

ELGC COV VS 23a

Ymchwiliad i COVID-19 a'i effaith ar y sector gwirfoddol

Inquiry into COVID-19 and its impact on the voluntary sector

Ymateb gan: Helpforce Cymru ac y CGGC

Response from: Helpforce Cymru and the WCVA



Additional evidence for the Senedd's Equality, local government and communities committee inquiry into Covid 19 and the voluntary sector

Case studies to illustrate cross sector and collaborative working during the pandemic

Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council (DVSC)

DVSC, one of the smallest of a network of County Voluntary Councils in Wales, responded quickly to Covid 19 by creating a #Covid19 Volunteer Community Response opportunity for local people to get involved and promoting this via the all Wales volunteering database www.Volunteering-Wales.net.

Discussion ensued with the County Council about what support volunteers could offer. DVSC set up and ran a referral system (using a call centre approach), to enable individuals to obtain help with shopping, prescription collection and other tasks.

Working jointly with the County Council, DVSC telephoned all registered volunteers to enlist their support. As a result of the website and telephone campaign, more than 440 people signed up as #Covid19 Volunteer community responders and 247 actively volunteered in their communities- either through DVSC's community support service or having been placed into roles within the council or local voluntary organisations.

Individual requests for support were received by the County Council and referred to DVSC. They were either matched with volunteers or referred on to local groups, including identified 'anchor organisations' who were already providing specialist or place based services for the wellbeing of the community.

Between April and June 2020, 738 referrals were received and responded to- 570 from Denbighshire County Council and 168 direct from the local community.

Warm Wales is one of DVSC's anchor partners. It received 217 referrals from DVSC and supported 235 residents through prescription collection, food delivery, befriending, dog walking and gardening. In this 3 month period, it enabled a total of 733 volunteer interventions, including also advice on energy efficiency, utility bills and tariff switching.

DVSC stepped up its ongoing support to local voluntary organisations by assisting with volunteer recruitment, providing information, emergency grants and free, digital sessions on a range of legal, employment, and HR topics, which are all available on YouTube. Trainings session on the use of health and wellbeing apps, good governance, managing change and fundraising were also on offer, as well as a suite of more than 60 low cost e-learning courses, available to individuals and groups.

With an eye to the future, DVSC has developed partnerships with a range of organisations to enable the ongoing delivery of activities beyond the pandemic.

‘These are organisations who can work with us to strengthen the eco-system of voluntary action and social enterprise, supporting recovery and developing community resilience through the Covid 19 pandemic and beyond’ said DVSC Chief Officer, Helen Wilkinson. ‘By working together, we can address community needs in a collaborative manner, ensuring that our collective impact is measurable, achievable and builds a legacy that goes beyond the immediate challenges’.

Key points;

- CVC role in local coordination – linking with local authority and community based organisations
- Pre-conditions: an all Wales database and third sector support infrastructure
- Building a legacy from the current crisis

Blood Bikes Wales

Blood bikers transport blood, x-rays, medication, breastmilk or equipment as required by the NHS, providing an efficient and free service for local delivery or further afield. Longer journeys involve a relay of volunteers from different Blood Biker groups.

Chairman , Nigel Ward describes the impact of Covid 19:

‘In March we had conversations with health boards about how we could best help in the forthcoming crisis. New protocols were introduced to reduce contact and cross-contamination.

‘April saw a doubling of the number of volunteer riders scheduled on the duty rota in most areas.

‘Our fleet has covered more than 44,000 miles in total but thanks to a generous donation of 2200 litres of fuel from BP, our fuel bill was half what it could have been’

‘May and June were record breaking months with 813 jobs completed in June. It just goes to show the additional demand the current situation is placing on the NHS and by extension to ourselves’

A [fuller version](#) of this case study is available

Key Points

- well established relationship between a volunteer led organisation and Health Boards
- Flexibility /adaptability of volunteer service adding resilience to cope with unexpected demands
- Funding and sustainability challenges

Flintshire Social Services

Flintshire County Council worked with Flintshire Local Voluntary Council (FLVC) to recruit a group of volunteers to provide supplementary support. FLVC recruited 200 volunteers to support community activities during the Covid crisis; 64 of these were allocated to the Council’s Social Services team.

The volunteers have provided vital support to the continued delivery of core social care services as well as undertaking activities specifically in response to the Covid 19 crisis. For example:

PPE delivery to Older People’s care homes and domiciliary care providers to support care provision; PPE, sanitising and cleaning packs to all schools in the County to support the reopening programme;

Grounds maintenance and decorating to support the opening of a new Older People’s Care home;

Support to Extra Care residents and to people in assisted living locations;
Supporting third sector group to provide shopping deliveries;

Support to the vulnerable children’s Shoebox Appeal distribution;
Telephone support to older and/or vulnerable residents to reduce loneliness and isolation

The partnership enabled an effective recruitment process, with FLVC having closer engagement with citizens, as well as a strong reputation and trust. Social Services were able to allocate a small, temporary team to oversee administrative processes and allocate volunteers to activities, and links with their Workforce Development Teams and HR teams were established to support these processes.

The Council’s Strategic Policy Advisor performed a key support role, providing a Council - wide view of volunteering and making links with other authorities to share best practice.

A strategy is being developed to transition to a more long term arrangement This will support future volunteering opportunities as well as any repeated health crisis.

Volunteers have developed new skills, achieved personal satisfaction and have recognised, with pride, their contribution in helping to support people in a time of crisis.

A care home staff member said 'The volunteer has been absolutely amazing thank you. She has given the residents and the staff a little boost, something to look forward to a few times a week. It helps the staff undertake some of those tasks that aren't getting done as regularly as normal. This has been a real positive thing to come out of this awful time.'

Key Points

- Close collaboration between council and CVC
- Seeking to embed volunteering within the local authority in the future

Prescriptions delivery in Swansea

Under normal circumstances pharmacies throughout Swansea offer a prescription delivery service for those unable to collect these for themselves. With so many people shielding during the lockdown, pharmacies became overwhelmed and unable to meet the demand for home deliveries of their prescriptions.

Swansea Council for Voluntary Services (SCVS) agreed to help by involving volunteers who had previously registered on the www.volunteering-wales.net website and were known to SCVS, and new volunteers who had some experience in health and care.

Swansea University volunteering organisation, Discovery, helped by processing DBS checks, as they already had experience of doing this remotely. New systems were developed for interviewing, checking and safeguarding volunteers so that large numbers could be processed quickly.

Volunteers were supplied with a name badge, hand sanitiser, gloves, face covering and instructions on keeping safe and observing social distancing.

Delivery requests were made using a pre-existing referral system based on GP cluster areas. SCVS staff received the requests and allocated them to individual volunteers.

About 900 deliveries have been made, with 45 volunteers active or in the process of becoming so.

Volunteers are in close contact with SCVS staff so that any issues can be quickly attended to. There were issues with prescriptions not being available, for example, or with items missing and communication with the patient and the pharmacy was needed until this could be rectified. Sometimes safeguarding concerns were reported and further support could then be put in place, such as linking with a volunteer to provide telephone befriending, support to access food and essentials or signposting to other local authority or third sector provision.

Charlotte, from SCVS says 'the doorstep contact has been crucial in keeping households safe when other agencies have either ceased or reduced their input'.

A volunteer said 'Already being a volunteer for SCVS for two years and being furloughed from work during this period, I wanted to try and do something to help my community. Not only to keep myself busy and give myself a break from the monotony of staying at home, but for my mental health and to help others... It has been rewarding to pick up prescriptions for others, saving them putting themselves at risk or queuing for long periods of time. Then to drop them off, knowing that they now have the medication that is vital for them and to see how grateful they are for the service I have provided. One lady even said I was an angel, which really moved me, I even cried when I went home and told my children, who are very proud of me.'

Key points

- Existing relationship with Discovery and a referral system for GPs already in place
- Availability of existing volunteers, with DBS checking already done
- Flexible and experienced staff team coordinate and support volunteers and liaison with pharmacies

Telephone support in Carmarthenshire

Just before lockdown, the local authority commissioning officer approached Carmarthenshire Association of Voluntary Services (CAVS) about setting up a telephone befriending service, as it did not have the capacity to do this. It was recognised that there would be many people shielding or self isolating for a considerable period with no or little contact with the outside world.

CAVS is the administrative partner for Carmarthenshire United Support Project (CUSP) 'Home from hospital, home not hospital', a partnership of 9 voluntary organisations committed to assisting people to live independently.

It was felt that a new telephone service would be a valuable addition to the existing activities of this project (transport, domiciliary care, crisis support, inter-generational arts project) and it was quickly set up.

Volunteers, and volunteer co-ordinators were recruited on www.Volunteering-Wales.net and by word of mouth through CUSP partners. Over 100 volunteers were quickly recruited, including nine coordinators. 'We were inundated with offers of interest; we had to take down the opportunity from the website after just 2 days' said Jackie Dorrian, Health and Social Care Co-ordinator at CAVS 'and the people who stepped forward are unbelievable, with such experience as well as commitment and time to offer. There was a broad spectrum, including nurses and other professional people. Even people who are themselves shielding have been willing to volunteer'.

‘We were a little surprised that there was not an influx of people requiring this service’ said Jackie ‘but many organisations had set up their own systems for keeping in touch with people. We have had many more volunteers than people requiring the service (63 to date). However, most of the volunteers are still with us, despite some of them not have yet been asked to call anyone.

‘Once the shielding requirement ends, we may find people becoming anxious about stepping outside the door and wanting to talk with someone.’

The service is for any age, not just for older people. It has helped younger people with anxiety or other mental health issues and has worked with homeless people and with those with issues relating to alcohol and substance misuse. Referrals are made by the local authority, Delta Wellbeing (local authority owned provider of technology related care and support) and by local voluntary organisations such as Age Cymru Dyfed, and Carers Trust.

Volunteers are allocated by CAVS staff on the basis of clients’ requirements. Some volunteers have recognised counselling skills, for example. Some clients just want someone to chat to, others have more complex needs. CAVS provides the necessary back up support for volunteers and through its contacts with CUSP partners and with the local Community Connector Plus, can access whatever support or information is required.

‘The project is here to stay, at least for a while’ said Jackie. What would happen if we stopped now?’

Key Points

- Local authority seeking support from third sector for what it did not have capacity to delivery
- A partnership of organisations already existed and enabled speedy development and delivery

Neath Port Talbot

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council put out a call out for volunteers to support their Safe and Well Service – a service for individuals who were shielding from the coronavirus and had no other means of support. Volunteer roles included shopping, prescription collection, daily errand runs and telephone social support.

Involvement from Neath Port Talbot CVS was sought at the very start. They developed a coordination plan and helped to put the necessary volunteering good practice in place to ensure volunteers were kept safe and supported in their volunteering roles. This included developing a volunteering policy, recruitment procedure, volunteer role descriptions, volunteer training and guidance handouts along with training for the staff members who would be managing the volunteers during this time.

Just over 500 volunteers expressed an interest in volunteering with the Safe and Well Service with approximately 35% taking up active volunteering roles.

Key points

- Council campaign and involvement of volunteers
- Support from CVC in developing volunteer scheme

Briton Ferry Covid-19 Volunteer Response

Instigated by the conductor of Llansawel bowls choir, a meeting in March brought together representatives of local voluntary groups, elected members, local businesses, social services and Neath Port Talbot County Voluntary Services. The purpose of meeting was to consider 'putting systems in place to help the most vulnerable members of our community. We can help take the strain off the NHS and make sure we stick together if the situation gets worse'.

Within 10 days a Briton Ferry Covid 10 support group was formed and every household received a flier outlining the support available: prescription collection, shopping, emergency food parcels, essential errands etc.

The Community Hub became a distribution hub where volunteers sorted and packed essential supplies, ready for contactless doorstep deliveries.

The foodbank is still operating from the Hub and provision has expanded to include a weekly fresh produce delivery service The Hub has joined the Fareshare Cymru scheme which enables the purchase and distribution of surplus food in the community.

The local elected member set up an online fundraising page which raised over £3,000. One voluntary organisation 'Me, myself and I', offered a telephone support service 'Let's keep talking' and another (Grow Cymru) is developing services and activities to support women's emotional and mental wellbeing during lockdown.

The local Boys and Girls Club have developed and distributed fun and educational activities for children and their families on a weekly basis

Regular live entertainment through social media 'Fix @Six', including singing, bingo, quizzes. These are an opportunity also to raise funds for the group.

At its peak almost 70 volunteers were supporting the most vulnerable in the community on a daily basis. Membership of the facebook groups stands at 4,160.

'The renewed sense of community spirit has cemented long lasting partnerships and indeed friendships between both individuals and community groups which aids in building a strong, safe and resilient community.'

Key points

- Local leaders bringing together the whole community, including elected representatives
- Pre existing activities and networks aligned to the common cause, as well as new support

Llandegla Community Shop

Llandegla Community Shop and café were established in 2017 due to the need in the area, and is run day to day by 35 volunteers and 2 part time paid staff. The nearest shopping town is Ruthin and it's a round trip of 18 miles.

Due to the pandemic the café needed to shut straight away. The shop reduced opening hours and adapted in accordance with government guidelines, with a one in, one out policy, use of hand sanitiser for customers hands and shop baskets. With the resulting loss of income was the possibility of having to use financial reserves to keep going.

A grant of £4,815, from the Clocaenog Forest Wind Farm Covid19 Fund, administered by Conwy Voluntary Services Council (CVSC), enabled them to continue to run the shop during the pandemic, providing essential supplies to the village and outlying areas, including home delivery to vulnerable and isolated individuals and a community prescription collection service.

Esyllt, from CVSC said 'It is an excellent example of how the community came together during hard times and gained more volunteers so that essential services could continue and new services could be established in response to need. The group is now looking to the future and how that can progress, adapt and sustain their services for the future.

Key points

- Small emergency grant enabled continuity of an essential rural voluntary service and development of new ways of working

Nanny biscuit

Nanny biscuit was created to bring together a series of local initiatives in Flintshire and create positive outcomes in mental health, isolation disability, ex-forces support, local ecology and age concern.

It is organised and run by volunteers and following an appeal for Covid 19 volunteers, has had huge numbers join up.

Even before lockdown they were supporting people to get food and essentials, by shopping. The demand grew so quickly within two weeks, that they decided to open a food distribution centre. This meant that large amounts of good value food could be sourced and distributed to large numbers of people throughout the county, without volunteers having to make multiple trips to the supermarket.

Free and subsidised food packs are now offered to vulnerable, shielding and self-isolating individuals (in addition to the standard paid-for packs for shielding individuals).

The project coordinates 'good deeds' such as pen pals letters to care homes, birthday presents for care home residents and is also organising socially distant music performances for care homes. It works with many local groups and organisations including Round Table, CREW, Volunteering Matters, Warm Wales and others.

Flintshire Local Voluntary Services (FLVC) has supported the project with governance and funding advice, safeguarding procedures, risk assessments, volunteer management systems and training.

'FLVC helped us to manage the fast establishing of such a large infrastructure of food distribution and volunteer management. They have provided a sounding board, kept us up to date with new issues and provided advice on shaping our offer as well as links to other groups and organisations'

Key points

- Volunteer initiative with essential support from CVC infrastructure
- Achieved large scale operation and impact quickly
- Preconditions - existing networks, committed individuals and common purpose were in place

Clwb Rygbi Nant Conwy

With approval from Welsh Rugby Union and the Board of Directors the paid staff rugby development officer (RDO) role was redefined in order to develop effective operational procedures for a rapid response multi-faceted service.

Volunteer club members were galvanised to provide a community support network across rural Conwy.

The RDO acted as programme coordinator and was the single point of contact. A publicity information campaign was undertaken using social media, posters and national radio on 'how to access support' and a spreadsheet developed for tracking tasks. Local authority town and community councils, Boots the chemist and GPs were informed of the service, its scope and availability

Volunteer club members were recruited as shoppers, delivery drivers, prescription collectors and befrienders as required.

Glesni Jones, Chair of Clwb Rygbi Nant Conwy says 'The club succeeded in mobilising help within 48 hours of the pandemic and so plugged a gap in services during early lockdown. It has relieved pressure on statutory services and lessened the stress faced by many individuals and families at a time of real need.

'The Club has co-ordinated its efforts by linking in with the Local Authority Covid community assistance project, which provided a central support point for people in need of help during

the lockdown. The Local Authority project enabled vulnerable individuals and families to access a central contact number and made referrals to volunteer support groups across the county.

‘Our club has facilities and a venue which could be a valuable asset as a base for coordinating emergency provision, as has been the case for a number of other community rugby clubs in Wales. We remain at the heart of the community and will continue to ensure we have a valuable and proactive role in assisting public services and the wider community in the face of any future crisis’ added Glesni.

Key issues

- local initiative coordinating with local authority provision and referral system