



Personal Outcomes Stories during COVID: Phase 2 understanding from experience

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What has continued to help keep a focus on what matters for people during the pandemic?

Bearing in mind, Compassionate Inverclyde is a social movement based on ordinary people helping ordinary people, we have continued to look for ways to make sure that keeps happening despite the changing circumstances we are facing.

Our facebook group is a great way of communicating, even more so with the recent restrictions. <https://www.facebook.com/CompassionateInverclyde> It communicates to people in Inverclyde about the great things that are going on – building a sense of community with constant good news. It is our main way of recruiting volunteers too. Or if we need specific items for boxes, we get a brilliant and rapid response through that.

Wellbeing is a key priority driving our activity. The 5 ways to wellbeing is built into our way of working, and we are still focusing on connecting, giving and noticing. One of the ways we are still doing that is our wellbeing phonecalls. We have made over 3000 phonecalls during this period, which can be daily or weekly, to stay connected to people who would otherwise be alone.

Are there changes that seem to be lasting longer term and are there things that have slid back to old ways of doing things?

The most pressing issue in Inverclyde right now is food poverty. The local authority and HSCP are working together to plan a strategic response to that. We contributed to that in a small way during the early stages of the pandemic with our helping hand boxes, working closely with other voluntary sector partners. Although we are not directly involved now we are very aware of how big an issue it is right now for people to be able to eat well to stay well.

What difference has this made to people?

Our feedback tells us that people who get boxes or phonecalls know that they are not alone, and that somebody is thinking about them.

For our volunteers, staying active and being able to contribute is really important and many say that this helps their wellbeing too. Involving different generations is a key part of what we do. It's been great to get schoolchildren involved again and along with loads of other groups, they are contributing to our Jolly Boxes, and again it encourages that

community spirit from an early age. These boxes will go to people in hospital on Xmas eve, and will go to anyone alone at home at Xmas as well as care home residents.

Although we haven't been able to continue with all our projects as we would want a really lovely thing was the film that was made over the last year that puts Compassionate Inverclyde in the context of our local history, and includes many of our volunteers.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hfAJdEQID4I> I think that has given people a boost.

How did this make you feel?

I am sad in some ways. We started out a few years ago with a clear mission to tackle isolation and loneliness in Inverclyde. The pandemic has made that a much bigger issue and it is counteracting so much of what we have been working towards.

I am frustrated that our No-one dies Alone project (NODA) has had to pause for now. We already provided this service in the hospital and care homes and had trained 30 companions to sit with people who were dying at home alone. That has been a long term ambition and I am struggling with the fact that we are so near to being able to provide that, but can't.

In another way though I am still proud of our community and the huge numbers of people who contribute in so many ways to helping other people. I just need to be patient.

Reflecting on your experiences what have you learned?

It's more of an observation than learning, but it has really struck me how well positioned we were to be able to respond to the crisis. The foundations were in place, and we have already establish ourselves as a group of well organised people who can adapt to new circumstances. We were able to hit the ground running because of that.

I still think back to that early stage of the pandemic. We needed to get people out quickly to delivery prescriptions and there wasn't time to do PVG checks. So I had to rely on phone interviews and use my judgement. There was no problem and we delivered more than 500 prescriptions, meaning that we were able to support health and wellbeing of people who couldn't make their own arrangements. We have always talked about trust and courage and when we were in that situation, trust and courage paid off.

What difference has it made to you to tell your story as part of this project?

I think it's always good to take a step back, to be asked questions that help you think about things from a different angle. I'm not sure how to explain it exactly, but when you hear your voice talking about a subject that you care about deeply, you become aware of the importance of the message and the aspiration that other people can share that hope and inspiration.