



## Personal Outcomes Stories during COVID: Learning from practice

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



I am part of the Get Togethers team at the Soil Association. Get Togethers is an intergenerational project that aims to bring people together through good food; whether that be growing, cooking and or eating. I work across Glasgow, Edinburgh and Inverclyde.

As the pandemic hit, we put a pause on all our activities as it was not safe to get together. We maintained contact with our stakeholders, mainly through email and over the phone. We wanted to offer support where appropriate but didn't want to clog up peoples email boxes as aware that for many, they were providing services to communities, individuals and families.

We facilitated a short consultation to find out what our service users were doing, what support we could provide. We were able to gather that **'good food'** was at forefront; where to get it, how to cook and store it and how to support people who were now facing severe food poverty. We were able to respond by providing an emergency small grant, which enabled us to support 14 organisations across Glasgow, Edinburgh and Inverclyde providing essential services.

Another focus is around people **staying connected with each other**, now more than ever. We have developed a number of ways for people to **get together in a safe way**. We have developed a Facebook page, which we encourage our service users to follow. This is a space to share, learn and connect. We have had gardening tips, exercise classes and cook along sessions as well as people sharing their local event and feel good stories.

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

Had to shift to everything being online; more email, calling and video interaction. We are in the process of developing online training around cooking and gardening. Next month we will host our first online networking event.

As our project was put on hold, it gave us an opportunity to reflect on what we've been doing well or not so well and to make appropriate changes moving forward. One of the biggest changes is we have now changed our focus to be more inclusive in bring people together of all ages and backgrounds through good food. We will have more online courses and have new online resources that people can access via our website.

#### **What have you noticed that has been better?**

Even though people have not been able to get together physically, there is a stronger sense of community spirit with many people saying they **feel more connected** now. **Being healthy and eating well** is at the forefront of people's minds and we have seen a rise in people shopping locally, eating more organic and seasonal produce.

As a staff team, there has been less travel, which is better for the environment. It has demonstrated there are several ways to be part of bigger discussions, meetings etc without physically having to be there.

There have been more virtual spaces to connect with colleagues - online coffee breaks where we are encouraged to take a break and catch up with our colleagues. Virtual pubs and quiz and games evenings. Perhaps for some having a better work/ life balance, with the mental and physical well being of the staff team being seen as important during these unprecedented times

#### **How did this make you feel?**

At first, I struggled with everything going online as I am used to meeting people face to face. I had 'Zoom' fatigue and had to monitor this and ensure I took regular breaks. I felt a bit lost with my project being postponed and was unclear how to best support people.

I found it very heartening that individuals and organisations liked to hear from us and felt supported by me. Being able to provide some sort of financial support for organisations doing amazing work made me feel good and as if I was helping in a very practical way.

#### **What have you learned through this?**

I have learned that **we all need to be connected**, that food is at the heart of all communities and is a great way to bring people together.

That perhaps we will have an end to rush hour, with more people working from home if possible.

#### **Anything else you want to tell us?**

For more information about the Get Togethers programme, please check our website <https://www.foodforlife.org.uk/get-togethers>