‘Priorities for the New Normal’: Lessons from lockdown research

Wednesday 12 August 2020
10:00 am – 12:00 pm
A Policy Scotland/ Third Sector Research Forum Event

Agenda

10:00 – 10:05 Welcome and Plan for the Session (Dr Sarah Weakley, Policy Scotland)
10:05 – 10:10 Scottish Community Development Centre: Andrew Paterson
10:10 – 10:15 Voluntary Health Scotland: Kiren Zubairi
10:15 – 10:20 Inclusion Scotland: Rebecca McGregor
10:20 – 10:40 Breakout Session 1: Reflecting on your experiences
10:40 – 10:50 Break
10:50 – 10:55 Rural Poverty Research in Fife: Prof Karen McArdle
10:55 – 11:00 ‘Lockdown Lore’: Dr Nick Le Bigre
11:00 – 11:05 Children’s Neighbourhoods Scotland: Dr Claire Bynner
11:05 – 11:25 Breakout Session 2: Developing recommendations
11:25 – 11:45 Reporting Back & Discussion (Sarah Weakley)
11:45 – 12:00 Feedback and Closing (Jane Marryat, TSRF)
Priorities based on research with community organisations

Andrew Paterson, Policy and Research Officer (andrew@scdc.org.uk)

What community organisations have been telling us in our research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Combined factors</th>
<th>Impact on communities</th>
<th>Emergency community-led response</th>
<th>Impact on community organisations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Covid-19 Lockdown and ongoing social distancing Economic downturn</td>
<td>Unemployment Financial hardship Mental health Physical health Other issues (domestic abuse, addiction) ‘Community spirit’</td>
<td>Has saved lives Rapid funding Creative solutions Partnership between organisations and sectors</td>
<td>Wider &amp; deeper demand Challenges to service provision (e.g. social distancing, social anxiety) Sustainability Increase in volunteers Increased recognition and trust</td>
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Policy recommendations

• Continued funding and support for community-led responses to address ongoing impact on vulnerable communities

• Put community organisations at heart of recovery (both locally and nationally)

• Support to ensure every community is as resilient

• Support better local partnership between statutory and community sectors
• COVID-19 has exacerbated social, economic and health inequalities
• Poor mental health outcomes even in those who are normally emotionally resilient
• Increased economic uncertainty resulting in a range of issues: job losses, homelessness, debt, food insecurity, loss or reduction in income...
• An increase in loneliness and social isolation and reduced social confidence
• Reliance on negative coping mechanisms
• Decrease in NHS and social care services

• Sustained support to vulnerable groups and communities
• Redesign existing policy legislation to take cognisance of COVID-19
• Tackling inequalities at heart of new policy and action development
• More open and visible debate on issues such as Universal Basic Income, the importance of wellbeing as a measure of national success and co-designed and inclusive policy development.
• Investment in civil society
Some survey results

- Over 800 responses.
- 30% of respondents said their social care support had either been stopped or reduced.
- 53% of respondents said they had experienced difficulties accessing food.
- Around 15% of all respondents told us that their mental health had been negatively affected.
Our asks

1. Stop stigmatising disabled people as vulnerable and problematic.
2. Promote our human rights as disabled people.
3. Involve us, the experts in our own lives, both now and when we build the 'new normal'.
4. Support our national and local disabled people’s organisations so that we can be involved.
5. Communicate with us and inform us in ways that are accessible to us.

Breakout Session 1:

Reflecting on your and sharing with others:
What are the key messages coming through from your evidence?
Do any of the findings in the presentations resonate with your work, if so, how?
NE Fife (and the remainder of Fife)

Narrative Inquiry – accessible, starts from silence

Vulnerable and disadvantaged people – using food boxes, community fridge

Sample – Strong sample, saturation, biased towards women

Complexity – interrelationship of disadvantage; poverty

Haves and Have nots Findings

Social Isolation;

Mental health issues;

Food Insecurity;

Danger of volunteer fatigue;

Complexity of disadvantage;

Not represented in SIMD.
What needs to be done?

- Investment in community spirit!
- Community activism
- Investment in mental health (other than NHS; and reaching out);
- Investment in the small steps;
- Investment longitudinally;
- Investment in those who can do this;

Changing the Narrative – Now more than ever

Lockdown Lore Collection Project
Documenting Creative Responses to the Coronavirus Pandemic

Nicolas Le Bigre
Teaching Fellow and Archivist
Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen

Priorities for the ‘New Normal’: Lessons from Lockdown Research
The *Lockdown Lore Collection Project* is:

- documenting a wide range of creative responses to the pandemic;
- an ongoing, crowdsourced, volunteer-supported, long-term archival and research project;
- Scotland focused, but not exclusively limited to Scotland;
- divided into five themes:
  1. handcrafted responses (loosely defined) to the pandemic;
  2. stories of lockdown living (written and via ethnographic interview);
  3. pandemic-related songs and tunes;
  4. pandemic-related poetry;
  5. digital initiatives set up during the pandemic.

Submissions to the Project

- There are over 350 submissions by unique individuals, with new submissions coming in regularly as the situation changes and demands new responses (e.g. Aberdeen lockdown);
- Each submission may contain multiple items, e.g. several photos or poems, and the total number of items in the collection is well into the thousands;
- Most submissions come from Scotland, but we have received submissions from the rest of the UK and other countries including Canada, Russia, Nigeria, India, and elsewhere;
- Volunteer interviewers (mostly former students with an MLitt/PhD in Ethnology and Folklore), have conducted ethnographic interviews with over 50 people, with still more interviews scheduled.
Vulnerable and/or Disadvantaged Participants:

- **Patients who had Covid-19 but are suffering from long-term effects:**
  - Symptoms constantly being questioned;
  - Not being treated seriously by medical practitioners or others;
  - Patients not being listened to or learned from;

- **Disabled people:**
  - Pariah status as some are scared they are more susceptible to catch (and spread) the virus;
  - Constant fear and stress of DWP reassessing them if they are ‘too active’;
  - Not being consulted on well-intentioned, but dangerous ideas (e.g. widening pavements without including way-markers for the blind);

- **Elderly people:**
  - Having difficulty accessing and using the Internet;
  - Feeling condescended to by being told to shield when they want to contribute actively;

- **Financially and socially disadvantaged people:**
  - Not having garden space and so suffering much more stress than people with green space;
  - Constant exposure to virus due to reliance on public transport and/or working in high-risk jobs such as carers;
  - Being targeted by politicians as scapegoats for poor behaviour during lockdown.

With regard to creating a ‘new normal’, perhaps the most important lesson learned from this research is that the pandemic has not only introduced new problems, but exacerbated existing ones.

The ‘new normal’ must strive to fix long-term problems such as structural racism, sexism, classism, poverty, and homelessness, which existed long before the pandemic appeared.

This was made clear to me in this poignant message, written a few feet from my front door.
Many thanks for your attention.

You can contact me at n.lebigre@abdn.ac.uk

Learn more about the project here: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone/public-engagement/lockdownlore

And remember, be kind to your(s)elf!
Key messages / findings

• **Vulnerability of children and families:** existing health inequalities; more families falling into poverty; disproportionate impact of the negative social and economic effects of lockdown / economic crisis

• **Family wellbeing:** additional costs of looking after children at home; reduction in income and delays in payment (furlough and UC); interlinked nature of different stressors on families (financial distress, pressures of home-schooling and childcare); social isolation and mental health

• **Service responses:** food provision; providing practical and emotional support to families; compassion and energy of third and public sector workers; increased collaboration

Policy recommendations

• **Decrease financial pressures** on families by extending social security support and providing resources for digital inclusion

• Additional investment in **community-based wellbeing** and mental health support services

• Increase the **agency of families and children in food provision** through empowering self-help projects

• Provide **sustainable grant funding** to third sector organisations

• Build upon and sustain the agency and self-help within communities, through **public sector engagement at a locality level**

• Engage the wider third sector in **strategic emergency response and recovery planning**
Breakout Session 2:

**Developing Recommendations:**

- Where should local authorities and national government place their priorities? (Both funding priorities and programme priorities)
- And, what are some ways that we can ensure our participants & client voices are heard in this recovery?

Feedback:

Please provide feedback on this seminar in the chat function addressing this question:

Short evaluation form also available at link in chat function:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfzDqSTT6rBP81S3UE7YO8pLdpdxDhi2L7TfKi9JQ7XSTCSUEg/viewform?usp=share_link
Keep in Touch & Future Events

Future research and event collaborations:

Sarah Weakley, University of Glasgow:
sarah.weakley@glasgow.ac.uk

Jane Marryat, Evaluation Support Scotland
jane@evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk