



Personal Outcomes Stories during COVID: Learning from practice

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With thanks to all the brokers involved



How have you been able to keep a focus on what matters to people during COVID?

In the context of self-directed support policy in social care in Scotland, we set up a successful community brokerage network in East Ayrshire several years ago. We now work across Ayrshire, coordinating a network of brokers who help people to plan and organise their support. We make the most of any budget or resource and maximise the use of community activity and support. If the person doesn't qualify for formal support the broker can still help by linking to activities in the community or with other people with similar interests. We are funded to help people and carers to:

- feel more informed
- creatively and flexibly plan to achieve personal outcomes including accessing community assets
- have increased skills so are better able to manage social care packages

From the outset of the CV-19 Pandemic we made a conscious decision not to rush in but rather to see where gaps in support needs may emerge. We didn't want to get in the way of the community response to CV-19. We started by engaging in welfare calls with people we were involved with and we continue to do that.

When PPE emerged as a big issue for people in caring roles we realised there were issues about how to get it to people who employ personal assistants (PA). It was also recognised that people employing a PA may have other concerns. East Ayrshire HSCP approached the Community Brokerage Network (CBN) to deliver PPE to those PA employers that needed it and the brokers were also able to provide reassurance and support wellbeing.

What have you had to do differently and what made this possible?

The knowledge and skills of the brokers was key to the success of this as they had:

- local intelligence knowing where the local addresses were and used this to plan routes to minimise travelling

- the ability to engage with people and offer reassurance and guidance about the options/flexibility of SDS during the pandemic as the details became clear
- skills in strength-based conversations and ability to address anxieties and concerns
- connections to signpost people to other support arrangements where needed

The skills used are those used every day in the work of the broker but the context was different. It was possible because of the longstanding and positive relationships with the HSCP that had been built over time and was rooted in mutual respect and trust.

What have you noticed that has been better?

This arrangement meant that over 100 people who were PA employers didn't need to make arrangements to travel to pick up the PPE. It was delivered by a small group of 8 brokers meaning the risk of exposure of carers to CV-19, many of whom were caring for clinically vulnerable people, was greatly reduced. They didn't have to worry about the risks of leaving home and received reassurance from the brokers.

How did this make you feel?

This felt a worthwhile use of the resources we had available and there was satisfaction knowing that the time invested in relationships and building a credible organisation over the years had paid off. The HSCP trusted us with information and with a task that would make peoples' lives easier. The recipients of the PPE were able to share their delight at not having to make arrangements, especially with limited public transport, to collect it from the town centre.

What have you learned through this?

It reinforced that small acts can make big differences and sometimes it is right to sit back and wait for the right opportunity to reveal itself.

Anything else you want to tell us?

It was a very positive experience for the brokers involved. They had offered their services through local hubs but hadn't been called upon to support any aspects of the work. The brokers had felt that they were doing little to help and they carried a bit of guilt about it, while recognising the need to allow community responses to emerge. The PPE deliveries made good use of their skills, knowledge and experience so was the perfect activity. This will continue on a monthly basis until it is no longer needed.