



SUMMARY REPORT

Collaborating in Communities to Improve Mental Wellbeing

A Pockets & Prospects Project



Developing Collaborating in Communities

With Pockets & Prospects funding from [Scottish Community Alliance](#), in late 2020, [SENScot](#), [CHEX](#) & [Scottish Communities for Health & Wellbeing](#) (SCHW) developed a collaborative approach to address the mental health & wellbeing challenge that has emerged from the Covid19 crisis. This involved both community organisations and social enterprise suppliers offering mental health & wellbeing focused activities and services.

Our approach was based on the model developed by SENScot & [Glasgow SEN](#) for the [Glasgow Pockets & Prospects Project](#) which aimed to tackle loneliness and to mitigate the negative impacts of welfare reform. Addressing mental health issues emerged as a key aspect of the Glasgow project, with community organisations reporting positive results for local people through accessing activities and services from social enterprise suppliers. It was also successful in that social enterprise suppliers reported a range of benefits, including increased trade and becoming more sustainable.

Based on the previous success of the model and the comparable issues being addressed (i.e. increased mental health & wellbeing issues within communities and a loss of income for social enterprises as a result of covid-19) we were confident that this approach would provide a valuable lifeline to both local communities and social enterprise at a time of significant need.

We worked together to identify / invite 15 community organisations who would have a strong awareness and understanding of the mental health & wellbeing needs within their workforce, people who access their activities and services and their wider community. At the same time, we called out to social enterprise suppliers, inviting them to submit fully costed offers that we collated as a menu of activities and services that could be viewed and accessed by the community organisations. Given the extent of interest from suppliers and the expectation of the need to regularly update this menu, the menu of activities & services was accessible via a website <https://collaboratingincommunities.org/> rather than a pdf brochure.

How it worked

The community organisations were each allocated £1300 to buy in activities and services for a range of people connected with their organisation. This included both virtual and face-to-face sessions for staff, volunteers and community members. Once an agreement had been reached with a social enterprise supplier to buy in services, an online [order form](#) was submitted to SENScot, the activities would take place and the social enterprise would invoice SENScot for the agreed amount.

Project participants: community organisations

15 community organisations from across Scotland were identified / invited to participate through their involvement in the SPRING Social Prescribing Initiative / SCHW or membership of CHEX. Full list of participating community organisations below.

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Project participants: social enterprise suppliers

Over 50 social enterprises from across Scotland submitted fully costed offers covering a wide range of mental health & wellbeing related activities and services in response to the call out. Additional suppliers were added during the project at the request of community organisations. A full list of suppliers and the activities and services offered can be viewed [here](#).

Community Organisation

3d Drumchapel

Annexe Communities

Finn's Place

Getting Better Together Ltd

Health-in-Mind

Healthy n' Happy CDT

Healthy Valleys

Lorn and Oban Healthy Options Ltd

Ormlie Community Association

Polbeth Community Hub

Raploch Community Partnership

The Hub

Values Into Action Scotland

Yipworld

Your Voice

Area

Glasgow

Glasgow

Glasgow

North Lanarkshire

Scottish Borders

South Lanarkshire

South Lanarkshire

Argyll & Bute

Highland

West Lothian

Stirling

Dumfries & Galloway

Glasgow

East Ayrshire

Inverclyde

Membership

CHEX

Spring

CHEX

Spring

Spring

Spring

Spring

Spring

CHEX

CHEX

CHEX

Spring

CHEX

Spring

Spring

Orders

Orders were received from community organisations from December 20 to July 21. During this period:

- 14 of the 15 community organisations submitted orders
- 35 orders were received
- 22 different suppliers were selected via orders
- 33 activity / service orders were delivered
- Over £17k was paid directly to social enterprise suppliers delivering activities & services

Whilst some community organisations chose to spend their full allocation with a single supplier and a specific service e.g. counselling, other community organisations spread their allocation across a number of suppliers and a range of activities and services.

Only two orders were not delivered, one because of reduced capacity within a community organisation to accommodate the activity and the other was due to staff changes within one of the suppliers. Both of these situations had arisen as a result of ongoing Covid related restrictions.

Activities & Services Accessed

The activities and services accessed via the programme included a range of sessions, workshops, training, activities and products. This included both virtual and face to face delivery depending on appropriate Covid restriction levels applicable at the time. Overview of activities & services provided, and relevant suppliers listed below.

Project Activities

Activities & Services

**'Coping with Stress in the New Normal'
sessions**

Feeling Good App

Counselling sessions for individuals

Mindfulness sessions & courses

Adverse Childhood Experiences training

Mental Health First Aid course

Creative wellbeing packs

Drawing workshops & online art sessions

**Gratitude Journal sessions & Decopath &
Macrame classes**

Storytelling sessions

Taster language classes

Bespoke history talks

Yoga & Tai Chi classes

Drumming workshop

Taster language classes

**Outdoor photography experience & Wellbeing
in the Woods session**

Bike repair and access to bikes

Gift bags to support walk & talk activity

Supplier(s)

Positive Steps

Foundation for Positive Mental Health

**Mind Mosaic, Wellbeing Therapies (Health
in Mind)**

The Wee Retreat, Heartfelt Change

Wellbeing Scotland

**Environmental health CIC, Polbeth
Community Hub**

The Libertie Project, DRAW

Mind & Draw

Reachout With Arts in Mind

Village Storytelling

Lingo Flamingo

Maryhill Burgh Halls Trust

The Health & Wellness Hub

Menself

Lingo Flamingo

Open Aye

Biketown

Scout Store

Needs Addressed & Impact

Community organisations were asked to complete a short feedback form once the activities / services had taken place. We asked them the following questions:

1. Who was the activity / service provided to?
2. How many people accessed the activity / service?
3. What was the need being addressed through providing this activity / service?
4. How has the activity / service addressed mental health needs?

Participating Individuals

Over 800 individuals accessed or participated in the services or activities.

Individuals participating were predominantly community organisation's service users, both new and returning. However, some organisations purchased services specifically for their staff and volunteers.

Community organisations made some reference to targeting service users including:

- People in receipt of benefits
- Children & young people
- Single parents
- Women
- Older people
- Clients accessing the SPRING Social Prescribing service
- Individuals referred via other projects
- People unable to engage with statutory mental health services and unable to fund the support themselves

Mental Health & Wellbeing Needs Addressed

In terms of the needs being addressed, community organisations made reference to the challenges of living through lockdown, ongoing restrictions and the continuation of the pandemic for people within their local community. They noted the increase in mental health issues emerging because of this and cited poverty and social isolation playing a key part.

Stress, loneliness, boredom and low mood were frequently referenced by organisations as one or more of the problems they were seeking to tackle. More insight and context for these is provided below.

Needs Addressed & Impact

Tackling Stress

- Supporting people to address and deal with additional stress.
- Supporting people to understand the causes of their stress and providing tools / techniques to deal with this and help them through.
- Providing opportunities for relaxation to improve mental wellbeing and reduce stress.
- Supporting people to cope with the challenges of living with the ongoing restrictions.
- Sharing techniques to enable people to deal with stress associated with the pandemic crisis.
- Providing self-care time for individuals, for example for single parents struggling with their own mental health and wellbeing throughout the pandemic.
- Providing support for home-schooling during lockdown.
- Provided an opportunity to connect with others and providing structure through the week where this was important to increase the mental wellbeing.

Tackling Loneliness & Boredom

- Providing opportunities for people to meet familiar and new people and to make connections to alleviate loneliness.
- Providing the tools for family activities and interaction.
- Providing access to activities with others to alleviate loneliness and boredom during lockdown.
- Alleviating boredom through the provision of opportunities for enjoyment and learning.

Tackling Stress & Low Mood

- Enabling people to access talking therapy and counselling support.
- Enabling people to address low mood and improve their sleep.
- Providing access to well-being activities that are suitable for all abilities.
- Access to equipment that allowed people to undertake artistic activities, with the pack also promoting a mindful activity that supports mental health by living in the present.

Improving Mental Wellbeing

- Providing opportunities for people to use their creativity and look after their mental wellbeing through creative activities.
- An opportunity to learn new skills, e.g. crafts.
- Increasing people's understanding and skills on how to approach individuals experiencing mental wellbeing concerns.
- Provided staff and volunteers with the skill set and knowledge they require to understand mental wellbeing and how to approach individuals.
- Encouraging the local community caring about each other.

Needs Addressed & Impact

Quotes relating to Impact

Amongst the numerous examples shared by community organisations, we've included some below that will hopefully demonstrate not only how this model helps to improve mental health and wellbeing within communities, but also shine a light on the commitment and insight of these organisations in working with their local communities and the valuable role of social enterprise in supporting this work.

“Clients have been able to speak to trained professionals about their lives and the things impacting on their mental health in a safe and non-judgemental setting. Clients have reported that having this opportunity has helped them to feel valued and worth it which is something many had not experienced. By offering this support in a way that is free from the barriers of financial means and statutory criteria, clients have been able to address their mental health in a way that has not been possible for them up to this point.”

“This service provided staff and volunteers the skills set and knowledge they require to understand mental wellbeing and how to approach individuals.”

“Participants reported that it has been valuable that they have been able to say what would benefit them in terms of support for their mental health and to then actually receive it has been both refreshing and meaningful to them.”

“A participant told me that because of inactivity caused by a previous injury, the pandemic was a real problem for him mentally. He was overwhelmed by the support he received through the scheme. His bike is helping him get back on track and he believes that he couldn't put a price on having the bike to help him. The bike is the difference between him sitting at home on his own or having the freedom to get out and about.”

“Having a craft focus and a task to complete, having some structure in the week, engaging with others, learning something new - these are all elements that help our mental health. The response from those who attended was very positive.”

“Each child/young person received an art pack to use during the Covid 19 pandemic. It provided the children/young people with equipment to allow them to undertake artistic activities. The pack promotes a mindful activity which supports mental health by living in the present.”

“It has helped the individuals and their families to work through the activities. Very suitable for indoors and outdoors and our team have linked up via zoom.”

Impact on social enterprise suppliers

Suppliers were also asked to complete a very short feedback form once they had delivered activities or services. We asked them:

1. In what ways, if any, has participating in Pockets & Prospects benefited your social enterprise?
2. Prior to being involved in this project, had you considered your social enterprise having a role to play in addressing mental health needs within local communities?

All of the suppliers approached to deliver activities and services had previously considered themselves as having a role to play in addressing mental health and needs within local communities.

In terms of the benefits experienced from participating, suppliers reported the following:

- Increased the profile of their social enterprise
- Increased awareness of their services
- Connected them to identified need & confirmed demand
- Provided access to new markets & extended reach
- Provided new & returning customers
- Provided new connections
- Helped to build new relationships
- Provided confidence to offer online services
- Helped to explore a sustainable enterprise model

Experience of engaging with the project

Supplier experience of engaging

All supplier feedback on engaging with the project was positive, particularly in relation to the process, communication and administration. The process was described as clear, straightforward, relaxed and easy to engage with and the project communication was described as friendly, open and approachable.

There was some confusion on a few occasions when community organisations had approached a supplier not on the initial listing without informing us. As we were not aware of the supplier they had not received the email with the booking information, but this was quickly addressed on each occasion.

A couple of suppliers also noted that some community organisations were not fully aware of the admin process and that some learning or guidance for community organisations would be helpful to ensure a shared understanding of the process between suppliers and community organisations.

Overall, suppliers reported it being a positive and enjoyable experience, with some providing additional comment on the value of the service.

“A very positive experience, evidenced by the testimonials and the feedback we received from the targeted audience. We saw first-hand how a scheme like Pockets & Prospects can make a difference in people’s lives.”

“Fantastic! It's a great service, very easy to use. The email from Pockets & Prospects with all the booking info was particularly useful.”

“Really positive experience. It's been great to have a product/service that is needed and is making a difference to communities across Scotland. We've had positive feedback from the organisations that have contacted us.”

“It was a relaxed friendly process with open approachable communication between partners. An opportunity to meet other organisations and with scope for future developments and collaborations in the future.”

“Many thanks for a straightforward and efficient process. We also greatly appreciate that the opportunity to do the training has strengthened our profile and our connections in West Lothian and beyond.”

Experience of engaging with the project

Community organisation experience of engaging

We invited community organisations to rate their experience of the project in the feedback form and all provided the maximum 5 stars.

Some also submitted additional comments, as noted below.

“I think this was a very good way to support social enterprise during challenging times.”

“A massive thank you to Pockets and Prospects and SENScot for making this process easy, barrier free and just generally for making it possible. This is such a valuable fund that has, can and will make a huge difference to people's lives.”

“This has been an excellent idea where we are able to access resources from other Voluntary Sector Groups.”

“We really appreciated the extra funding to run these sessions and getting to know Positive Steps who did a fantastic job. We have had enquiries about this course from those who attended to see if they could do it in their own workplace and have referred them on to Positive Steps.”

The project received early enthusiasm from both community organisations and suppliers, however the momentum of the project was significantly affected by the ongoing, changing, and regional variations in covid restrictions across the country.

Given the difficulties experienced by community organisations in relation to staff furlough, ability to operate, adjusting service provision and addressing additional needs, it was crucial that we provided flexibility for the participating community organisations. Whilst this resulted in the project taking place over a longer period that we had originally anticipated; it did not impact on overall engagement and impact.

Key Lessons

1. The activities & services provided had an impact on a wide range of mental health issues.
2. A wide range of benefits were reported by community organisations, suppliers, and beneficiaries.
3. Small levels of funding, when managed well can have a disproportionate positive impact in communities.
4. This approach has the potential to strengthen local wellbeing economies and networks.
5. The procedures and processes used to support the project were successful, with some adjustments identified to further improve the experience of all participants.