



## Personal Outcomes Stories during COVID: Learning from practice

### Local authority social worker

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



I am a social worker based in children and families' services. While in self-isolation myself it has been very challenging to manage peoples' fears and needs as well as I would like to. Other members of my team have helped with emergency support issues. These have focused on base level needs like electricity, gas, food and someone to listen to children and families.

A lot of the relational-based work has had to be scaled back to ensure financial worries are kept as the priority, particularly as people have been losing their jobs and having to apply for Universal Credit. Mental health has been another key concern for many of the people I work with.

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

The use of technology has been the biggest difference over this period for me, whether it was group work with children or video calls to maintain some form of face-to-face contact. This took a period of upgrade and development but it did help maintain relationships and groups.

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

During the early phase of COVID in particular there was more flexibility with using our budget to support families with small items, Netflix cards, internet etc. These were items which would have not have been freely available previously.

There has been a shared understanding of the importance of maintaining contact between service users and workers. It has felt more open because many fears and practicalities have had to be addressed, which has resulted in better communication and focus on the key needs.

#### How did this make you feel?

I have felt relieved due to the fact that we have found ways to respond to new needs including more flexibility with money for items that would help people during this time that wouldn't have been signed off previously.

**What have you learned through this?**

Social work provides a particularly important role in a time of crisis like this, in providing links between the people who use our service and the range of other agencies that are potentially involved.

Workers now have a better understanding of managing services during a crisis. It is vital that everyone communicates in order to understand what the key needs are and that this is not distorted by statistical reports that do not reflect service users' and workers' understanding of the priorities. It would be ideal if there could be more links between Scottish Government and practitioners in deciding performance measures going forward.

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

Throughout this period the solidarity of workers has been the most pivotal aspect; on several occasions workers have had to collectively think about how social work is run and what is beneficial for a pandemic such as this. It would be good to see that collective wisdom being taken on board.