



**November COVID-19 survey:
Volunteers and Trustees Supplementary**



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1. Introduction

The [November survey](#)¹ gathered further information from charities about the impact that COVID-19 was having on them. The survey included a two part open question

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

Please use the text box below to tell us what you have learned and we will share it anonymously with other charity sector support bodies, and the Scottish Government.

Q8b In your view, what should OSCR and charity sector support organisations be doing to help your charity overcome the challenges that it faces because of the pandemic? Are there any other factors that you wish to bring to our attention?

2,548 charities participated in the November survey, of these 1,583 charities completed Q8. Most charities completed both 8a and 8b, others completed one but not the other. This has given a great deal of data but it is messy, partial and fragmented in short sentences, bite size comments and some more substantive responses, covering a broad range of subjects and with a fair amount of crossover in responses between 8a and 8b. The greatest number of open responses referred to financial matters and/or Annual Returns.

There is no one typical charity. They are diverse and individual, and though some have the same purposes, or geographical location or type of income their experiences of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic are varied. There is no single narrative here but many thoughts, reactions, comments and things they have learned which have identifiable themes such as finances or how they adapted that are useful to cross cut the data and pull together to show the differences of both the impact and the response of Scottish charities to the pandemic

Each of the cross cutting themes combines the responses from both 8a and 8b. Each theme is given as far as possible in the words of the respondents, with extensive use of quotations but without the use of quotation marks as this would disrupt the text. Key points made by multiple charities have in places been drawn into a summary statement. The voices of the charities are also given without interpretation or inclusion of assumptions, consequently there are places where something said may be unclear or leave a gap. The data was anonymised and anywhere within the responses there were identifiable features they have been removed or replaced by generic terms to preserve anonymity. Boxed text are quotations.

The following sections 2 to 8 are extracts from the main findings documents with the inclusion of specific supplementary comments from charities about volunteers in section 9.

¹ OSCR's COVID-19 impact on charities surveys <https://www.oscr.org.uk/about-charities/surveys/>

2. How charities adapted

The most consistent problem and frustration that charities had with restrictions was the lack of clarity in how they applied to their own charity and the frequency with which they changed. Many charities said that the biggest problem was keeping up to date with unpredictable, complex and frequently changing advice. They found decision making was often overturned at the last moment, making changes to comply with social distancing restrictions took planning, time and money that were obsolete before they were used, and it was very difficult to keep up with the guidelines in how to keep people safe while working.

Particular impacts of the restrictions that meant many charities could not operate included the closure of indoor venues which affected the income of the charities that own or run them and the users of those places which were mainly community based charities and groups that run activities, events, and fundraising. Travel restrictions also impacted charities that operate both indoors and outdoors. As one charity put it, we were restricted in our ability to operate due to the combined impact of National COVID restrictions, and the COVID risk assessment and operational procedures imposed by both the venue and charity. The trading of charity shops and venue cafes were similarly affected.

Many charities ceased their usual operation because the safety of their beneficiaries, who were either elderly and/or vulnerable, and restrictions to protect them was a priority that prevented their participation in activities or events such as lunch clubs. It also impacted some charities ability to offer support to their beneficiaries.

Similarly, social distancing impacted charities that run activities that involve close contact with beneficiaries so they could not operate, such as riding for the disabled; charities that run activities such as music or art classes; and schools were closed to visits from for example, a charity that has a mobile planetarium.

A number of charities also told us that they did not have enough volunteers to operate as usual even when restrictions allowed. This issue arose mainly for charities with elderly and/or vulnerable volunteers, many of whom were shielding. There were also charities that said their volunteers were afraid or reluctant to return as they did not feel safe, particularly where it meant coming into contact with the public.

Since restarting we have had a good response but due to lack of volunteers and uncertainty about the future we are having to work at around 60% capacity and are unable to get that back up until the threat of future lockdowns is gone.

3. Going online

The single greatest impact of the pandemic and restrictions on almost all charities was going online. They adapted to using online platforms for communication that facilitated the delivery of services, operation of the charity, maintaining contact with beneficiaries, generation of income and providing activities; this change was wide spread though with variable degrees of success.

The need to adapt was recognised by many charities across Scotland for two key reasons: as essential to the mental health and wellbeing of their beneficiaries, volunteers, staff, trustees and the public; and to ensure the future of their charities.

- Whilst COVID 19 has presented many challenges the use of technology has proven invaluable in maintaining communication with those who benefit from our charity and providing means of donating whilst social distancing continues.
- It has undoubtedly brought opportunities and actually improved how we work with volunteers and enabled us to engage with them in entirely different ways. This would not have happened (at least not in the short term) if we hadn't been forced to use video conferencing.

Video conferencing was the most frequently mentioned in the responses with Zoom, Microsoft Teams and WhatsApp mentioned. Websites, Email, Facebook pages and other social media were also used for communication.

Almost all charities appear to have gone online to some extent, but with varying degrees of success, and as above some experienced limitations and barriers including: lack of access to IT equipment; lack of IT skills of trustees and/or volunteers and/or their beneficiaries; and poor network connection. Whilst Zoom was the most frequently mentioned, some charities used other platforms, and the uses to which they put these platforms was varied. Many charities told us they used online platforms for trustee/committee/Board meetings and that some found there were additional benefits to this; used various platforms to maintain contact with their beneficiaries; the restrictions also catalysed going online and working from home for some charities; some adapted to generating income online; and some charities said they would continue to use these tools in the future, though there are issues that need to be addressed.

Barriers and limitations experienced by charities

- Lack of proper broadband provision stops our Board from having a visual connection, we have to meet by conference call (audio) which is better than nothing but not nearly so good as being able to see each other and means that a lot of materials have to be duplicated and delivered - costly in time and money.

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- ☞ Lack of proper broadband provision stops our Board from having a visual connection, we have to meet by conference call (audio) which is better than nothing but not nearly so good as being able to see each other and means that a lot of materials have to be duplicated and delivered - costly in time and money.
- ☞ We don't have the IT skills to have a Just giving site or a Facebook page to raise funds online. We have been able to meet using zoom and have found this invaluable.
- ☞ The expectation that everyone has access to the necessary tools to complete everything online eg grant applications/reporting, everything has to be submitted electronically when volunteers do not have for example scanners or printers at home.
- ☞ Older volunteers do not always have access to up to date IT or broadband speeds needed for Zoom meetings.
- ☞ None of our trustees had any experience of providing online services or conducting online meetings. All our services were provided face to face and now we are trying to learn how to film, edit and deliver online workshops, set up online coffees chats to reduce isolation etc and we are struggling to learn the skills and to pay for the new equipment. We need to find people willing to give up the time to do these as everything takes longer digitally. The morale within our trustees is also rock bottom and is putting the charity at risk.
- ☞ Closure of our meeting place has reduced the communication we can have with our community. They can only contact us online, FB, Twitter, our website. Our Trustee's agreed to remain in office by email for the coming year, some being contacted in person because they didn't have computers. Others were competent with email but couldn't use zoom. Those of us with PC' were able to arrange some community activities keeping our online services up to date with info about Covid-19, Neighbourhood watch activities, community clean ups with social distancing, attending zoom meetings.
- ☞ Trustees met on Zoom but it would have been nice to have sector specific training for this. This has improved communication but not the social side of working in a charity which is sad.
- ☞ Some charities were concerned that older volunteers find it hard to use all of the IT when they are used to speaking to others.
- ☞ Older members struggle to adapt to technology. Technology cost (Zoom) offset by savings made on room hire etc Loss of public outreach opportunities (small financially but significant in meeting our stated goals)
- ☞ Our members (and indeed our Trustees) are typically elderly and vulnerable to Covid; they are also less technologically competent or equipped to access our services online (eg online presentations and talks; use of social media; online resources). Our events and those of our member societies provide a valuable social interaction - particularly for the elderly - which will be missed and affect mental wellbeing. We have held our AGM on zoom to maintain governance.

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- In August we began virtual meetings. Participants were not all keen and therefore numbers were reduced.
- There must always be non-online options for doing things - everything from operating a business/charity to private individuals going about their life. The increased reliance and requirements to do things online, or using automated services, is alienating and mentally destroying many people: people for whom these methods, for many individual reasons, are not an option. Many of our members/supporters fall into this category, and are being isolated and left out as a result. There must always be options for doing things in person or at least over the phone, with another human being. Many of our supporters are not able to use online or mobile banking, so cheque and cash payment options must be supported. Most of our donations, or payments for merchandise, are by cheque, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to pay them in.

The future for charities online

Some charities said they intend to continue to use online platforms and tools for meetings, delivery of services and wider communication with other organisations. Several charities also shared their thoughts on the future of charities online.

- We hope to attract more trustees who will not have to attend meetings in person but can be present on line.
- A digital strategy has to be included in any planning for the future.
- Our immediate challenge is to better gear up for digital working between our trustees.
- 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.
- Our charity supplies computers and training to schools mainly southern Africa. We have a small group of trustee/volunteers. I think it unlikely that the services we provide will disappear immediately but the whole IT sector is evolving at such a breakneck speed that our traditional desktop/laptop provision strategy is due for a massive rethink.
- We have become more digital in our internal and external communications. Therefore, a strong ultra-fast broadband network is essential for the UK.
- We are starting to offer members' days as Zoom meetings. This excludes those who don't feel at ease with technology, so we need to find a way to reach them too.

4. Maintaining contact

Although 32% of charities that responded to the November survey told us they were not able to operate or were closed it appears that almost all of them were in fact trying in various ways to maintain contact with their beneficiaries, staff and volunteers even though they could not provide their usual services or activities. Some charities told us about the importance of maintaining communication with their members and/or volunteers.

As seen above many charities went online but some found there were limitations and barriers to the use of online platforms and tools. Where this was the case they found other ways to maintain contact including phone calls, text messages, paired walking, emails, letters, cards, newsletters, amateur radio, local radio and TV. There were even occasional benefits, as one charity told us that keeping in touch with each other had made them a stronger group; and another that they would continue to use phone calls to service users after restrictions ceased.

5. Why restrictions caused closure or inactivity of some charities

There were some charities who were unable to adapt and the reasons for this appear to include the loss of places to operate, loss of income, their location, type of activity, the vulnerability of their beneficiaries and/or volunteers and/or staff; or sometimes combinations of these.

Vulnerable volunteers

- Nearly all our volunteers are retired persons and are Covid-19 vulnerable.
- With all volunteers (7) over 70 and no fundraising activities taking place, we have temporarily ceased operations.
- Most of our volunteers are in the 65-95 years old range and most are reluctant to return until they feel secure.
- We have found that we have not adapted very well to the impact of the pandemic as our trustees are too old to adapt quickly.

Combined issues

☐ The impact of Covid-19 on a very small charity has been to emphasise how vulnerable it is, and pose an additional query about its longer-term viability. Some, but maybe not all, of the trustees were already aware of this. A high proportion of the trustees and members have additional support needs, and often also other chronic health issues. Some of the trustees and volunteers are above retirement age, and also have personal or family health issues. This has made group meetings impossible since late March, and also caused our main project to close down completely, as it necessitates quite close contact. Our disabled members also have financial issues, and tend not to have technical skills, so meetings on Zoom etc have not been possible. All the above issues make it unlikely that any resumption of our normal activities will be possible for some time. In practice, the future of the charity is in some doubt. Despite this, the more hale and hearty of the trustees have maintained contact with people by phone, and met occasionally (never more than 2 at a time, still allowable under Scottish rules), to plan, get the Annual Accounts under way, etc. A further issue, not of the charity's making, is that the church where the project takes place has said we cannot return there in the foreseeable future because they cannot ensure social distancing arrangements. Overall, we have learned that the longer-term future of the charity will need to be addressed, but that we can hang on in the current weird limbo if necessary.

6. Funding and fundraising

The analysis shows levels of tension between needs and sources between those able to access funding sources and those who were or perceive themselves to be unable to; and between those with the skills and resources to seek and access funding (typically characterised as time, knowledge and paid staff) and those who were resource limited and inexperienced in this type of activity and its execution (typically characterised as volunteers).

A large number of charities' responses said they felt overwhelmed by the information about emergency financial support, finding it complicated and confusing. They could not determine if they were eligible, or not. The application forms were long and complicated asking for vast amounts of detailed information which they did not necessarily have. Quite a number asked for assistance and/or training in how to complete these applications. They also said they had been refused but did not understand why or felt it was unreasonable. A few said they had not heard anything in response to their application.

The majority of charities asking for help with identifying and accessing funding sources were run by volunteers, with no staff. A number said their volunteers were working on funding applications in their own time to make sure this activity did not impact their services and beneficiaries, and more than a few of these volunteers had either their own caring responsibilities or paid employment as well.

It is such a complex challenge applying for grants from the government. We are volunteers with other work commitments and family concerns, and it is frankly, seriously overwhelming going through the application process. We don't even know all of the grants available to us, and which would apply to us. The grant applications are truly the most challenging, and sometimes soul destroying exercises.

Fundraising activities and events were almost at a complete standstill due to COVID-19 restrictions, and was a major worry to a many charities who rely on generating all or part of their income.

Some charities said there was an urgent need for clear guidance around fundraising and income generating activities. Others asked for support to raise awareness and lobby for restrictions to be relaxed, or better still ended. Charities that usually generate their own income asked OSCR and charity sector supporting organisations to press Scottish Government and Local Authorities on this.

The impact of loss of income on charities varied across types and sizes of charity. Whether they had kept going or had been inactive, were large or small, in November, there were concerns being expressed about the viability of a number of charities without financial support to replace the loss of fundraising income.

Most of these usually self-supporting charities were run by volunteers who were asking for help to identify and access funding sources. They said they did not have the time to keep the charity operating and find funds; nor did they feel they had the skills to apply for grants. Several charities said the wide range of funding bodies can be confusing, particularly those which were being used by the government to distribute government funding.

A charity which does not employ any staff and was not eligible for grant funding [at the time] asked that their financial difficulties be represented to the government as there are many groups working with children whose income had dried up completely.

7. What charities learned

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

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.

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.

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.

What some charities learned about their volunteers

- 🗨️ 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.
- 🗨️ 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.

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- ☞ Careful planning in operational issues and protecting health of all staff and volunteers.
- ☞ 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.

What some charities learned about resilience

Some charities shared what they had learned about being resilient and in part that is about people.

- ☞ We have learned that we are over dependent on elderly and vulnerable volunteers and were not prepared to engage younger volunteers.
- ☞ 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 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.
- ☞ DO believe in yourself and your volunteers, if you lead with belief, they will believe also.
- ☞ 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.

8. What charities asked for help with

Training and workshops for trustees

Several charities asked OSCR and third sector support organisations to provide more online training, education and workshops for trustees including how to train volunteers online. There were also a number of requests for training for trustees on leadership; charity management; developing policies and PVG guidance; and volunteer management.

Linking, sharing and networking

A number of charities asked for help with making links and opportunities for networking to share experiences and resources. These included a networking service to help facilitate cross charity cooperation, for example, charities with properties could assist others who need to find alternative venue due to their Local Authority hall being closed or those with kitchens could assist with making meals for local elderly people; or larger charities with greater assets in terms of staffing and technology could be encouraged to support smaller volunteer dependent organisations in the same field.

One charity asked for OSCR and the charity support organisations to create a network of contacts to widen the network of go-to advice and support for third sector organisations and charities. It would also create opportunities to create new partnerships. One good thing which has come out of all of this, has been that many of have become aware of each other and what we do. This, in turn, has led to us working together in creative and meaningful ways.

Several charities wanted help with ways to share examples of good and innovative practice that can overcome the difficulties we face; ideas to overcome difficulties from similar charities; information sharing Zoom meetings with small similar charities so that we can learn from each other; and share experiences with targeted organisation size specific help and advice.

Advice and guidance

Many charities asked OSCR and third sector support organisations to provide up to date information on restrictions with advice and guidance on how restrictions apply to charities, risk assessment and getting ready to restart.

Some charities asked for advice and guidance to help with understanding health and safety measures for staff/volunteers/users; one asked for templates for risk assessment for volunteers. They asked for guidance on rules and restrictions for charities including building use and management, hosting activities and events, and working with volunteers.

Governance

Some charities asked for more guidance on governance responsibilities especially if charities are working more flexibly and trying to respond to emergencies. Several said that the remote management of activities/volunteers/staff/services and/or projects was placing an increased demand on management time (which they felt was the priority), whilst also trying to keep up with the simultaneously increased demands of governance in continually changing circumstances. They asked for continued guidance and help on governance in a changing situation which was felt to be crucial for them to be able to adapt to changing needs; and assistance with governance issues directly relating to constitutional documents.

Management

A number of charities asked for help with management and for practical support in charity management. They said many small charities are often governed by a board of local volunteers who, although passionate and committed, don't always have the skills or resources necessary for effectively managing an organisation particularly those that employ staff; and if possible provide more support in regards to how to manage activities remotely.

Guidance and advice for particular types of charity

Several charities asked for targeted advice to small, entirely voluntary community groups. They said simple guidance would be of real benefit as they felt a lot of the guidance available was aimed at well-established and structured charities and was too complicated for the majority of small volunteer groups.

Planning ahead

Some charities asked for help with planning and going forward. They said it would be good to have advice on strategic planning for living with some form of restrictions going forward; continued advice for all charities of the development in the government strategies and help with the tactical approach required; and advice about new ways of working.

9. Further thoughts and comments charities shared about their volunteers

Positive outcomes

- Just looking to keep providing services and really has shown the commitment of volunteers.
- This pandemic has made our volunteers stronger. Our service is very much needed and the pandemic has given many more upsets for our volunteers to deal with.
- We have developed a strong team of volunteers.
- A stronger and more understanding bond between trustees has emerged as a result of the different project challenges, and a greater public appreciation of what our charity does.
- We have switched to Zoom for management committee meetings which had had the benefit of cutting travel time for already busy people. We should have had a volunteer giving training in dementia care to carers in China but travel restrictions meant that this also had to be done by Zoom. Not quite as good as face to face but well received by the beneficiaries nevertheless.
- Our charity has adapted our place of operation and put a protocol in place to keep both volunteers and customers safe and feel confident that they can safely visit our charity café. There has been good co-operation between ourselves and the committee of the hall we work from.

Raise awareness

- Maybe produce a series of short videos of case studies showing how volunteers have got involved in a variety of settings; to encourage more volunteering. Use social media and local press to publicise these, emphasising that the volunteer roles can be Covid safe.
- We feel that the funding should have been made readily available to those delivering and operating as Covid resilience hubs such as our own who provided hot meals and food provision for our elderly in shielding and those struggling through Covid and we are currently continuing these services in providing support to all aspects of our communities by doing a people centred approach but feel that the commitment of all volunteers hasn't been recognized as it should have been.

Learned

- ☐ We have learned to take things one step at a time eg no volunteers furloughed, volunteer concerns about food local authority gave us, somehow to keep safe and learn about risk assessment. Be flexible. I think my fellow trustees and myself are tired.
- ☐ Continue to be patient and also to offer support when key volunteers are unable to offer the services they generally do, in this case our treasurer.
- ☐ Covid has encouraged the volunteers to improve their digital skills and it turned out not to be as scary as they thought it would be.

Barriers and limitations

- ☐ Our main problem has been lack of face-to-face meetings. With an elderly selection of Trustees, we have not yet been able to have online meetings because of lack of personal equipment (or antiquated versions of personal equipment); although we are working our way towards this.
- ☐ As an older people's organisation all volunteers, members and trustees are older with several shielding.
- ☐ We have had to decrease our days of operation to two mornings a week as many of our volunteers are older and haven't returned to working in the cafe.
- ☐ Our members and indeed our Trustees are typically elderly, vulnerable to Covid; they are also less technologically competent or equipped to access our services online (eg online presentations and talks; use of social media; online resources) and conduct our charity business through online meetings.
- ☐ As Chair have found it difficult to function as well as I would have liked due to the current situation and illness of myself and family members. We have not been able to sign cheques to pay for expenses and rent of premises due to being unable to meet. As Chair, Secretary and Treasurer, I am finding it very difficult to find any voluntary help. I have been asked for help re access and related issues and have been unable to meet the people involved.
- ☐ There is a national shortage of laptops available for purchase so we cannot help those volunteers who only have access to a mobile phone.
- ☐ Remember that like ourselves and other small charities we are all volunteers who carry out roles in which we have no experienced in our normal working lives unlike large charities which have dedicated staff who cover finance and HR areas.

Volunteer drift

- Feel that in many ways the pandemic has encouraged people to step back from voluntary work and perhaps will not return when things are better.
- Volunteers are finding different activities to occupy their time and have decided not to return to our charity because they have reduced commitment
- Our charity has seen a halving of the number of volunteers. This means that we cannot provide as much cover for the benefit of the community.

Trustee fatigue and volunteer burn out

- It has been difficult for Trustees to take on the additional work voluntarily required to help steer the charity through these times when often Trustees personal work situations are also impacted. As a charity providing out of school childcare, we were able to re-open in August, however, we are experiencing a double hit in terms of reduced demand and income due to COVID alongside increased costs in order to operate within a COVID safe environment.
- The current Covid 19 context is challenging and gives the trustees a considerable level of additional work. This can be arduous particularly for volunteers who are already giving a considerable amount of their time to lead the organisation. There are challenges with maintaining engagement and with keeping effective communication across the organisation. People are working very hard to keep the organisation active and bouyant.
- Charity directors more stressed and stretched due to increased own paid work demands coupled with increased charity demands. Charity recently lost a director due to increased mental health pressures however has had an increase in volunteer support. Volunteer support has had to be remote on the whole, less hands on
- As a small, local organisation we have been able to continually adapt and work flexibly to meet the changing demands and increased need for community-based support. We have a strong local presence which enabled us to recruit a large number of new volunteers. However the ongoing situation leads to feelings of fatigue within the organisation. There is a real risk of volunteer burn-out, especially in smaller grassroots groups that developed in response to the pandemic.
- The burden on volunteers can become very onerous.
- Fatigue - volunteers are losing motivation to even try to keep our charity going.
- I reckon that volunteer fatigue will increasingly be a problem.
- Flexibility, the demand on the service has increased. Let us deal with that need without adding to the workload. Recognise that smaller charities rely on a smaller team and we are burnt out.





Volunteer recruitment

- Our main issue is that though we are experiencing increased volunteer interest in our outdoor conservation tasks, we no longer have capacity to utilise that many volunteers due to social distancing.
- We have been unable to recruit any volunteers as training has to be done face to face, and is practical.
- COVID-19 has curtailed our intention to recruit more volunteers and trustees.
- Difficulty in finding replacement trustees and volunteers. Tend to come from older part of population who are vulnerable and unwilling to get involved.
- We would like professionals, eg financial experts, social workers, medics, to volunteer for our trustee board to help us manage the lack of support and funding. Without the volunteer trustees we could not function but that is not the best way to run an organisation.
- One of our main issues is lack of young volunteers with required digital expertise.
- We work in an area that is different to most charities and receives less interest from all sorts of agencies. We require physical help with grounds maintenance, leading guided tours and other voluntary tasks that may generate a little income and it is feet on the ground that are needed to help us.






Risk

- We are missing the social activities that our charity provides and think we should be allowed to use our own discretion as to how many of us are able to meet together. Our volunteers are drawn from an ageing, retired population and many people live on their own. We are old enough to make our own risk assessments.
- Would perhaps have liked templates for risk assessments for volunteers.
- As an older people's organisation all volunteers, members and trustees are older with several shielding.
- Difficulty of running the charity due to the safeguarding of trustees and volunteers.
- Volunteers reluctant to be involved for fear of contracting covid. Introduced single working, which is less appealing to volunteers as lose the social aspect of volunteering. Introduced sanitiser, face coverings, hand wash, social distancing measures; helpful in reassuring volunteers they were safe.

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-  This charity is run for and by people with a particular chronic health condition. We have no paid staff or other volunteers. Our beneficiaries and our Trustees are people who are particularly susceptible to Covid19 because of age and health profiles. In view of this, returning to face-to-face meetings (our main mode of operating) is problematic. Even when restrictions lift it will be very difficult for us to know when we can resume safely - and to have the confidence to do so. I think this is the main worry.
-  Our activities have been curtailed because the over 70's and the vulnerable are no longer eligible to volunteer - for their own safety reasons.
-  Most of our volunteers are in the 65-95 years old range and most are reluctant to return until they feel secure.
-  Given our sector (church), we do not employ staff but rely on volunteers, some of whom have been unable/unwilling to continue due to shielding etc which has then impacted on the workload of others

Other experiences

-  Frustration that we cannot get volunteer work parties together to do management work.
-  Remember that like ourselves and other small charities we are all volunteers who carry out roles in which we have no experienced in our normal working lives unlike large charities which have dedicated staff who cover finance and HR areas.
-  Most charities are run by unpaid volunteers who have other increased pressures on them at the moment so the charity work is taking lower priority and being impacted.
-  When regulations for dealing with covid were issued, I found it hard to find any guidance on how a small charity, totally dependent on volunteers should be behaving. I found it very stressful as our main aim has always been the safety of our volunteers, and visitors to our projects. I feel the Third Sector was ignored, yet now we are being told that we will have to do more (with less) as council budgets are drastically cut. Quite rightly, support was given to organisations dealing directly with covid, but there seemed to be nothing available to projects already working in the community before covid, but dramatically affected by it so that they could sustain their work after the pandemic.
-  Unfortunately we cannot use any of our volunteers as they staff our creche which has not been running.

continued



- ❏ We are a non-profit making charity, and all our volunteers are over70 and unable to continue preparing spoken copies of the two local papers that we record during the present endemic. Our office bearers are all retiring once we are back in business. I am retiring as chair (aged 78), our secretary is retiring (aged 89) and our treasurer (aged over 80) has developed very bad Alzheimer's during the current situation and is unable to prepare the books for audit.
- ❏ The impact of Covid-19 on a very small charity has been to emphasise how vulnerable it is, and pose an additional query about its longer-term viability. Some, but maybe not all, of the trustees were already aware of this. A high proportion of the trustees and members have additional support needs, and often also other chronic health issues. Some of the trustees and volunteers are above retirement age, and also have personal or family health issues. This has made group meetings impossible since late March, and also caused our main project to close down completely, as it necessitates quite close contact. Our disabled members also have financial issues, and tend not to have technical skills, so meetings on Zoom etc have not been possible. All the above issues make it unlikely that any resumption of our normal activities will be possible for some time. In practice, the future of the charity is in some doubt. Despite this, the more hale and hearty of the trustees have maintained contact with people by phone, and met occasionally (never more than 2 at a time, still allowable under Scottish rules), to plan, get the Annual Accounts under way, etc. A further issue, not of the charity's making, is that the church where the project takes place has said we cannot return there in the foreseeable future because they cannot ensure social distancing arrangements. Oddly, none of this has affected our financial viability, because though sales have decreased dramatically, costs have been virtually eliminated. Overall, we have learned that the longer-term future of the charity will need to be addressed, but that we can hang on in the current weird limbo if necessary.
- ❏ Our charity provides support for older people and those with a disability, especially those who, for whatever reason, are socially isolated. The main effect of our services is on the wellbeing and health of our members. The pandemic has highlighted social isolation as a huge problem so, unlike previous years, we have found it easier to access the funding available, as much of it has been targeted at those who are vulnerable, often lonely and least able to help themselves. It has given both staff and trustees a boost to have the work we do recognised as vital and funded, albeit delivered in a different way. It has allowed us to continue to support people through some dark times so that they were able to re-engage when restrictions were lifted. This second round, they and we are better prepared but the impact is likely to be greater as the restrictions, darkness and bad weather reduce opportunities for going out and about and affect mental health in all but especially those with re-existing problems.
- ❏ We have found that we have not adapted very well to the impact of the pandemic as our trustees are too old to adapt quickly so we really don't have much to share.
- ❏ Our charity does not have any staff so everything is done by volunteers. Most advice is for large charities that have staff.
- ❏ As a small museum totally reliant on volunteers we have had to close since lockdown was imposed in March. We do not have sufficient volunteers to provide cover to open the museum and to control access throughout to ensure social distancing rules.

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