronger communities, reduce social isolation amongst vulnerable people, and strengthen community partnerships and local facilities.

Organisations can apply for up to £1,500.

The deadline for applications to the first round of funding is 5pm on Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> July; organisations can re-apply if they are unsuccessful in a previous round.

For further information, including full eligibility criteria, please visit the [CVS Falkirk](#) website.

#### **5. AOCB**

##### **5.1 UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

LJ shared a post on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund from the [Scottish Parliament Information Centre](#) (SPICe), after it was discussed at the previous meeting ([Item 7.4](#); linked for your convenience).

The post covers what the Shared Prosperity Fund will look like in Scotland, and how much funding will be available (amongst other points).

For further information, please visit the [SPICe](#) website.

##### **5.2 Vaccines and Vaccine Certificates**

ALG highlighted that the current vaccine certificates being issued in Scotland have not been very accessible, but especially for people whose first language is not English, as well as people who are digitally excluded, and those with reading and writing issues.

**Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> July, 3pm – 5pm  
via Zoom**

**[www.cvsfalkirk.org.uk](http://www.cvsfalkirk.org.uk) | 01324 692 000 | [info@cvsfalkirk.org.uk](mailto:info@cvsfalkirk.org.uk) | @CVSFalkirk**

CVS Falkirk and District is a Company Limited by Guarantee in Scotland No. SC085838 | Scottish Charity No. SC000312 |  
Registered office: Unit 6, Callendar Business Park, Callendar Road, Falkirk, FK1 1XR