



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?

Our service was set up to help EU citizens apply to remain in the UK now that we have left the EU. The service targets the most vulnerable in society to help them complete their immigration application and submit it to the Home Office.

The pandemic has caused over 374,000 people in Scotland to be put on furlough and caused worry and stress about employment, housing and debt as well as having to apply to remain in a country that many now call home.

The Citizens Advice network in Scotland focusses on face-to-face advice and we are now having to review this while bureaux are closed to the public. However, we have managed to keep the EU helpline open and set up a new national helpline for general advice related to the Covid pandemic in two weeks. Since opening the new helpline we have been able to maintain a focus on giving free, confidential and impartial advice to the public.

On a personal note, I've been connected to work on personal outcomes in Scotland for many years. I previously worked in one of the early implementer sites (Midlothian), starting over ten years ago. It's been great to carry that through in to my current role.

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

We have had to revert to email, telephone and webchat. Whilst this is not ideal, we have ensured that we continue to deliver our services. In Scotland there are 59 bureaux and the vast majority of people giving advice are unpaid volunteers and they continue to give their time, working from home, to help people with their problems.

What have you noticed that has been better?

I've noticed that the advisers are delivering a more person-centred approach when contacted by members of the public. They always take a person-centred approach but at the moment they take an extra interest in people's circumstances to see if they need additional support. Advisers are also taking more time with one another to ask how they are and to make sure that they are coping with social distancing issues, especially those with young children.

How did this make you feel?

Humble

What have you learned through this?

I've learned that there's a lot more kindness in the world than I thought and there are huge numbers of people that care about others and are less selfish than I thought.

Anything else you want to tell us?

We want to carry out work with people who work in the care sector and people that they care for as we appreciate that there are large numbers of EU citizens working in the care sector and older people either in care homes or receiving care at home.

When we are able to do so we would like to hear from organisations that would like our assistance for their staff and clients.