



Outcomes under COVID stories – Personal Outcomes Network

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



The [Scotland Reducing Gambling Harm](#) programme, managed by the ALLIANCE, aims to put the voice of people affected by gambling harms at the heart of action to reduce those harms. To do this it is setting up a Lived Experience Forum. The Forum will create recommendations to speed up delivery of the [National Strategy to Reduce Gambling Harms](#) launched last April by the Gambling Commission. Engaging people with lived experience is crucial to the success of the programme, and is necessary to tackle stigma associated with gambling. Prior to COVID -19, the plan involved four workshops held throughout Scotland, alongside a series of focus groups. This process would inform and engage people to find out what mattered to them in creating the Lived Experience Forum. These

events were planned for March onwards, with the Forum established towards the late Summer / early Autumn 2020.

Given the public health emergency it would have been inappropriate to launch the forum in March. Since then however, we have grown in confidence on running virtual sessions and have been exploring other ways of engaging people – one to one phone interviews, surveys and work through the ALLIANCE's 2,900 members across Scotland. We need to respond to different preferences for communication forms and also recognise that people will want to contribute differently, with some perhaps using or developing skills in speaking, chairing, reviewing documents and so on.

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

We are now formally launching the programme through a virtual session in July and the programme's engagement plan and timescales have been changed to:

- [Virtual ALLIANCE membership engagement sessions](#)
- Four virtual events across Scotland
- A survey and series of one-to-one interviews with people with lived experience

- Working with the Third Sector Interface network, Self Management Network Scotland and Self Management Fund projects' learning events
- Working and developing engagement through ALISS, Discover Digital, Carer Voices, Community Links Practitioners, and other emerging partnerships.

These events, survey, interviews and other engagement activities will take place Summer-Autumn 2020, with the Forum established in late Autumn 2020, Winter 2020/21.

What have you noticed that has been better?

In the virtual engagement we have done so far, I've been noticing that people give one another more time and that there is a shift in the power dynamic of the meetings. Because people appreciate that a virtual meeting would descend into chaos if people speak over one another, they give one another more airtime and make an effort to really listen to what others are saying. It also flattens out the power dynamics, to a certain extent. Where a Chief Executive may attend a meeting in a suit and be much more at home in a round table setting than people with lived experience, the power dynamic is shifted when everyone is wearing a t-shirt and speaking from their own homes.

How did this make you feel?

Running an engagement programme during social distancing raises a host of concerns. One challenge I've been grappling with a great deal is how to engage digitally excluded groups in this work. Usually the ALLIANCE is good at travelling all around Scotland to deliver sessions, events and engagement, that is not possible at present. However, there may be benefits also, such as the flattening of the power dynamic mentioned above. I remain very motivated to continue, as there are key outcomes associated with this work, with potential to improve health, relationships and financial wellbeing.

What have you learned through this?

This time has made me appreciate more the benefits of careful planning and preparation for any engagement work. The ALLIANCE is a very nimble, fast-moving organisation when it comes to engagement. On coming into post late February, we already had two workshops lined up for early March. These past few months have made us pause and reflect on how to do this engagement best and how to reach people effectively.