



# Swansea Council for Voluntary Service

Evaluation of the Covid-19 response – March-July 2020

September 2020

**Contents**

Introduction ..... 1  
    Role during the pandemic ..... 1  
Coordination and planning ..... 3  
    Systems and information..... 3  
    Cluster Groups..... 3  
    Volunteers..... 4  
Responding to the need ..... 6  
    Referrals ..... 6  
    Providing information ..... 7  
    Volunteers..... 8  
    Food..... 9  
    Prescriptions ..... 10  
    Hospital Discharge ..... 10  
    Supporting groups..... 10  
Reach and impact ..... 12  
    Meeting individuals needs ..... 12  
    Supporting the wider sector..... 15  
    Coordinating support..... 17  
Looking Forward ..... 18

## Introduction

In August 2020 Urban Foundry Ltd were commissioned by Swansea Council for Voluntary Service (Swansea CVS) to evaluate their response to the coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19). The report covers activity for the period until the end of July 2020. Some support services will have seen changes since this period, with some seeing increased demand and others reduced need.

Swansea CVS are an umbrella organisation for the third sector in Swansea. They provide information, advice and support to the sector as well as ensuring the views of the sector are represented to government and policy makers. Swansea CVS also directly deliver projects that aim to improve the lives of people living in the County.

In early March 2020 Swansea CVS began stepping up preparations for their response to Covid-19 and presented a Pandemic Action Plan to staff on the 10<sup>th</sup> March. They had started working from home risk assessments by the 17<sup>th</sup> March, and all staff had a laptop with remote access and a work mobile by the end of March. This preparation meant that when the national lockdown was announced on the evening of the 23<sup>rd</sup> March, Swansea CVS received their first referrals from GPs and individuals on the 24<sup>th</sup> March.

## Role during the pandemic

Swansea CVS had and continue to have an important role in Covid-19. They are both a direct deliverer of support to individuals who need help but they are also a convener and fulcrum for other third sector organisations in the area. They help to connect people to third sector organisations and third sector organisations to the wider public sector.

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic they have:

- **Provided direct support to individuals** – they have supported people with access to food and medicine but have also provided a range of activities that have supported people's emotional wellbeing
- **Provided support to the wider sector** – they have continued to support the wider third sector with volunteers, information and guidance, direct funding and support to access wider pots of funding
- **Coordinated support** – they have helped coordinate support to individuals, but have also been part of ensuring a coordinated response across Swansea including being part of key Local Authority meetings and being part of key networks including Swansea Together

This small evaluation helps to illustrate the role Swansea CVS played and continues to play during the pandemic and we have compiled this report with evidence provided by Swansea CVS.

---

*“Thanks so much for everything you and your organisation are doing, it is so reassuring to know that support is there.”*

---



## Coordination and planning

As we set out in the introduction, Swansea CVS had undertaken a range of planning and preparation prior to the national lockdown. This meant when the national lockdown was announced the whole staff team were in a position to adapt their ways of working and areas of focus. Swansea CVS had three solid foundations on which their Covid-19 response could be built:

- **Systems and information** – clear mechanisms for sharing information both internally and externally
- **Cluster groups** – organising the staff team and organisation into geographic areas to allow for a coordinated local response
- **Volunteers** – utilising existing systems and protocols to support volunteers in Swansea CVS, those in the wider third sector and those undertaking more informal volunteer roles

## Systems and information

Swansea CVS placed a strong focus on communicating information both internally and externally. The website was reconfigured to create a Covid-19 micro-site. Information on the site was organised into:

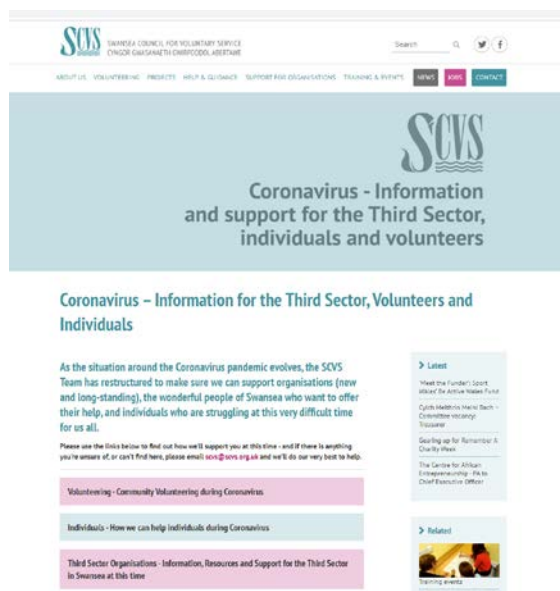
- Volunteering – an area for people who were interested in volunteering and guidance on what to do. There was also a clear link to an infographic providing advice and guidance on doing informal volunteering
- Individuals – an area with contact numbers, named people and email addresses so people know who to contact for support. Links to other organisations offering support to individuals, organised by theme was also provided – this was regularly updated with the local availability
- Third sector organisations – an area with contact details for third sector organisations and advice and guidance around operating during Covid-19, including information on loans and grants, mental health, volunteering and business continuity

The site was regularly updated with information as it became available and the existing strong presence on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn was used to share information. Swansea CVS also undertook two surveys of the wider sector to understand their support needs both at the start of the national lockdown and as the first lockdown started to ease.

Internal communication was also critical as the team had shifted from a purely face to face organisation to a remote working one. The team utilized Slack as a tool to coordinate, share ideas and to seek help from each other. An internal staff bulletin was also introduced to keep the staff team updated. Systems were also established so referrals could be easily managed.

## Cluster Groups

The major change undertaken by Swansea CVS was the creation of Cluster Groups and Cluster Leads. Swansea CVS have a Health and Social Care Manager which



gave strong existing links into local GPs and their existing cluster groupings. It was decided to facilitate a local response. Swansea CVS would organise into Cluster Groups that mirrored the GP Clusters. This meant there was a named person that GPs or other partners could refer to and individuals could self-refer to. Although this is a small detail, it meant that from an individual's perspective they weren't phoning a help line, they were phoning a person who could help.



The reorganisation into Clusters allowed staff to organise and respond to issues in a clear geographical area. It also allowed the teams to collate and share information relevant to their particular area. This was particularly important considering the formation of hyper local support groups and the differing availability of food banks and other services. Alongside this cluster structure, staff were allocated specific responsibility for a theme of activity, so there was a named lead for pharmacy collections, food work and internal and external volunteering.

To further support staff during Covid-19, all staff had access to a counselling service where they could seek support for their own health and wellbeing.

## Volunteers

Supporting volunteers is a key part of the work Swansea CVS does. It has in place volunteer policies and support systems that could be readily adapted in response to Covid-19. This facility was hugely important as the number of people wanting to help during Covid-19 was substantial. Swansea CVS had an existing system that meant they could:

- Provide a single point of contact for people wanting to volunteer
- Support existing volunteers to transition to new ways of working
- Ensure references and DBS checks were taken for people wanting to volunteer within SCVS Projects
- Provide training, particularly around safeguarding, for those volunteers taking on new roles
- Provide systems and mechanisms to support volunteers whilst they were volunteering

Volunteers were deployed for activities being led and coordinated by Swansea CVS, but they were also recruited for other third sector organisations in the area. Swansea CVS played an important role helping to keep volunteers 'warm' during Covid-19 so they would be ready to volunteer when the right opportunity arose, including offering access to relevant online training (for example, safeguarding) whilst they awaited placement

Although the recruitment of volunteers using the Swansea CVS protocols meant some minor delays were experienced by those wanting to be volunteers, this was balanced by the benefit. It meant the volunteers recruited were able to take on a variety of tasks and could be supported appropriately.

Volunteers working directly with Swansea CVS completed a recording sheet after every task. This meant any issues or concerns could be addressed immediately. The team could also provide a duty system 9 to 5 Monday to Friday. Holidays were coordinated and mobile phone numbers diverted so it was easy for a volunteer to contact a member of the team wherever they needed. Volunteers were also provided

with information and talked through this by a member of the team so they knew what to do if there was a crisis or they had any immediate concerns.

The processes in place were well established and tried and tested, so as the need and number of volunteers increased during Covid-19, Swansea CVS had the systems to both deploy volunteers and support them in their roles.

## Responding to the need

The structure set up by Swansea CVS meant they were then in a position to respond to the needs in the community. Swansea CVS provided a person-centred service to the people they worked with. This means they understood what a person or organisation needed and mobilised the support to meet those needs. The main areas of activity they undertook that were aimed at specifically supporting the Covid-19 response were:

- Referrals – the cluster groupings meant they could respond to referrals from GPs and the public sector
- Providing information – ensuring both individuals and the wider third sector knew what support was available to them
- Volunteers – continuing existing volunteer projects, mobilising volunteers to key volunteer roles and harnessing the enthusiasm of those new to volunteering. Also offering a telephone befriending service for those in need of emotional wellbeing support
- Food – being part of the coordinated Swansea wide approach to providing food, but also creating an emergency food provision and providing volunteers for the Coop food service
- Pharmacy – coordinating volunteers for pharmacy collections
- Hospital discharge – coordinating the third sector approach to supporting people as they exited hospital
- Supporting other third sector organisations – continuing to support the wider third sector, including supporting new groups set up to respond to the crisis, expansion of existing services, safeguarding and securing additional funding

## Referrals

The first stage of an individual receiving support is for someone to recognise a support need. This could be an individual self-referring, or from a partner organisation, particularly GPs. Early in the pandemic Swansea CVS produced a leaflet, shown opposite. This clearly showed people the type of support that was available and who they needed to contact to get that support.

Swansea CVS ensured they were available 7 days a week, which meant they could pick up some referrals who needed support when the Local Authority helpline was closed.

Figure 1 shows the number of referrals Swansea CVS received each week, with the biggest peak coming 4 weeks into the national shut down.





# URBAN

FOUNDRY

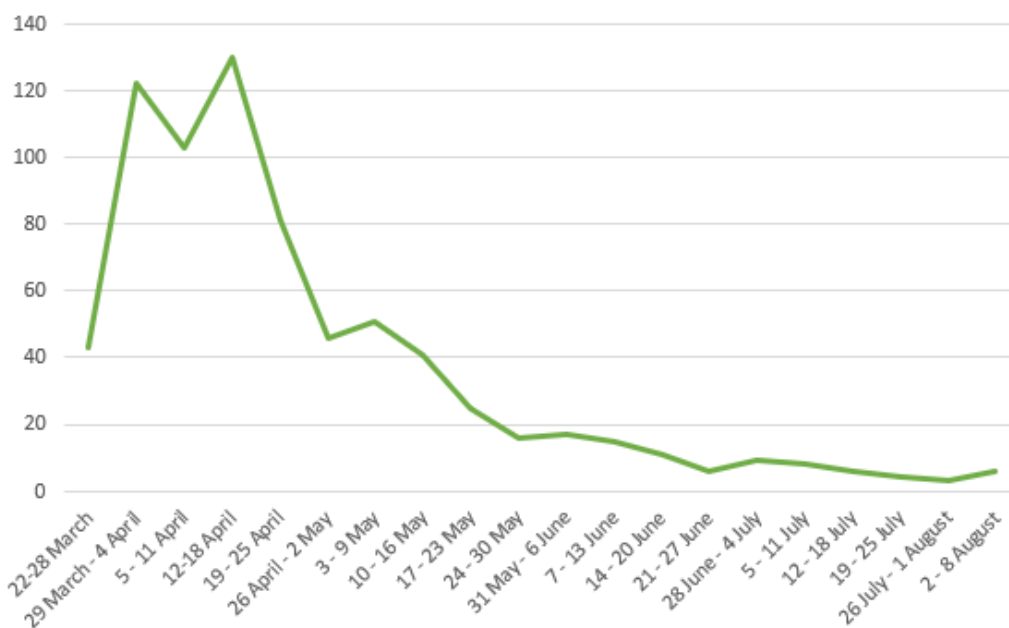


Figure 1 - Total referrals to Swansea CVS by week

The number of referrals varied by GP cluster, shown in Figure 2. The area with the highest number was Cwmtawe, which in part reflects the strength of the existing relationship between the team at Swansea CVS and the GPs in that area. However, it also reflects the community and the increased need they experienced.

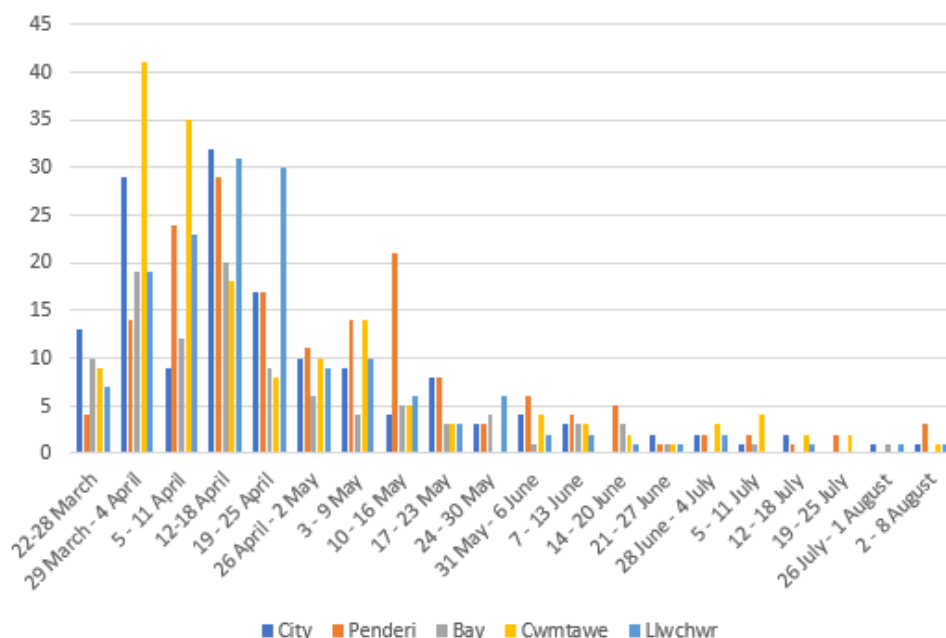


Figure 2 - Number of Total Referrals to SCVS by Cluster and Week

## Providing information

As set out above, an early part of the response by Swansea CVS was ensuring the website was set up to provide information that people needed. This was a considerable

challenge due to the volume and pace of information that was being provided. A key challenge was ensuring the most critical information was readily available to people.

The team also quickly pulled together information about the type of support that was available in each community, and the national support, including the furlough scheme and the various Government grants. This was a challenge for staff as they sought to keep ahead of the information and to be the local experts in a fast moving and changing situation.

This internal information, alongside the external information, was used by the staff team to ensure referrals for support were guided to the most relevant sources of support for them.

This sourcing and organising of information drove increased traffic to the website, with 15,641 visits to the website between 23<sup>rd</sup> March and 5<sup>th</sup> August. 84% of this traffic was looking at the Covid-19 information.

## Volunteers

Swansea CVS continued to provide many of the volunteering projects. This included:

- **Involve - Mental Health and Wellbeing Project** - looked at how it could diversify support offered to those it supported in a group setting and what other services it could offer using volunteers who previously visited hospital settings.
- **Transcend** - volunteers previously matched continue to offer support to those they are matched with. Some of the new referrals to Transcend have been accommodated by the Telephone Befriending.
- **Wassup** - Volunteers continue to offer support via telephone to the children and young people they are matched with
- **Interact** - Some volunteers have continued to offer support to those they are matched with. Group volunteers are not currently active, but staff remain in contact with them. Some Interact referrals have been accommodated by the telephone befriending
- **Penderi Young People's Wellbeing Project** - focus of the project is for anyone aged between 9 - 17 years old within the Penderi Cluster who would benefit from some wellbeing support, which is via telephone/video call. (not volunteer involving)
- **SNAP Project** - for anyone aged 11 - 16 within the Cwmtawe and Llchwyr Cluster area that would like support to become more active/improve wellbeing.
- **Social Prescribing** - remained open to referrals, able to support anyone 18+ in the Cwmtawe Cluster - offering a holistic support to enable people to re-engage with their community.
- **Swansea North Dementia and Carer Project** - offering support to anyone 18+ with Dementia and their Carers.
- **A Better Welcome to Swansea Project** – provides support and volunteer mentors to newly arrived asylum seekers and refugees. Volunteers and the project officer kept families updated in relation to available services and news and government updates

Swansea CVS also helped coordinate PPE including face masks, shields and gloves that could be distributed to volunteers. They also provided some tools to help those people who were undertaking informal volunteering so they had basic information on



how they and the people they were helping could stay safe, shown opposite. Swansea CVS also provided those people doing informal volunteering with a back stop. If they had concerns they could contact Swansea CVS and there was information on all the relevant phone numbers in the Swansea area.

In order to help match those newly registered volunteers with potential roles across the third sector, Swansea CVS undertook a survey with 1,200 people interested in volunteering to help audit their skills. They asked third organisations for role descriptions to start matching volunteers to organisations. As the pandemic progressed they also reached out to the pool of volunteers with specific volunteering requests.

An important part of the volunteer service provided by Swansea CVS was a telephone befriending service. This could support those people who were feeling socially isolated or lonely, or were considered at risk of becoming isolated and lonely. People referred to the service were triaged, and those with more substantial wellbeing needs were supported by existing, experienced volunteers who already had mental health training in place.

## Food

During Covid-19 a new issue emerged across Swansea that was replicated across large parts of Wales and across the UK. Prior to the pandemic there was a rising issue with food poverty and increased use of food banks. As the pandemic progressed there was a new issue of *access to food*. This issue impacted a wide range of different people. Those shielding had access to support from the Local Authority, but they didn't necessarily want or need the food being provided, what they lacked was access to food.

Swansea CVS was able to provide volunteers to support Coop in providing access to food. A system was established where a person could contact the Coop and pay for their shopping over the phone. A volunteer would then collect the shopping and leave it at their door with a receipt. This helped overcome some of the access to food barriers, but also ensured some of the issues with financial abuse could be avoided.

Swansea CVS were part of Swansea Together and were part of their fantastic work getting hot meals to those who needed it, again providing volunteers and ensuring the right paper work and guidance was followed. This support (both volunteers and guidance) was also provided to new food banks setting up or those expanding to new areas to meet demand.

The person-centred service provided by Swansea CVS ensured people had access to the food they could actually use. This included providing ready meals to people who were unable to cook from the food provided.

A big innovation, however, was the creation of an emergency food response. Using a small amount of funding Swansea CVS purchased non-perishable food that could be stored in cluster team's homes. This meant when they received a referral and local

food banks were closed or unavailable, they could provide people with an emergency food parcel.

## Prescriptions

Swansea CVS also became the approved route, via Public Health Wales for liaising with GPs and pharmacies for prescriptions. They formed a partnership with 4X4 Response Wales, a voluntary organisation that usually provides emergency transport as well as recruiting volunteers to be managed by SCVS.

The partnership, together with the volunteers managed by SCVS, allowed them to provide a prescription collection service to people who were shielding, vulnerable or were self-isolating. The training provided to volunteers by Swansea CVS and the appropriate vetting procedures they put in place ensured all medications could be collected and delivered by the volunteers. This was not without challenges as sometimes pharmacies would run out of medicines and there were factors outside the volunteers' control. Volunteers had access to PPE from early on in the pandemic. Pharmacies developed really effective working relationships with both SCVS staff and volunteers.

## Hospital Discharge

A further area of development by Swansea CVS has been working closely with the wider third sector and health partners to establish the Community Wellbeing Pathway, which is one of the pathways within Swansea Bay University Health Boards Rapid Discharge Process. This part of the pathway aims to support those people who need a small amount of support to remain safe and well at home as they are discharged from hospital. Swansea CVS is providing a co-ordinated service by brokering the services of other third sector organisations that can support the patient.

They had received 13 referrals by the end of June, 12 of which resulted in the person being able to return home with support. There have been significant increases in referrals since the stats were reported due to embedding of the service within hospital processes.

## Supporting groups

As with supporting volunteers, supporting the wider third sector is a hugely important part of the work that Swansea CVS do during more normal times. During Covid, SCVS have provided direct advice on a range of subjects and business continuity support to over 50 groups. This has included:

- Helping groups access the UK Government furloughing schemes and providing detailed information on eligibility and business planning during the Pandemic. This has worked well with groups large and small furloughing staff
- Getting the word out about the government business rates grants when they become available for 3rd sector in May-June
- New organisations, including spontaneous groups, have been supported with advice and help to constitute and review their governance to respond to the new emerging needs during the crisis, such as food banks
- BAME organisations have responded to the new demand for food and set up food distribution within their communities.
- Getting guidance out to village halls/community facilities about WG / WCVA guidance on re-opening in June

- Governance and/or funding information and advice, especially in preparation for re-opening services and facilities in general
- Promoting available funding via the SCVS website and from July, via ebulletin
- Promoting & administering small grants VSEF (Voluntary Service Emergency Fund) April to date and Comic Relief VSEF from July
- Responding to individual searches for funding

Alongside this support Swansea CVS have run two surveys, one near the start of the pandemic to understand what the immediate impact of Covid-19 was on their delivery. The second sought to understand how third sector organisations were preparing for the end of lockdown and what their training needs might be. Understandably the two biggest issues identified by the sector were Health and Safety and Safeguarding. Access to online training for these topics was made available to Swansea CVS through Swansea Council.

This led Swansea CVS to develop the following training programme for delivery over summer and autumn 2020:

- Communicating with remote and disparate teams
- Managing remote volunteer programmes
- Managing staff performance at a distance
- Leading organisational change
- Strategic planning and decision making
- HR management in challenging circumstances
- Having difficult conversations and dealing with conflict
- Coaching at a distance

## Reach and impact

During Covid-19 Swansea CVS were able to reach a large number of people. Although the scope and scale of this report is limited in the amount of data we have been able to collect around the impact of the work, it is clear from the data that Swansea CVS has:

- Supported individuals with their practical, emotional and health needs and helped them navigate some of the challenges they faced due to Covid-19
- Supported the wider sector with recruiting volunteers, advice, support, guidance and securing funding
- Supported the coordination of support for individuals and coordination between the public and third sectors

## Meeting individuals needs

As set out above Swansea CVS offered a person-centred service. They sought to understand the issues, needs and anxieties of the people that were referred to them and connected them to the most appropriate service or activity. The type of support provided could be grouped (as shown in Figure 3) into practical, emotional and health support. Across the duration of the lockdown the main requests were around practical support, alongside emotional support in the immediate response to the lockdown.

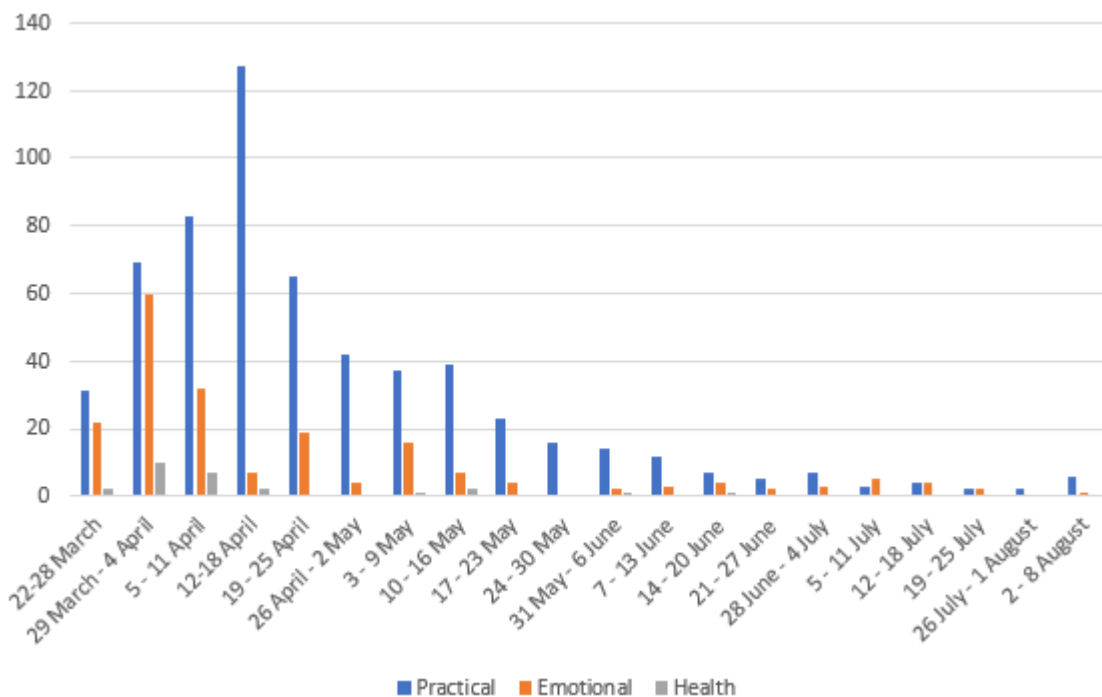


Figure 3 - Type of support requested from Swansea CVS

At the start of the lockdown the initial requests received from referrals were for help with access to food, which later changed to help with prescriptions. As shown in Figure 4, the number of prescription requests rose sharply from 20 in the first seven-day period to 103 in the third set of seven days.

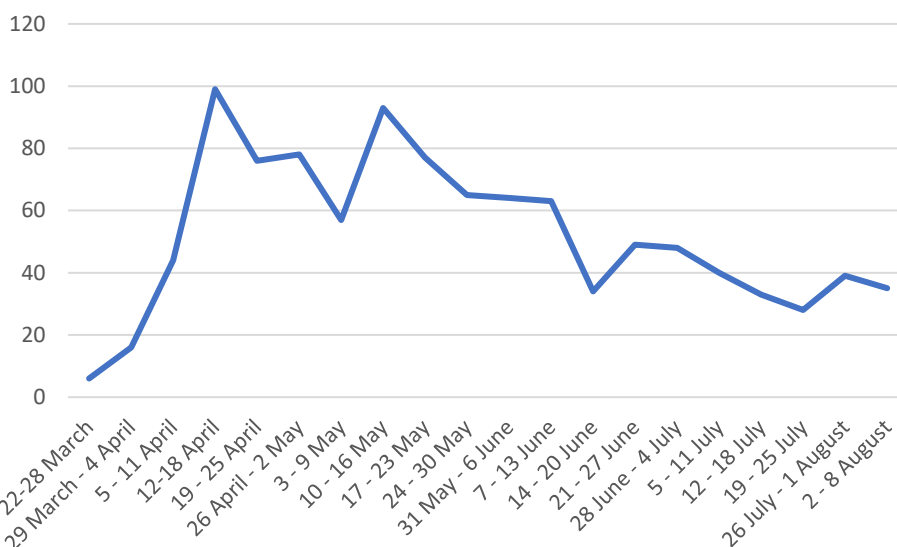


Figure 4 - Prescription requests by week

The feedback from those people who Swansea CVS has been working with has been hugely positive.

*"Can I say a massive thank you to you and all your team. We are working across the whole of South Wales and it's amazing to see the work and the difference to people's lives that SCVS are making." Partner*

*"The medication was delivered yesterday as promised, everything was fine. I would like to say how much we appreciate the efforts of you and your colleagues and thank you all for your kindness and help"*

*"Over the last few months I have been dealing with several of your wonderful staff. I would firstly like to take a minute to thank you and your team for all their hard work over the pandemic."*

*"Very many thanks for arranging for our prescriptions to be collected today. Your help is greatly appreciated"*

*"Thank you all for my medication I will be clapping for you tonight 🙌"*

*"Just to let you know that we have just received our prescriptions from (name of volunteer). Many thanks to you and all concerned for what appears to be a very well organised operation."*

*"Just wanted to say thank you for helping my Dad it has really helped and made him much more relaxed."*

The person-centred approach also led to Swansea CVS identifying the Grab and Go bags provided as part of the Free School Meal service run by the Local Authority. They identified the bags had inappropriate food in them for some cultures. This was a particular issue for refugees and asylum seekers who otherwise had no recourse to public funds. After highlighting this with partners supporting this cohort of individuals the issue was taken to Home Office and payments are now loaded onto the ASPEN card.

The impact of the person-centred approach meant peoples differing needs could be met.

### **Case Study 1**

Mr and Mrs M were referred to SCVS by their G.P. Practice. When contacted by SCVS, Mr and Mrs M mentioned they were concerned about being able to get shopping and collecting their medication during Covid-19, as did not want to put themselves at risk by going out. Mr and Mrs M are in their late eighties and early nineties. SCVS gave the couple the telephone number for the Coop Care Line. They telephoned the Coop Care Line with their shopping list and paid over the phone. Their local Coop food store was Clydach, who were able to utilise the volunteer list provided by SCVS to contact a volunteer to deliver the shopping (with their receipt in the bag) and leave on the couple's doorstep.

Mr and Mrs M contacted SCVS again a few weeks' later for medication. SCVS contacted the G.P. Practice who confirmed that the prescription was ready and would be given to the Lloyds Pharmacy next door to the Surgery. SCVS contacted 4X4 to arrange collection from the Pharmacy and delivery to Mr and Mrs M, which was completed the next day. Mr and Mrs M reported feeling less anxious about having someone to contact if they needed help. Mr M regularly uses e-mail and has been keeping in contact via these means.

### **Case Study 2**

I was contacted by a carer who was looking for help to solve a problem that her mother, who is living with dementia, needed help with.

The lady lives alone and her daughter, who cares for her, lives out of the area, and also has a newborn baby, so is unable to visit. The lady needed help to reset her television as she had pressed too many buttons and as a result, had no service. Her daughter had tried to talk through things on the phone but to no avail, so it needed someone to visit the property to solve the problem for her. Usually the daughter would contact a neighbour to help out but, due to the current situation, no one is able to call on her.

After ringing around a number of television repair companies, I finally found one that was still working and, was also prepared to enter the property to reset the television. The gentleman was able to call the same day so I passed his details on to the carer and arrangements were made for his visit, which was successful.

### **Emotional and Wellbeing needs**

As well as addressing the practical needs of people across the county, Swansea CVS has been supporting people with their health and wellbeing needs. This has been directly through the ongoing telephone befriending and existing volunteer support services.

As a new service developed towards the end of the reporting period, the telephone befriending service has supported people with 29 matches, with a further 3 matches being organised. The telephone befriending volunteers are contacting people once or twice a week to check in with how they are. They are also able to involve the wider staff team in helping to solve problems or address issues. At the time of publication of this evaluation, referrals for this support have seen an ever-increasing demand for befriending support.

The telephone support is not limited to adults, and Swansea CVS has continued to provide support to vulnerable young people through their existing network of programmes.



*“Feedback from carers and children and young people has been extremely positive, the young people are happy to continue receiving support, where lots of other activities they may have been involved with prior to Covid is on hold”*

However, the emotional and wellbeing support has also happened indirectly. The volunteer opportunities created by Swansea CVS helped people with their own mental health and wellbeing by creating opportunities for people to have a sense of purpose and focus during the most difficult phase of the lockdown. The value of volunteering was showcased through a social media campaign that operated during Volunteer Week.

*“Already being a volunteer for SCVS for two years and being furloughed from work during this period, I wanted to try and do something to help my community. Not only to keep myself busy and give myself a break from the monotony of staying at home, for my mental health and to help others. Knowing there are people out there who are in difficult situations, such as being forced to stay home due to illness or other self-isolation reasons such as shielding. I knew I had to make the most out of my situation. I am fortunate that I can drive and am fit and well, so could do something for those who are less fortunate than myself. It has been rewarding to pick up prescriptions for others, saving them putting themselves at risk, queuing for long periods of time as is the case now with the current situation. Then to drop them off, knowing that they now have the medication that is vital for them and to see how grateful they are for the service I have provided. One lady even said I was an angel, which really moved me, I even cried when I went home and told my children, who are very proud of me. I am also thankful for this opportunity as I am setting a great example to my children about helping others and pulling together in situations.”*

*‘the ability to feel, even in a small way, I was helping in a crisis. Seeing nurses and key workers contributing, I wanted to help with national solidarity. Without volunteering I would have felt helpless or useless, it stopped me feeling this way.’*

*‘As I’m fit and healthy and have time on my hands volunteering makes me feel a little less helpless, more focused and gives me a sense of purpose’*

*‘It makes me happy that I can do something to help people who aren’t able to get out and about. It is also good for my wellbeing too. I’m very appreciative of being able to volunteer during this time of uncertainty’*

*‘I haven’t been able to work due to the Covid-19 situation. Finding a volunteering opportunity through SCVS has given me a renewed sense of purpose and motivation’*

## Supporting the wider sector

Alongside the work supporting individuals, a key outcome of the work of Swansea CVS during the pandemic has been supporting the wider sector. This has been in a number of ways by recruiting volunteers but also through supporting people with direct funding or by supporting them to access their own funding.

Figure 5 shows the degree of interest that was generated on Volunteer Wales for volunteer placements. Swansea CVS were able to support the placements of at least 256 volunteers in 38 different third sector organisations across the County.

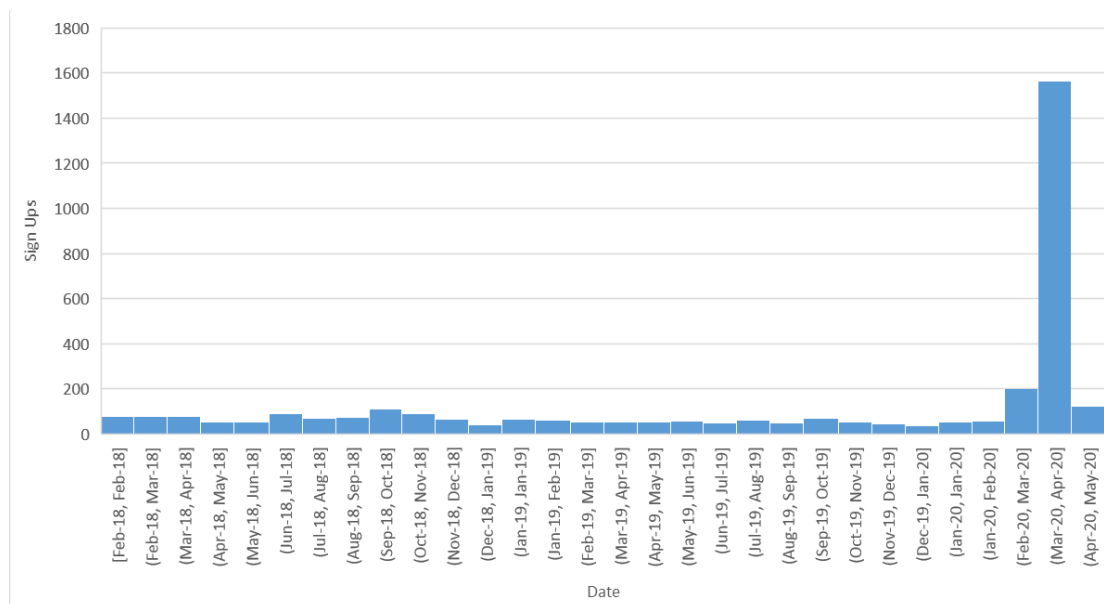


Figure 5 - Volunteer Wales sign ups

The Development Team were able to support a wide range of hyper-local organisations as they established, including supporting them with the right paper work and safeguarding procedures.

SCVS directly awarded £13,777 to 8 groups via Voluntary Service Emergency Fund small grants scheme between March and July 2020:

- 4x4 Response Wales - South Wales- £2000 - Delivery service
- Pontarddulais Partnership - £3000 - foodbank
- Welsh Hearts - £5000 - Defibrillators in the community
- GSP Partnership £500 - Contribution to core costs during Covid lockdown.
- Morryston Tabernacle £500 – Newsletter to local residents
- Iberian and Latin American Association £200 - To support refugees and asylum seekers
- South Wales MSTC Ltd £577 – Staff training in preparation for restarting service
- Race Council Cymru £2000 – To support international students in Swansea.

Two addition groups were funded using Comic Relief VSEF Fund in July 2020:

- Llamau - £3000 – IT for remote working for outreach staff
- National Autistic Society - Swansea branch - £2825 – Costs of online training
- Additional local funding sources to be administered by SCVS were negotiated during the period covered by this report with a significant Capital funding scheme coming to fruition recently. (noted in the final section).

In addition, Swansea CVS supported 38 organisations to raise over £320,000 between March and July 2020 from the following funding streams:

- Austin Bailey Foundation
- Community Foundation in Wales - Wales Coronavirus Resilience Fund
- WG - Voluntary Services Emergency Fund
- Comic Relief VSEF Fund

- National Lottery - Awards for All
- Moondance Foundation Covid19

## Coordinating support

Covid-19 led to an unprecedented response from the public, private and third sectors. Individuals also got involved in street level volunteering and supporting their friends and neighbours. This led to a huge amount of activity happening, but also it needed sharing widely so people knew what was available to them in their area. The fast-changing environment also meant this information needed constant updating.

*"I just wanted to send you a quick thank you for this updated wellbeing directory – I have found it so useful to be able to signpost people with the up to date information on the services they need. Just wanted to share my gratitude. Many thanks' - Local Area Coordinator*

*"...that's amazing, I'd been feeling frustrated and worried because I wasn't getting anywhere and was really worried how I was going to sort the all of this, this is a huge relief for me. and thank you so much for talking to me today"*

The partnership coordination ensured people knew what was going on and also ensured, wherever possible, duplication of tasks was minimized.

### Case Study 3

We received a Referral from a Neighbourhood Officer for an individual who has been living with her father. Her Father who was the tenant of the property had passed away in hospital with the Covid19 virus and her sister who also has Covid19, was on a ventilator.

The individual has also been in hospital herself and was diagnosed with the Covid19 virus. She had been sent home to isolate. She had no money or food. She also had a prescription she needed collecting and a suspected clot. We advised the referrer about contacting the Local Area Coordinator regarding food or Local Authority emergency provision.

After initial difficulty in contacting the individual we managed to speak to her to discuss how best to support her. She explained that the respiratory nurse from the hospital had been in touch and was getting her prescription for her. Her immediate need was for food. We discussed her dietary needs and her ability to cook while she was unwell. I agreed to contact the neighbourhood officer to check on progress with a food parcel so that we didn't duplicate the service. I reassured her that we would make sure that she did get food today.

I contacted the Neighbourhood Officer, she explained she had been unsuccessful in contacting the LAC team and couldn't get food today. I agreed to organise one of our emergency parcels, I also updated her that the young woman had sorted her prescription so we didn't need to organise this.

We dispatched a member of our Team to deliver the food parcel immediately. I contacted the Neighbourhood Officer to let her know that had been done and to discuss getting further food, which she has successfully managed. There has been ongoing contact between us, the referrer and the Individual, to explore how we now move forward as there are a large number of practical, financial and emotional issues which she will need to be supported with.

## Looking Forward

The future in both the short and medium term is hugely uncertain. The economy is slowly reopening following the Covid-19 lockdown, but the pace of this opening is likely to change depending on rates of infection in the community. There is a considerable challenge faced by the third sector in slowly returning to normal but also continuing to meet the needs of people in the community and being ready to respond to a new wave of Covid-19.

Swansea CVS has recently secured a Welsh Government Third Sector RPB Capital Funding grant of £200,000 to support the sector to adapt how they work, but the future funding landscape is uncertain.

Covid-19 has shown the huge value of the third sector, it has shown it can be nimble, quickly solve local problems and work across a wide range of different partners to meet the needs of individuals in the communities. Organisations like Swansea CVS play a particularly important role as they support individuals but they also support the sector.

One of the interesting insights from the Covid-19 response is that Swansea CVS could help anyone, there were no geographical or other parameters put in place, if someone had a need they could be helped. Those delivering the activities felt a free reign led to a better, more welcoming service to anyone who needed it across the County.

Some of the key successes from the Covid-19 response by Swansea CVS have been:

- **Adaptability** – Swansea CVS quickly adapted to a new structure and new way of working flexibly to best meet the needs of people and third sector organisations in the community
- **Information** – quickly collating, organising and sharing the information about what was happening across the area and helping individuals navigate those services
- **Volunteers** – building on existing, high quality systems and processes to allow them to utilise volunteers with specific training who could be trusted in the community
- **Food** – providing volunteers for various activities that supported food poverty but also specifically responding to the Covid-19 specific issue of *access to food*
- **Trust** – individuals have trusted the volunteers and staff at Swansea CVS because although they are professional they are not part of the public sector

Although our evaluation was limited by time it is clear the third sector is a hugely valuable part of the landscape in Swansea. They fill a different role to those offered by the public sector. They provide a trusted, person centred response for people in the community. They work around the constraints that public sector organisations often have to impose. A vibrant third sector is a critical part of any emergency response and it has shown itself to be hugely valuable throughout the pandemic. However, third sector organisations need resource. They are well placed to fill the roles often perceived to be the remit of the public sector, particularly those that involve working with individuals in a person-centred way to help them solve problems. Swansea CVS enhance this role by supporting individuals but also supporting the sector.

The structures adopted and the outcomes delivered by Swansea CVS during the pandemic have demonstrated their ability to rapidly respond to crisis situations. This approach could be applied to other 'resilience' situations where a 3rd sector coordinating body would be required.

Swansea CVS are also assessing how the up-swell of interest in volunteering can be built upon to convert enthusiasm into long term volunteering with established organisations across the sector, providing a positive, long-lasting legacy as a result of the community mobilisation that has occurred during Covid.

The pandemic has further highlighted that whilst it is important that public bodies respond to community need, attention must be given to how that is then converted into support for communities and the sector in the longer term, as such services can more effectively, responsively and cost effectively be delivered by third sector organisations.