



**November COVID-19 survey:
What charities learned**



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1. Introduction

Q8a Earlier you told us about how COVID-19 and the restrictions were affecting your charity. OSCR is keen to provide the charity sector with an opportunity to share its experiences, frustrations, and successes in response to the pandemic.

Please tell us what you have learned and we will share it anonymously with other charity sector support bodies and the Scottish Government.

2,548 charities participated in the November survey, of these 1583 charities completed Q8. Many charities took the opportunity to tell us what they had learned as they dealt with the challenges of COVID-19 and the restrictions. We told charities 'Your Voice Matters' and this part of the qualitative analysis is given entirely in their voices.

Most of what charities learned relates to how they were able to adapt and operate in the face of the pandemic and the restrictions that were in force, but they also learned things about their charity, their staff, their volunteers, their beneficiaries and their communities. What charities learned from confronting the impacts of the pandemic was not always straightforward or necessarily negative, for example

Beneficiaries

We learned how important we were and how much of a difference we made to the lives of families when the pandemic struck and our two key programmes were almost halted overnight. It probably took the arrival of the pandemic and for us to take a step back to realise how much of a difference we were making and how these programmes brought such a positive impact on our client group. We are now trying to accommodate a large number of clients who we had arrangements with in 2020 into our 2021 schedule.

Charity operations

We have learned that we can all work from home and save on office costs. We are able to involve more of our partners in meetings to share learning and develop the workforce that supports carers and young carers.

Public benefit











We learned the importance of working within the regulations to deliver some form of experience (we are an environmental education and conservation charity), and the wider wellbeing benefits of us having a presence 'on the ground' in regard to physical and mental wellbeing.

2. What some charities learned about adapting

Many charities learned to adapt fast and to keep adapting as restrictions changed and as different charities faced different challenges, this is what they said

- One can adapt to new circumstances very quickly. We moved from a face-to-face environment to a digital one in one week.
- Adaption has to be continuous, trying new online learning tools, being creative.
- Understanding the regulations was key to respond quickly in physical activities. How to safely deliver activities to keep our community engaged.
- Bigger organisations than us had to go through more loops to understand how to act safely but because of our more grass root approach we could put in place policies and adequate measures to act within days.
- Different charities will have different challenges, being adaptable in how we deliver has actually meant in some ways people achieving better outcomes than before.
- Remote working works.
- Allow more risk taking and creative thinking and solutions to be tested, thus expanding comfortable boundaries that were in place pre-covid.
- Adapted and changed the delivery of our service by offering click and collect and at one point we offered contactless delivery too.
- It has not been possible to allow our volunteers to fully return to their volunteering duties and that this has had a negative impact on their mental health.
- We need to be adaptable and imaginative. One example our fortnightly paired walks keep folk connected.
- You can keep a choir going virtually without people meeting.
- Positive effects that can be gained from a blend of office and home working.
- Take things one step at a time. Be flexible.
- Learn how to keep safe and learn about risk assessment.
- We connected with local school to begin a pen pal scheme with children to draw pictures to post to people as we are unable to function and achieve our aims and purposes fully providing support to older people.
- Adapted our model of practice for people living with long term health conditions.

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-  We have found that we can adapt the services we provide so that we can work remotely and still meet our client's needs.
-  We have learned to quickly adapt to ever changing information.
-  As Chairperson I have learned to delegate more.
-  We have learned to be more creative. We have moved to online services, along with CDs of services being sent out to those who wish them. There is regular communication with all through calls and letters. More offerings given directly. Our church now reaches people from further afield (eg France) and we are looking at how to use this technology moving forward but hard to plan. We have also created a prayer space in our garden for the community.
-  We have learned to think fast and outside the box to be able to adapt to government guidelines but still reach our service users.
-  We have learned to provide assistance when an [overseas] emergency appears. Everyone has learned to be much more flexible and to identify problems that would not normally be evident. The pandemic caused a huge amount of fear among our Africa families and the people were starving; they needed to be provided with food which was totally unbudgeted for and cost a lot of extra money.
-  We have learnt that we need to adapt in order to continue to meet our charitable objectives. We do Arts & Heritage events which were cancelled in 2020 and we expect to cancel in 2021 - we are exploring social media to meet our objectives.
-  It has been a perfect storm for the sector we support. For us we adapted fast to online delivery of our work and in the first six months worked more than ever in order to help influence policy, and respond to information and support needs.
-  The frustration of not knowing when we can return to our business model has had the effect of us adapting very quickly to new guidelines, planning what can be done to ensure staff, volunteers and customers are safe.
-  Agility and adaptability is required for any charity to continue to operate successfully in the near future.

3. What some charities learned about flexibility

A number of charities told us what they learned about the need for flexibility; and how essential it was in adapting and being able to respond to the pandemic restrictions both within charities and within the sector

- ☐ We have learned that a positive attitude among staff and trustees helps greatly, as does a willingness to be flexible and adapt to changing conditions.
- ☐ Flexibility really matters
- ☐ There was a great need for staff and volunteers to be flexible in their working patterns and in their job content.
- ☐ Try to follow the trend of directives from Government, give time to consider the implications, and act once the situation is clear for your organisation.
- ☐ The flexibility within the sector to meet needs as they emerge.
- ☐ That it is possible to find opportunities arising from necessity to change operations. Flexible working by staff given the space to explore new directions. Importance of marrying strategy to financial projections.
- ☐ That we can work remotely and do most things while the office is closed.
- ☐ To find easier ways to complete our work at less cost.
- ☐ Flexibility and a willingness to change to accept new rules.
- ☐ Flexibility of staff mindset is vital to adapting to any unknown situation, combined with a willingness to adapt and overcome
- ☐ The need to be flexible and quickly responsive to the changing position - especially as it changes very quickly
- ☐ The need to continually scan the horizon to see a threat and 'plan for the worst case scenario'. You can then act quickly to ensure all the resources you need are in place. Don't wait for Gov guidance or science - use your experience to assess the situation and act decisively while communicating actions required quickly and clearly. Use your instinct.
- ☐ That there are opportunities to diversify.
- ☐ Try follow the trend of directives from Government, give time to consider the implications, and act once the situation is clear for your organisation.
- ☐ It is more important than ever to plan for the unplanned. This requires a flexible approach and culture in order to make the charity as resilient as possible on the one hand and able to capture new opportunities that arise.
- ☐ We have learnt the true importance of strong relationships and being flexible, and being open and honest about where you can and cannot help out. It's difficult saying no, when you are accustomed to saying yes.
- ☐ Try follow the trend of directives from Government, give time to consider the implications, and act once the situation is clear for your organisation.

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- That it is possible to find opportunities arising from necessity to change operations. Flexible working by staff given the space to explore new directions. Importance of marrying strategy to financial projections.
- We have learned that we are more efficient when working flexibly and remotely. We are taking this on board in reviewing our HR policies. We have also learned that we have been agile and imaginative in adapting our delivery models. We are building on this going forward.

4. What some charities learned about communication

Several charities shared what they had learned about communication, the different ways of communicating are given elsewhere, this is more about the need for and impact of communication.






- We have learned it is important to keep in touch with service users and not depend on social media.
- It is important to engage with other local charities and our local authority to ensure a 'joined up thinking and doing' approach.
- Timely and clear communication is key.
- Communication is key - both internal (staff and committee) and especially with our customers (beneficiaries and the whole community).
- Listen to your service users
- The importance of maintaining clear communication with our members.
- The need to maintain good communication with volunteers - identity, motivation etc.
- The availability of clear and comprehensive advice and guidance is critical. All such information needs to be consistent and kept up to date (even Gov/Council sources have been inconsistent and/or out of date after changes are introduced).
- Communicate openly and more frequently with core/repeat donors to deepen engagement with them and ensure they remain aware of continuing operations and any additional areas where there is need for their support.

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-  We have learned a huge amount about communication poverty and inclusion via the pandemic and mitigating issues. We have learned the government can work quickly but also quickly gets tied in administrative knots following systems and processes. That accessible information and inclusive communication gets confused and neither is done through strategic and operational plans. In effect communication is implicit rather than explicit. Not to be confused with PR.
-  The importance of getting email contact details of our members so we can more easily keep in touch.
-  Face to face contacts are a must
-  We have learnt to keep in contact with parishioners by being sure that everyone is contacted regularly by phone. Our income has stayed steady as people have either sent in their church envelopes, paid standing orders or paid into the bank directly. We have all got to know each other much better.
-  We connected with other charities sharing and supporting each other.

5. What some charities learned staff and volunteers

Several charities told us what they learned about staff and volunteers, including the importance of keeping them safe

-  We learned how willing people are to volunteer to help with the emergency. We had up to 80 volunteers working on the project, so we had to learn how to organise them.
-  How to manage volunteers working while observing distancing.
-  Volunteers are torn between providing the community service and keeping themselves safe. We are completely volunteer managed and run a public facing organisation (library) and most of our volunteers are in vulnerable groups (mostly age related). We are now relying on a small core of trustees and volunteers but are managing to keep services going. Having a more diverse volunteer base, including younger people looking to increase their experience may be a higher priority in the future.
-  DO Thank all your volunteers regularly, especially the littlest and the least able.
-  DO remember to have fun, volunteering is hard work but life is meant to be enjoyable, and if you have fun, everyone will benefit, your volunteers will want to turn out on a cold winters night, your beneficiaries will bask in the warm atmosphere you created.

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- ☞ Ensure you consult and involve all staff, volunteers and trustees in decision making about making adaptations.
- ☞ We learned to make sure we are supporting the staff with their well-being with free therapy swaps and checking in phone calls. Despite that some members struggled to adapt to stress, families issues or were overwhelm with their own personal issues. We have been able to bring in new members who have built up resilience.
- ☞ Careful planning in operational issues and protecting health of all staff.
- ☞ Nobody in any organisation is immune from isolation or other mental health issues. People need to support and take care of those above and below them in the structure to stop the whole organisation crumbling.
- ☞ That staff groups can change and adapt if supported and guided well.
- ☞ We learned what was needed for personal protection for our staff and installed desk screens, sanitiser points, contactless thermometer check staff and visitors every day/time before entry.
- ☞ The need to provide more job security — we currently only have staff on commissions we need to become employers but that's a huge financial undertaking for us without stability and continuity.
- ☞ This is a critical period to support staff and likely to become even more so over the coming months. This requires a constant focus, effort and resource but the results are significant. Maintaining a clear focus on priorities (albeit adjusted for current circumstances) and ensuring the organisation remains aligned on these is more important than ever. Many supporters are finding things hard too - reflect this in your communications and wider marketing.
- ☞ We have learned that financial support for staffing and other costs must be in place to support viability for when this challenging time ends. Rebuilding a whole childcare sector would cost much more, than sustaining it through the hard times.
- ☞ Health and wellbeing is a constant issue and people go up and down affecting productivity and motivation.

6. What some charities learned about their beneficiaries

There were striking contrasts in what several charities told us they learned about their beneficiaries, about their needs, getting to know them better and their resilience.







- ☞ Keep going. Our beneficiaries need us.
- ☞ We have learned that our beneficiaries really have been forgotten and abandoned. Our charity supports adults with learning disabilities. Other than our own charity, no other organisation at all has done anything to try to help and support our young people and their families. They have in particular, been totally abandoned by our local authority. Families are struggling to cope and the mental health of our beneficiaries has been severely affected.
- ☞ It is frustrating not to be able to let our beneficiaries meet at an event but they need to be protected and they understand this. We have learned to be adaptable concerning our clients and try to provide for their wellbeing by talking and providing nourishing food for them, which has been successful.
- ☞ We have learned to be grateful for the understanding of our beneficiaries. Despite reducing fees and offering a reduced service, everyone is very supportive and encouraging.
- ☞ We have learned that those we support are flexible and have more resilience than we perhaps credited them with. But now that we are approaching winter, and we are 7 months in, people are really beginning to feel the effects on their mental and physical health.
- ☞ We have learned that during this time parents of the children we have are quite happy to have a slower pace of life and not be involved in every activity going, they are busy with everything else too. Also the extra cost involved in being a member is now being saved in a lot of cases and we feel we will have lost a lot of members after the pandemic is over.
- ☞ We have learned the value of knowing our beneficiaries well (in this case an island community) as a strong starting point for quick identification and response to existing and emerging need. This information only existed - in the detail that we really needed - because of our ongoing capital project which required extensive consultation.
- ☞ We have learned how important physical exercise is after a stroke to provide and support positive mental health. We have also learned how important social group gatherings are for building self-confidence, self-awareness and for fostering friendships. The lack of social interaction has proved the greatest challenge for every member of the group. We plan to resume social activities as soon as it is safe to do so.
- ☞ Some people are bearing the isolation well and others are failing in mental health- it is not easy to predict who will need the most help, but we must be alert and support when necessary.
- ☞ DO ask, and keep on asking, your beneficiaries for their needs

7. What some charities learned about their communities

Several charities shared what they had learned about their communities; the value of working together; recognising the reciprocal support that emerged between communities and charities; and the negative impact on the community of closed local authority venues.





- ☞ The community will step up and help, so foster an environment where folks will come forward with ideas and develop those ideas. Cut folks some slack sometimes!
- ☞ Working to support other local charities has enabled us to reach our community when we could not on our own. We can provide services online. Online services reach a wider audience than those held in our building.
- ☞ Community is important to keep connected.
- ☞ The value of community involvement and the importance of donations.
- ☞ We have learned that the third sector, particularly community orgs, were best placed to step up and respond to emerging needs with an emergency response (tackling food insecurity/isolation/digital issues) at the onset of the pandemic. We also learned that we aren't/haven't been/felt as valued as other 'key workers' despite working nonstop, having no days off, and just getting on with what was needed.
- ☞ The community will come together in difficult times to help others.
- ☞ As a community, we have grown stronger. As a Trust, we are becoming better recognised and have developed meaningful relationships with community members that without COVID would've taken us a lot longer.
- ☞ We would now recognise that regularly updating information about our ongoing capital project is a cornerstone of our community's resilience.
- ☞ The importance of culture and sport provision for community wellbeing is undervalued and not recognised.
- ☞ We have found that local people very much want to support local charities, even though we do not offer direct help for those hard-pressed by Covid; but we may be able to provide indirect help by providing something people enjoy.
- ☞ We learned to respond quickly to the needs of our community and to apply for and win grant support to pay for it.
- ☞ We have learned the power of partnerships and how we can get so much more done for the community when we link in with the right organisations. Key to this is trust, respect and picking partners with similar aims, objectives and ethics, so pick your partners carefully.

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-  It is important to engage with other local charities and our local authority to ensure a 'joined up thinking and doing' approach.
-  To learn from each other and try to support each other.
-  We have learned that we had not reached the majority of the community we work in before COVID-19. Since the pandemic started we have reached 4 times the amount of family's that need our help with food donations, children help and activities and family support and signposting. We have a large proportion of families with ASN children that need additional support that they do not get anywhere else.
-  How resilient our community is.
-  We have been amazed how generous local people have been with time and money. Our local supermarkets have been very helpful by collecting food for our food bank and giving donations. We have been grateful for support given by our local resilience team.
-  We have learned that the value of community venues must not be undervalued by local authorities who can under-fund them. Our charity is in complete limbo and has halted all activity owing to the non-availability of our community venue, which is owned by the local authority. The non-availability owing to pandemic restrictions has had a massive negative effect on individuals in the community - isolation, no social contact, no fitness groups, etc. Quality of life has been lost.

8. What some charities learned about resilience







Some charities shared what they had learned about being resilient in a pandemic: planning, adapting and financial management help but it also involves people.

-  We have learned it is important to be patient; flex your resources and stay aligned with the latest guidance and support opportunities.
-  Business planning including what if analyses are critical in understanding the effects on the organisation's financial position in the short, medium and longer term.
-  We have learned that we are over dependent on elderly and vulnerable volunteers and were not prepared to engage younger volunteers.
-  We have learned that we need to adapt to the situation and try to develop new ideas to try to ensure our long term sustainability. It is slightly frustrating not knowing what will happen long term but we understand how unpredictable the pandemic is.

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- Need for a diverse leadership team with different backgrounds and perspectives. We've decided to try and add to our Trustees to give us new direction and fresh impetus.
- We have learned that as a group we are resourceful, determined and supportive of each other. Our interconnectedness with other local groups and individuals has become stronger.
- We are a resilient organisation but have had to adapt our working practices.
- We have learned how quickly activity can cease. We have also learned it is about ascertaining what we can do and not about what we can't do.
- It is important to have an organisational crisis preparedness plan before an unforeseen circumstance such as COVID-19 or any other.
- We had to respond very quickly to something that we knew very little about and the time we had to get systems and processes in place to protect not only our volunteers but also our clients to ensure they still had access to our services was incredibly short, we certainly had to think on our feet and react very quickly. It has also shown us that we cannot prepare for every eventuality.
- We have learned that a positive attitude among staff and trustees helps greatly, as does a willingness to be flexible and adapt to changing conditions. For instance we agreed that frustrations were simply different challenges which could be overcome. While we could not deliver face to face activities we were able to increase our online beneficiaries.
- We have learned that inward looking church is not viable. Outward focussed church, concentrating on loving our neighbours is much more productive.
- This has been an unprecedented situation and one that we have not foreseen, let alone have planned for. We must now be prepared for similar national and international disasters and build in business resilience. As we are a relatively small charity that relies on local and tourist visitors to generate our income we are particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in visitor numbers.
- Don't over think. Just DO. Don't listen to doubters or perhaps, maybe's. DO ask, and keep on asking your funders for help. DO believe in yourself and your volunteers, if you lead with belief, they will believe also.
- Our experiences of Covid 19 has taught us to be vigilant during this difficult time. Our frustration is the uncertainty and untimely changing of the restrictions. However, we kept our spirit high to enable us go through this pandemic knowing that there is a green light at the end of the tunnel and expect to do better in months and years to come.
- It has been useful to have built up a substantial reserves in our unrestricted account, which has enabled us to keep all staff on full pay during the long furlough period. So we have learned to try to maintain this reserve by applying for additional unrestricted funding where possible.

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-  The fact that our charity is not functioning at the present time means that whilst income is lower, so is expenditure, leaving us in a similar financial position. The lesson of all this is to have a good 'business' plan and money put aside for a 'rainy day'.
-  Adhere to our Business Plan with adequate funding in advance.
-  We have learned it is important to be patient; flex your resources and stay aligned with the latest guidance and support opportunities.
-  We learned that a medium charity like ours and local authorities were not in a position to be as responsive as quickly as we should have been to address severe need in the community - it took a couple of months to stabilise financially and get funding in place to get covid response projects up and running. The reason people didn't starve was that small volunteer groups of furloughed people were formed and sprang into action, this really makes the case for 1. local mutual aid and 2. the public and third sectors working together to plan for future crises.
-  Whenever possible, saving for a rainy day is crucial.
-  We have learned that we cannot function under the various restrictions on travel and public meetings and it is only our past cautious approach to protecting our resources that has kept us afloat.

9. What some charities learned about going online

Many charities told us what they had learned about going digital and the benefits of being able to hold meetings and being able to deliver a variety of different types of services online; but digital exclusion was also mentioned.

-  We are able to work from home and learned to use online meeting platforms.
-  We learned to use of Zoom for meetings.
-  Without the technology to communicate online our charity would not have been able to function.
-  Our organisation has learnt the importance of communication through digital means. This was something that some of our Board Members were hesitant about using but are now committed to.
-  Use of online discussion and meetings has increased and made us more efficient. It has generated more dialogue between trustees.

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-  We have learned that we can all work from home and save on office costs. We are able to involve more of our partners in meetings to share learning and develop the workforce that supports carers and young carers.
-  We have accelerated our move to operating digitally. We have learned it is possible to hold our Trustee meetings remotely although we lose some of the personal contact, particularly when inducting new Trustees.
-  We have learned how we can reduce our carbon footprint and committee meeting expenses by having Zoom committee meetings.
-  How a crisis provides impetus for change which was being discussed but had not got buy in from management and staff especially in the provision of services from face to face to digital.
-  Make the use of technology accessible to all volunteers and trustees to enable fluid communication, planning and manage activities remotely.
-  Home and remote working well and for decades many of us have wasted our own time and the earth's resources commuting unnecessarily.
-  We have become much more efficient and effective through the use of frequent remote on-line meetings via Zoom. We will continue using this in future rather than revert to pre-Covid physical meetings.
-  All age groups are open to meeting more regularly via the internet, and video links have been well accepted.
-  We learnt that digital exclusion is a huge issue affecting most of our beneficiaries accessing our services.
-  It's not always the folk you'd expect who are wary of video conferencing e.g. not the elderly nor those with poor broadband.
-  The benefits of virtual meetings & training - and the improvement it has on work/life balance.
-  We moved some of our activities online which in the short term has felt very positive. We have managed to keep afloat and have enjoyed delivering services in this way - however not sure how long this will be manageable and how long people will want to engage in this way. The ability to do face to face work would be great - we would look at combining digital with this if necessary. We have learnt quite a lot technically speaking.
-  Adapted our model of practice to virtual zoom, email correspondence successful but people wish to have face to face support as the majority of energy given is from group work, and peer support. Not happened for over 7 months.

continued

- ☐ We have learned that although using digital technology and remote engagement/instruction has enabled us to reach as many or more people than we might otherwise have done, there is no substitute for standing alongside people to share their experiences and show them how to take more control over their food (in this case by making bread with better flour). This has highlighted the need for investment in community food hubs, i.e. places where people can learn and share, specifically in terms of better ovens and simple equipment.
- ☐ The value of virtual interactions in several ways. Much easier to get people across the country interacting, speakers who no longer have to travel, but we miss the informal networking that takes place.
- ☐ We learned how to deliver our classes and tutorials using an online platform.
- ☐ Expanding our distance learning programme by on-line methodology has been very successful. Using e.g. Lifesize and Zoom helped staff and trustees to keep in touch and to remain positive. It also helped them plan alternative strategies for a new working experience.
- ☐ We have learned how to use digital resources, which we would hope to integrate into our future, so that for instance if a meeting could not take place because of bad weather we could hold it online, or if someone was unable to travel they could still participate using technology, this is not something that we would have considered in the past. The younger members of our organisation have been getting more involved as they realise that they have useful skills to offer, this is of benefit to the organisation as a refresh was required.
- ☐ We have learned to use IT packages for the on line delivery of music tuition and to make virtual music videos. This new method of delivery has allowed us to collaborate with other bands both locally and internationally. Some of our weekly meetings have been enhanced by having guest professional musicians give inspirational talks. We are learning what music adapts best for virtual rehearsals. Our players have learned confidence to play solo. Regrettably, not all of our members enjoy this new method of learning and playing and they have dropped out of the weekly meetings but have chosen to still pay their subs.
- ☐ Like many other organisations, we learned very quickly how to adapt our services in order to provide support to our community. Connectivity and togetherness has been our key purpose. We started a Befrienders scheme, phoning people at home. As a Digital Charity, we took our other services online. We've populated our Facebook page every day since March to inform, to entertain and to promote health and wellbeing. This has proved very popular.
- ☐ We've learned to use digital ways of communication with other bodies. In terms of awareness raising of the plight and needs of our members and campaigning for recognition, our access to appropriate government and other bodies has increased and progress has been made.
- ☐ The usefulness of social media in keeping our community of interest together.
- ☐ That a digital strategy has to be included in any planning for the future.

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☞ We learned that we are stronger than we think - the team had to pivot overnight to digital delivery but they did a great job! We learned that as well as we adapt to digital delivery, some of our most deserving clients can't engage this way due to economic inequality or lacking the skills to operate phones etc. We were shocked by the Lloyd's Bank report on digital skills among young people - we can't simply assume they have more skills than we do by virtue of being young, especially if the mere fact of being born into inequality puts them at a disadvantage. We need to do our best to be good ancestors and continue to challenge inequality.

10. What some charities learned about grant funding

A number of charities told us what they learned about finding funding, funders and working together.

Grant funding

☞ We used, for a short time, Grantsonline.co.uk to find out about funds across the UK that we could apply to. However, to keep accessing this information requires payment of a monthly fee and in the current climate that's not sustainable. Something like this should be free to use for all Scottish charities. Perhaps OSCR could buy a membership that could then be passed out to registered charities? I suspect there's a lot of unclaimed money out there but it can be hard and very time consuming to find.

☞ I have learned about grant systems that can help us in the future.

☞ There are some good funding streams out there for local communities.

☞ The HMRC webinars on how to apply for government grants were very helpful

☞ There are quite a few routes to be explored in ways of getting support from local authorities.

☞ Key features that have been helpful have included current funders being flexible with reporting. The pandemic has generated a large amount of additional fundraising requirements and the ones that have been kept simple and straightforward have been the most helpful. This allows for more effort to go towards service delivery. Reporting requirements can cause additional administration and work at a time when pressure on agencies has increased. Minimum reporting has been helpful.

☞ The most useful assistance is core funding or service contracts with non-restricted funds.

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- ☐ The most crucial factor has been the decision by our two key funders, Creative Scotland and HIE, to enable us to use our annual funding to keep afloat, and keep people employed, regardless of how much or how little of our planned activity we were able to deliver.
- ☐ I was unaware of the government/LA funding being available to charities such as ours until an expert told me by chance. This gave us a very comfortable cushion that will hopefully allow us to maintain our premises until we can re-open and start trading / receive donations again.
- ☐ Small Business Grant, administered through local authority has been particularly useful.
- ☐ We had to reconfigure our small SG grant and had invaluable support from the Corra Foundation. This is our first ever grant so have had a very steep learning curve but have found the extra time we had due to the lockdown was a bonus. The Scottish development alliance has also been a great support and learning resource.

Staffing and core costs need to be met

- ☐ We have learned that financial support for staffing and other costs must be in place to support viability for when this challenging time ends. Rebuilding a whole childcare sector would cost much more, than sustaining it through the hard times.

Know your funders

- ☐ The importance of good relationships with funders.
- ☐ DO ask, and keep on asking your funders for help.
- ☐ Bigger organisation with longer track records with funders got funding much more easily than our structure being so young and not yet recognised or should I say known to funders which makes us weaker to obtain funds but not so much weaker to deliver. Bigger organisations than us had to go through more loops to understand how to act safely whereas because of our more grass root approach we could put in place policies and adequate measures to act within days.

Financial instability

- Before the pandemic I worried a lot about the charity's financial stability and when the pandemic hit discovered that the corporations we work with were exceedingly vulnerable too - the global economy, not just the charity sector, are all reliant on constant cash flow, last minute supply and delivery, it's lacking in resilience as the money flows away from local communities. Having commercial customers was where we thought we'd have some stability but instead we had to seek that from government - mainly local and Scottish.
- We learned that a medium charity like ours and local authorities were not in a position to be as responsive as quickly as we should have been to address severe need in the community - it took a couple of months to stabilise financially and get funding in place to get covid response projects up and running. This really makes the case for 1. local mutual aid and 2. the public and third sectors working together to plan for future crises.

11. What some charities learned about generating income

Several charities shared what they learned about adapting how they generate income and the importance of communication.

Adapting income generation

- We have devoted more time and focus to online fundraising, including raffles/prize draws which might otherwise have been held at events.
- Cash is no longer king - contactless payment facility is essential.
- The value of community involvement and the importance of donations.
- We have focused fund raising on the Trust sector.
- We found a great generosity in our gift aiders who donated much more than usual this year.

The importance of communication to generate income

- ☐ We have learnt to keep in contact with parishioners by being sure that everyone is contacted regularly by phone. Our income has stayed steady as people have either sent in their church envelopes, paid standing orders or paid into the bank directly.
- ☐ We have communicated openly and more frequently with core/repeat donors to deepen engagement with them and ensure they remain aware of our continuing operations and any additional areas where we have need their support.
- ☐ I have found that people can be persuaded (sometimes against their better judgement) to donate electronically and regularly.

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