



Third Sector  
Chief Officers Group  
South Lanarkshire

# Above AND Beyond

The Third Sector in South Lanarkshire during COVID

# Every life impacted

***"I can't stress how great all your help has been, large and small, all is greatly appreciated"***

Community member

***"I can't thank you enough, when others seem to have disappeared, it's been a lifeline having you there for us"***

Parent

***"The support has been very beneficial to me through this difficult time in my life and to know that you are just a phone call away for support makes me feel more secure and have a more positive attitude"***

Community Member

**COVID 19 has impacted every life in South Lanarkshire.** Now over 6 months from the first lockdown date in March 2020 we are able to look back and reflect on the key learnings for those community and charity organisations. These are routinely called 'Third Sector' organisations however during the pandemic we believe that they became 'First Sector' and the first port of call for many in our communities.

This short report has been prepared through evidence gathered from the Chief Officers of some of the organisations with the help of VASLan our Third Sector Interface. The key learnings reflect the feedback from other partners including statutory services, and the aim of this report is to highlight the impact of the work that was carried out and inform strategic decisions going forward.

***"The involvement of communities and the third sector made a huge difference and the numbers of individuals supported, and the wider work around inequalities such as benefits and income maximisation checks, show the holistic approach taken."***

Lanarkshire LRP  
COVID Debrief



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# Third sector response

***“An exemplary success has been the unprecedented levels of support by members of the community and Third Sector/Voluntary groups working collectively alongside the Statutory Agencies to ensure support for the wider community.”***

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**1. An ability to respond quickly and effectively** evidenced by the change in patterns of working;

- Organisations quickly moved to remote working, whilst ensuring that those we worked with in our communities were still at the centre
- Existing connections were used to best effect and partnerships were strengthened
- New COVID- specific groups were set up overnight as local communities and volunteers stepped up to the challenge
- A new army of volunteers emerged with a heart for their communities
- The speed and agility of the third sector ensured that very difficult and challenging situations were alleviated
- Current network mechanisms such as Voluntary Action South Lanarkshire (VASLan) the Third Sector Chief Officers Group and the Third Sector Forum enabled a quick response.

Inequalities were addressed and those on the margins who were at most risk of being overlooked and excluded were included and embraced.

**2. Strong existing local connections** evidenced through frequent meetings with organisations and communities openly sharing information and intelligence to strengthen and add value to the work through collaborative working;

- The local knowledge and connections in each area enabled effective relief work;
- A strong community response was hugely effective in drawing communities together and ensuring that needs were met with local coordinating groups established such as the Clydesdale Community COVID Response Group led by Healthy Valleys;
- Encouraged the use of other emerging resources such as the SLC Community Well-being Helpline;
- The local organisations were well placed to utilise the COVID specific funding that became available;
- The trusting relationships with funders enabled a significant resource to be accessed for our communities.

***Without the existing connections, passion of the staff and volunteers, and the leverage of additional resources, the communities of South Lanarkshire would have suffered greatly.***

**125**

Over 125 organisations and community groups provided specific COVID support to local people

**£1.625m**

The Sector brought in £1.625m into our communities during the 6 months, Apr-Sep 2020

# Third sector response

***“The scale of engagement over an extended period has been phenomenal, more so in protecting the community and nurturing community networks that have the potential to add incredible value moving forward.”***

Lanarkshire LRP  
COVID Debrief

**3. An innovative approach, embracing challenges** evidenced by the scope and scale of the work undertaken which enabled a reach deep into our communities. The wide span over the sector demonstrated our agility and innovation.

- The strength of the ground level organisations was there when other services were not available.
- Staff responded by going above and beyond their remit e.g. redeploying staff, weekend and evening working, and operating outwith their specialisms; doing what needed to be done for our communities.
- It was easier to identify and help where needed as we were already in the community – the lockdown put everyone on a level playing field as needing help often had nothing to do with people’s financial circumstances.
- In light of the 600 suspended or significantly reduced services the gaps were filled as we responded to the needs in our community. Service delivery was significantly reduced as a result of the Coronavirus crisis due to, for example venue restrictions and staffing.

# Lessons learned

The foregoing three elements are key to our ability to respond to the needs in our community. These qualities have always been there, and in this crisis they were greatly highlighted.

There has been consensus across the sector that the qualities which exist need to be recognised and utilised.

We can bring flexibility, connections and innovation to the ongoing challenges that will be faced in our communities. Community representatives need to be at the table when planning occurs and decisions are being made.

**80**

80 new community response groups established

**2000**

Over 2000 people were ready and willing to volunteer in South Lanarkshire

# Our ask

As the current crisis has demonstrated, the speed and scale of response by community-focused organisations has been remarkable. This has been possible because we are from and of the communities we serve, giving us deep insights to the lives and needs of local people.

Our approach and way of working are part of the DNA of South Lanarkshire Third Sector organisations. Unfortunately, such work is not always recognised and rarely funded in any sort of sustainable way.

For the good of our communities we want to see systems change with a change of approach in commissioning and funding to enable the sector at a local level to be embraced fully as an equal partner.



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