SURF COVID 19

LESSONS FROM THE FRONTLINE

If wealth is the greatest shield from infection and serious illness[1], then disadvantaged communities are the most exposed
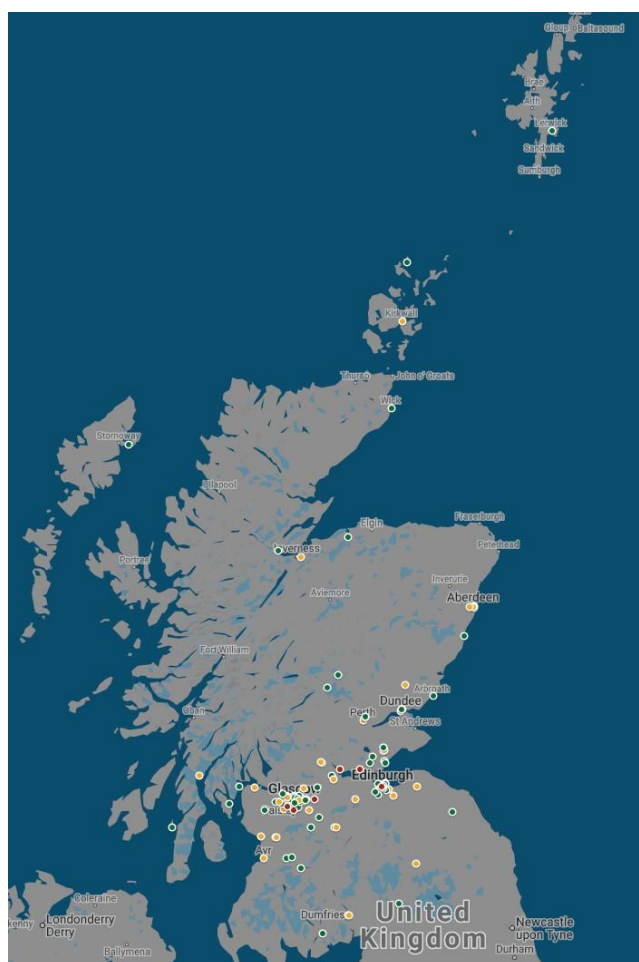
SHOWCASING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

The full interactive version of SURF's map can be found here:
https://www.surf.scot/projects/building-back-better/showcasing-community-resilience/

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[1] Devi Sridhar (18.5.2020) Advisor to Scottish Government on COVID 19 and Professor and Chair of Global Public Health at Edinburgh University. Interview, Daily Telegraph.
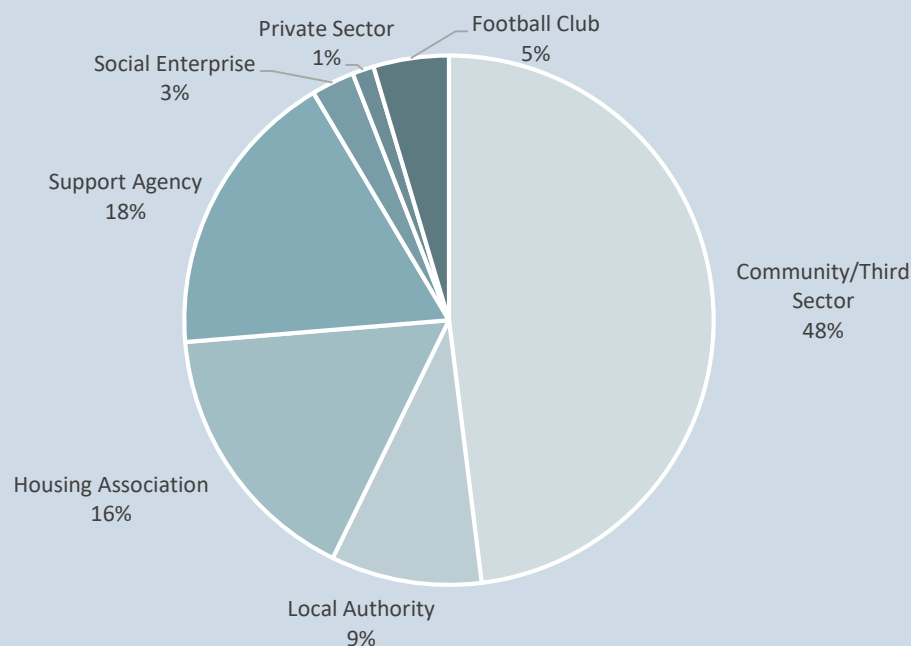
Contents

Introduction

SURF's role as Scotland's Regeneration Forum has become even more crucial during the COVID 19 crisis, as our network of community groups, local authorities, national agencies and funders responded to the lockdown's disproportionate impact on the poorest people and places. A key part of SURF's work is to identify and share learning which can inform and improve regeneration policy and practice across Scotland. This research analyses reports and learning from across SURF's network that will help us all to collaboratively rebuild better.

Since lockdown began in March 2020, SURF has been engaging with communities and organisations across Scotland and the cross sector organisations which support them. It has provided a platform for them to tell their stories of challenges, responses and resilience. Reports of these practical efforts have been published weekly on the SURF website, and as e-bulletins to SURF's 3000 strong network.

These frontline responses – more than 150 of them – represent a unique resource, providing inspiring examples of the ways in which communities and their partners have responded nimbly and effectively to immediate needs. In doing so, they have demonstrated the practical potential for a more collaborative approach to community wealth building, based on authentic local assets and aspirations.

SURF Community Resilience Examples by Sector

- Community/Third Sector 48%
- Support Agency 18%
- Housing Association 16%
- Local Authority 9%
- Football Club 5%
- Social Enterprise 3%
- Private Sector 1%

This report identifies common themes and lessons learned from those activities. This practice based learning from SURF's active network, is intended to help Scottish Government, and other key regeneration partners, to connect with, learn from and sustain these frontline examples of cooperative resilient action in place based communities.

Learning Points

1. **Volunteers** form the life-blood of almost all the practical activities
2. **Mutual support** – there have been powerful outcomes from newly formed collaborative partnerships
3. **Relaxing the rules** – funder flexibility and the repurposing and adapting of existing programmes to meet demand, has encouraged agency, autonomy and reciprocal trust
4. **Extraordinary efforts** have been made to meet an ongoing and increasing demand for imaginative, nourishing and fast responses to food insecurity. Literally **millions of meals** have been distributed across Scotland.
5. The **smallest of actions** – posting a letter, a weekly telephone call – have the potential to be life-changing
6. **Pre-existing community based, assets, services, networks** and interconnectivity have been crucial in setting up signposting and advice hubs
7. **Successful agencies are listening** to what communities are asking for and are adapting their processes and priorities quickly to meet the demand.
8. **Scotland is not online.** The impact of the digital divide in intensifying isolation and blocking knowledge exchange has been heightened

9. **Creativity has flourished** – not only in terms of the benefits of 'artistic' approaches but in the imaginative and innovative processes which have been developed to resolve problems
10. **Heightened awareness** of the potential mental health and wellbeing pressures exacerbated by the lockdown, has informed intelligent pre-emptive mitigating action

There has been some other early COVID19 research work, the conclusions of which reflect SURF's own. The Scottish Community Alliance conducted interviews with eight community led organisations.[2] The Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) produced a short report[3] illustrating what their community groups were experiencing in terms of pressures and suggested solutions.

SURF's work is based on an unusually large and diverse range of participants (152) representing a broad cross-section and including contributions from every local authority area in Scotland.

Organisations which are part of SURF's network were invited to contribute a minimum of 350 words describing in their own words their responses to the COVID crisis. Initially this was viewed as a way of celebrating and sharing the resilience of communities across Scotland. However, it quickly became apparent that these narratives from the frontline provided a potentially valuable resource towards better understanding community assets and needs. The learning in this report is based on analysis of those contributions. Because the narratives are self-reported, rather than survey responses or a box ticking exercise, it may be that some of the identified themes have been under-reported.

Learning in detail

1. Volunteers - Volunteers form the life-blood of almost all activities

An unquantifiable number of volunteers[4] has stepped up across Scotland to enable these activities. Some organisations have had problems coping with the sheer number of people who want to help. Some individuals may not be available in the same way once lockdown ends, but those who are, represent an extraordinary local regeneration resource and opportunity to build on in future.

In pre-COVID times, volunteer fatigue has been a recognised problem. When it is always the same small pool of volunteers rising to meet the challenge – whatever that might be – energy and commitment and goodwill run out. This crisis may have identified a new and

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[2] https://scottishcommunityalliance.org.uk/2020/06/30/lessons-learned/
[3] https://www.scdc.org.uk/news/article/2020/3/23/what-community-organisations-are-telling-us-about-their-covid-19-responses
[4] Three quarters of adults (74%) in Scotland said they had been involved in volunteering between March and June. **The survey**, carried out by Ipsos-Mori, showed informal volunteering has been by far the most popular form of support during Covid-19, with 35% of people helping family, friends or the wider community.

powerful resource. The task ahead is to find a way to nurture and support that so that these new volunteers become a sustainable resource in every community.
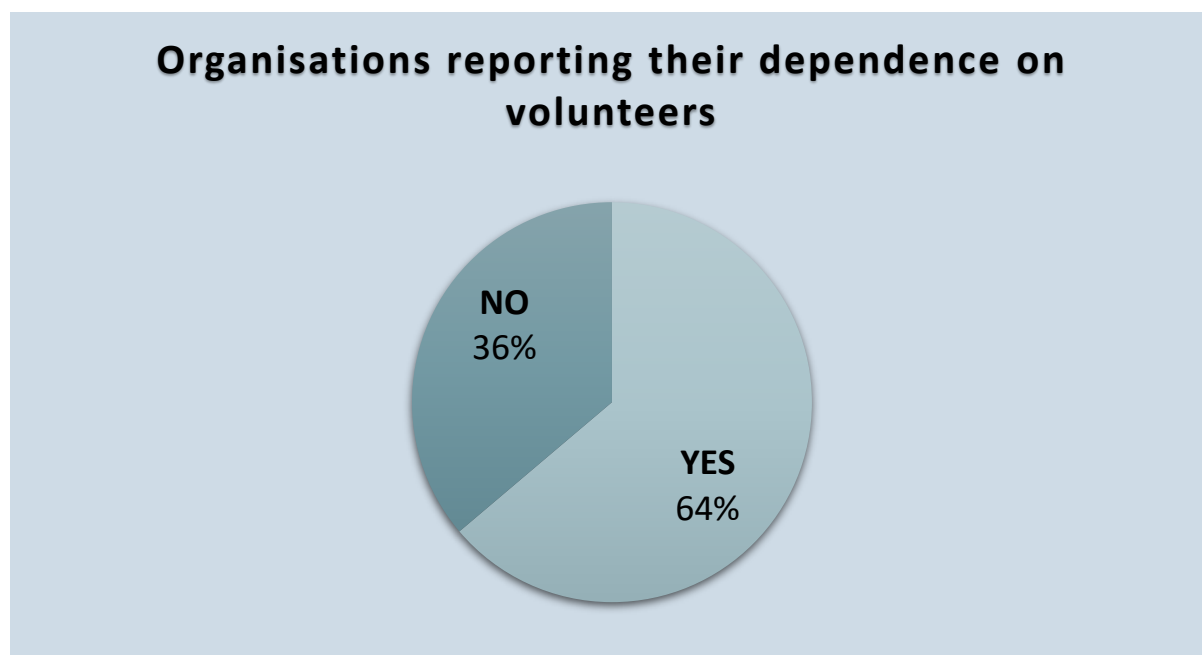
Organisations reporting their dependence on volunteers

NO
36%

YES
64%

Chart 1 – The majority of projects showcased by SURF require volunteers for service delivery.

Perth and Kinross Council were among those who were quick to respond on the volunteer front, once they became aware of the scale of what might be needed.

"The team realised that there would be a huge call on volunteers, so set up a phoneline and format so we could easily understand what the person was able to do (drive, chat on the phone etc), as well as which area they lived in and whether they had a PVG check or not. Once the volunteer had filled in the form, they were given a letter which they could show to the police if stopped while out volunteering. We encouraged people who were already volunteering to add their name, so we could build a really complete picture of who was out there in the communities.
All volunteers were added to a geographical database which means that if we get a really urgent request, we can identify people nearby who are able to help. Some activities, such as delivering medication, require a PVG clearance or other check. We risk assess activities where required.

To date we've had more than 950 people volunteer. Many of those were already engaged in volunteering in the region, but others were new to the idea. Part of the task has been to support existing volunteer organisations where it is needed, as well as developing that new cohort of volunteers. A guidebook was produced which helped those new to volunteering – but it served as a useful tool for all volunteers as none had faced an issue like COVID19 before."
                                                                    PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

2. Mutual Support - there have been powerful outcomes from newly formed collaborative partnerships

SURF has long advocated and actively supported collaborative partnership working as a way of avoiding duplication, more efficiently husbanding and targeting resources and eliminating the destructive 'competition' between community organisations which limited funding opportunities can sometimes create.

SURF's frontline reports overwhelmingly show that partnership working has snowballed in the crisis. New alliances have formed to deal quickly with whatever is being thrown at them. Networks and friendships and partnerships have adapted to change and pulled together to respond to need. In those shared efforts, mutual trust has been enhanced and friendships formed. It would be a significant and rare lost opportunity if the end of the immediate crisis meant that organisations returned to their own silos.

Frontline workers are agreed that these extended or newly formed alliances have enabled them to do more – better and faster and more efficiently.

Organisations citing the development of new partnerships

NO 25%

YES 75%

Chart 2 – More than two thirds of projects have formed new collaborations during the pandemic crisis period.

"There's been great success, resulting in two funders contacting us asking to make donations. It is very much a partnership approach to sharing resources and working together. The negative effects and impacts of COVID-19 has certainly seen partners draw on their strengths and resources and share to best meet the needs of the community."

THE GOVAN YOUTH INFORMATION PROJECT

Sharing Resources, working together. Govan Youth Information Project

3. Relaxing the Rules – Funder flexibility and the repurposing and adapting of existing programmes to meet demand indicate agency, autonomy and reciprocal trust.

The relaxation of red tape in order to respond quickly to need has been a positive outcome for a majority of organisations. Local authorities and national funding organisations listened to the requirements of frontline groups and many found new ways to meet them. Some set aside new or adapted funding for rapid COVID response needs. Others made it clear that funding for a programme that could no longer meet 'required' criteria for face to face interaction, could be used to meet the cost of reshaping the programmes to respond to actual need.

Organisations which had been used to ensuring that careful box ticking met funding requirements were given autonomy to do what was required to meet urgent demands which could not have been anticipated when the original funding was agreed. SURF has long argued that the real experts on community needs and wants are likely to be the community themselves. COVID lockdown has provided an opportunity to demonstrate that.

Organisations citing the benefits of reduced red tape around funding and programmes
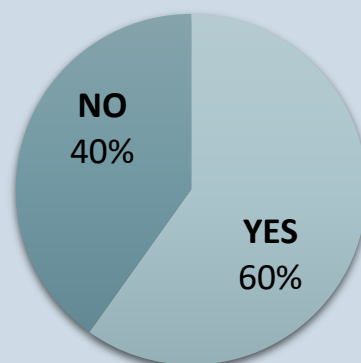
NO
40%

YES
60%

Chart 3 – Most initiatives profiled by SURF reported flexibility in standard project funding and programme restrictions.

"All of the afore mentioned support & our continuing support … [for our frontline COVID responses] …would never have been possible if it wasn't for the incredible funders that have backed us."   **EASTHALL RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION**

"A revised project fund, Open Fund: Sustaining Creative Development *, has now launched. This Fund provides flexibility to help individuals and organisations working in the cultural sector to continue creating work, and to adapt where needed.*
Our Creative Scotland and Screen Scotland Bridging Bursary programmes are now closed, these were designed to provide emergency funding for those in the most immediate financial need."   **CREATIVE SCOTLAND**

4. Food Insecurity - Extraordinary efforts have been made to meet an ongoing and increasing demand for imaginative, nourishing and fast responses to food insecurity. Literally millions of meals have been distributed across Scotland.

Lockdown has shone an uncomfortably bright light on the reality that many, many people living in one of the richest nations in the world, are only a day away from hunger. A delayed or reduced pay packet, a disrupted benefit payment, the absence of school dinners and the suspension of foodbanks and community meals and cafes have been enough to tip whole communities into hunger.   Voluntary organisations have joined forces with private enterprise – retails shops and restaurants – to provide deliveries to those in need. They have also delivered to those vulnerable people who needed to be shielded in their homes. Many, many families would have been left hungry without the ingenuity of those organisations which have successfully sourced and supplied food to those in need.

"We estimate that to meet the demand we need to deliver a minimum of 15,000 emergency packs per week. On the other hand, we are trying to manage our supplies to ensure we have enough to go around while this pandemic continues to affect us all." Residents who have already received packages from the Group have described the resource as vital for enabling them to feed their families." **NORTH EDINBURGH COVID-19 FOODSHARE GROUP**

Profiled Initiatives citing new or expanded work to tackle food insecurity?
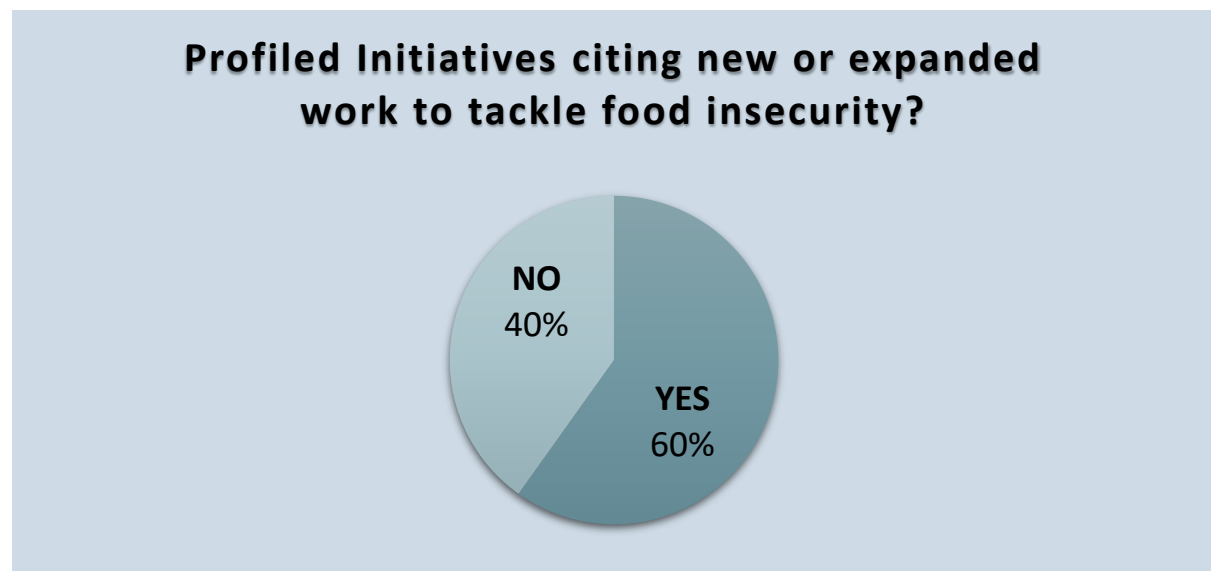
NO 40%

YES 60%

Chart 4 – Most of the COVID-19 response projects provide food to those in need.

"My husband has lost his job, and we were 2093 in the queue to speak to someone at Universal credits, 14 hour wait, no money, no food. My health visitor referred us to Covid-19 Foodshare Group and they just appeared with food and packed lunches for us. I have never cried to see food to feed my kids, but I just have no money. They turn up every day with packed lunches and for the last three weeks a food parcel has appeared at our door."

FAMILY FROM MUIRHOUSE

5. Little Things - the smallest of actions – posting a letter, a weekly telephone call – have been transformative in reducing isolation, loneliness, anxiety and fear.

Not everyone has needed food or money or online activities and entertainment. The reports from the frontline are full of evidence that some of the most effective ways of supporting the vulnerable require acts of thoughtfulness and imagination – facilitated by frontline agencies able to respond to unanticipated needs, as they are identified.

Among the many organisations reaching out to their communities, several of Scotland's football clubs have been involved in a series of 'outreach' programmes.

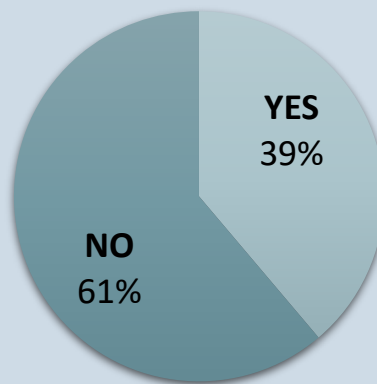## Initiatives citing benefits of 'Small Acts of Kindness'

YES
39%

NO
61%

Chart 5 – A large minority of over 50 projects drew attention to the large benefits derived from 'small actions' such as phone calls to local people.

"Elderly fans have been surprised and delighted to receive phone calls from assistant manager - Tony Docherty, Dons Legend - Neil Simpson, AFC Captain - Joe Lewis, along with other first team players including Andrew Considine and Shay Logan.

AFC Chairman, Dave Cormack, has made several calls himself. He said: "I've spoken to several fans who are self-isolating, reminiscing about their Pittodrie memories and sharing our favourite football moments."   **ABERDEEN FOOTBALL CLUB**

Elsewhere recipients have been expressing their appreciation of similar acts of kindness.

"Staff have embraced the opportunities Kingdom Contributes provides and have reached out to tenants by dropping off shopping, collecting prescriptions and by making welfare telephone calls. The feedback has been remarkable. One of our team received a personal 30 minute music recital from a tenant during a welfare call!

£500 was made available to allow staff participating in 'Kingdom Contributes' to buy small gifts up to the value of £10 for tenants to cheer them up during lockdown Using emerging technology such as augmented reality has allowed us to be virtually present in tenant's homes to help them complete simple repairs.

One thing that's become really clear is that sometimes a small gesture can make a big difference."   **KINGDOM HOUSING ASSOCIATION**

6. Interconnectivity - **Existing networks have been crucial in setting up signposting and advice hubs.**

The larger organisations – including housing associations, national funders and local authorities – realised quickly that an immediate need was to be able to respond effectively to a rapidly growing volume of calls for information.

Existing links and relationships between organisations enabled agencies to set up websites and phonelines where individuals and community groups could be directed to the most useful source. Volunteers, including many furloughed staff, set up key signposting systems to respond to urgent requests for help for those whose usual support systems had collapsed.

Across the country volunteers also distributed emergency numbers by leaflet through letterboxes to try and reach those without access to digital communication

"[It was important] *that they knew where to go and who to phone if they needed help."*

DTAS

"*We wanted to be able to reach everyone in the community to let them know what support was there for them. We know not everyone has access to the internet and less chance of seeing posters so we sent flyers to everyone in the village, over 2200 flyers went out. This had the information on our community support line which is open 7 days a week 10am-4pm."* **THE MUIR OF ORD DEVELOPMENT TRUST**
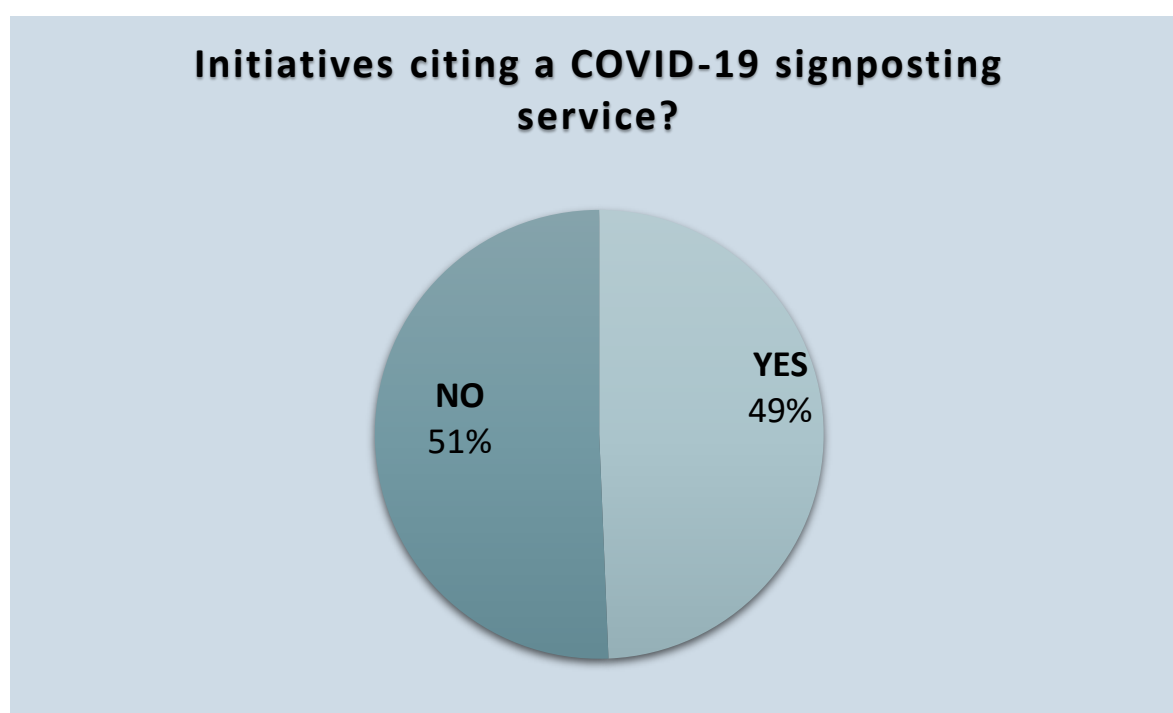
Initiatives citing a COVID-19 signposting service?

NO 51%

YES 49%

Chart 6 – Most of the showcased projects established a signposting hub to help service users access support.

6. Interconnectivity

7. Listening to Communities - Successful regeneration support agencies are adapting quickly to what is needed. Communities are being listened to in the crisis.

Those community based organisations which have been able to keep working through the lockdown have almost without exception had to adapt to survive. But the organisations which responded here are those which didn't only adapt by furloughing staff or closing offices or moving online (although many of these did so). They also adapted in direct response to need as it was expressed and identified by the people living in the communities in which they were based. Parents who were at the end of their tether were supplied with the means to entertain, educate and even exercise bored and housebound children. If families couldn't access programmes online, instructions and information was printed off and paper and pens were delivered to their doors.
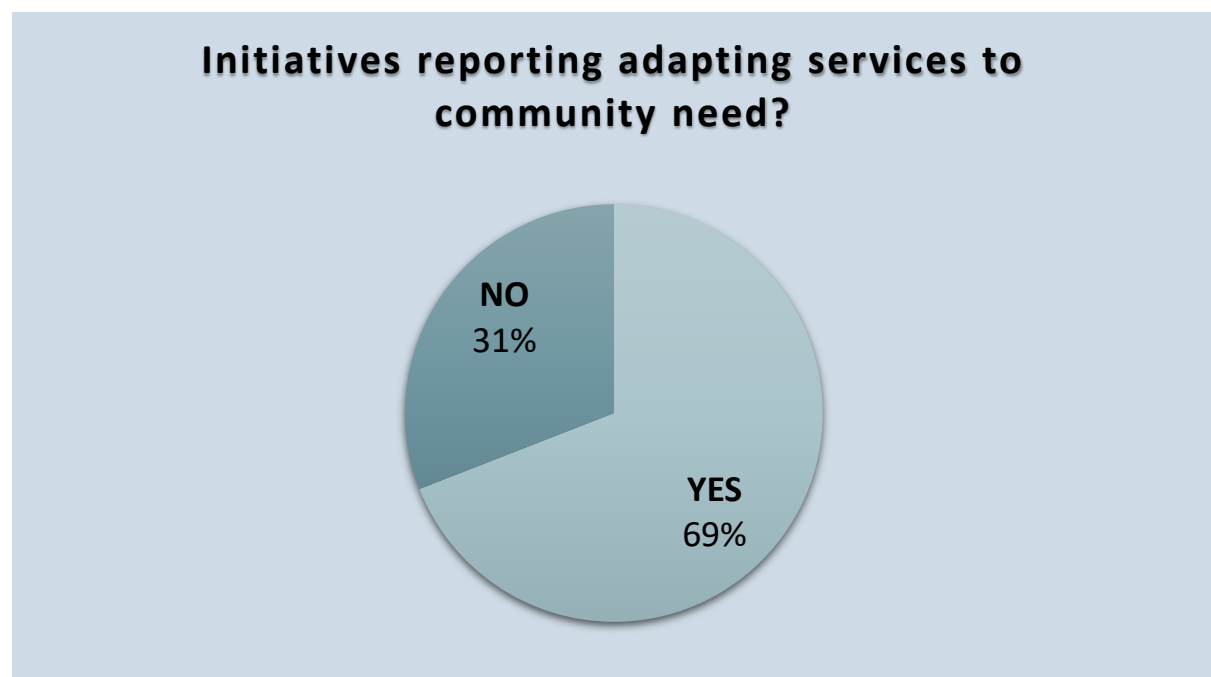
Initiatives reporting adapting services to community need?

NO
31%

YES
69%

Chart 7 – Most of the projects reported listening to community need and adapting their services accordingly.

"Covid-19 has reminded us how delicately we are connected with others, at a stroke it has removed any doubt about the importance of meaningful, sharing and healthy relationships to our wellbeing.

Who can fail to be moved by the heart-warming responses people have exhibited in the face of this crisis which not only reveals our innate willingness and ability to help one another but also the importance of community? Everyone and everything matters more than ever and it is essential that this truth persist when life goes back to 'normal'.

Civic engagement and social responsibility have quickly moved from nice-to-have to essential and lifesaving. Celebrate Kilmarnock's approach has always been to prioritise and support

those on the ground and in communities to work together in common purpose. Decentralisation creates resilience." **CELEBRATE KILMARNOCK**

"The needs of the community are ever changing, we have found each week and month has been different from the last. We have been able to develop activities and projects to meet these needs as they arise. […] We are also gathering ideas from the community about what they would like to see next to help us plan for the next stages and thinking about how we can adapt our services and facilities in the longer term."

THE MUIR OF ORD DEVELOPMENT TRUST

8. Scotland is Not Online - **The impact of the digital divide in intensifying isolation and blocking knowledge exchange has been heightened**

The immediate response of many organisations was to move as much of their programmes as possible to online. Those who owned mobiles, tablets and computers with internet access were able to find information, instructions, support and resources online. They were able to communicate easily with the outside world - and the outside world was able to respond.

But a significant minority were not able to participate. Organisations found that for the poorest, the cost of broadband access alone was enough to make the use of digital communication unattainable. And that was even without the cost of renting or buying the equipment itself. An additional section of society was also unable to benefit from digital access because they had never learned to use it. Organisations in SURF's network responded in some instances by diverting funds to buy equipment and others recruited volunteers to leaflet and visit households which would otherwise have been isolated.

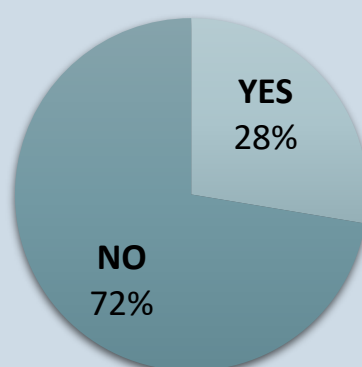**Do Profiled Initiatives cite crucial roleplayed by digiatl communication**

YES 28%

NO 72%

Chart 8 – One quarter of showcased projects reported the availability of digital connections as crucial to communication.

*"One thing that has become abundantly clear to us in recent weeks is, that even in 2020, not everyone in society has the means or the skills **to** instantly transition to a world of remote working, learning and living. Technology has become front and centre of how we will navigate these unchartered waters.*

*In a series of new partnerships with the Good Things Foundation's Devices Dot Now and Make It Click initiatives, and Foundation Scotland's Response, Recovery and Resilience Fund**,** we've been able to embark on potentially game changing technology provision to some areas of greatest digital inequality in Scotland and NE England.*

*Together we have been able to supply laptops or tablets to digitally dislocated customers so we can continue to deliver online digital skills courses**,** empower improvement in their digital skillset and increase digital confidence**."*** **WISE GROUP**

*"[One] priority was to contact the most vulnerable people**,** many of whom were older members of the community without any communication access, such as social media and computers. We organised a leaflet drop of 1700 fliers within the Duns area on 20th March, providing advice on the help we could offer, how to contact us and emphasizing people were not alone**."*** **DUNS GROUP**

Keeping in Touch. Edinburgh Old Town Development Trust

"Another key development was obtaining funding to allow EOTDT to provide people with technology such as laptops or wi-fi bundles, thus allowing them to remain in touch with loved ones, and enabling children who would otherwise have missed out to keep up with

their school work. This project is expanding thanks to the establishment of 'Digital Buddies', a partnership between the University of Edinburgh and EOTDT set-up to give ongoing support so residents can make the most of digital connections."

<div align="right">**EDINBURGH OLD TOWN DEVELOPMENT TRUST**</div>

9. Creativity has Flourished – not only in terms of providing or encouraging 'artistic' approaches but in the creative and innovative processes which have been developed to resolve problems.

From local children teaching other children how to make sock puppets online, or determined volunteers delivering packages of colouring or sewing kits, a great deal of effort has gone into entertaining those in lockdown and encouraging creative endeavours. Singing and dancing classes based at community centres have moved online. Some communities encouraged 'window art' and some of the large arts focused organisations have developed projects which encourage the community to become part of broader arts projects which will only be realised completely when lockdown ends.

National funders have promoted the use of cultural and creative resources to support widespread participation in processes which have supported community cohesion, promoted health and wellbeing and reduced isolation, enhancing connections between communities and cultural, creative and economic investments.
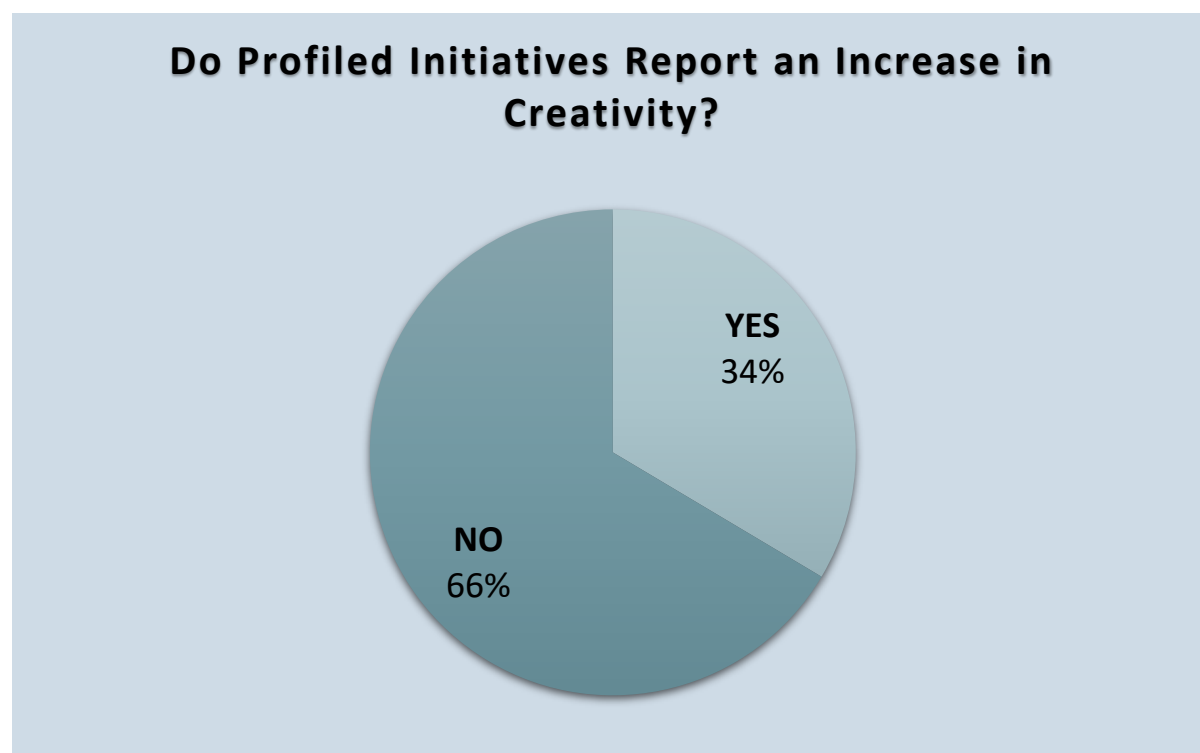
Do Profiled Initiatives Report an Increase in Creativity?

YES
34%

NO
66%

Chart 9 – Around one third of initiatives highlighted creative local endeavours that emerged during the pandemic.

"The Grounds Maintenance team at Home Fix Scotland even planted a floral tribute to key-workers in a large, raised bed at a prominent location at one of the high rise blocks in Gourock."
RIVER CLYDE HOMES

"The Stove Network hopes to build and maintain resilience in the present, as well as build hope and strategies of change for the future. The Stove will record these projects, constructing a new folklore of this experience that we have all gone through together as a community and as a planet.

The Creative Challenges launched at the beginning of April, starting with the Memory Jar challenge, in which people were asked to respond to the question 'What memories come in times of silence?' and create a memory jar full of things found in the home or items which have been gathered during daily exercise."   **THE STOVE NETWORK**

10. Awareness of Mental Health and wellbeing pressures being exacerbated by the lockdown has informed intelligent pre-emptive mitigating action.

When even those without pre-existing health and wellbeing issues are suffering from anxiety and stress, it is inevitable that those who are already vulnerable will become more so. Isolation, fear and insecurity are a potent combination. In anticipating that, many organisations have sought out those who are most at risk and quickly introduced a raft of support programmes designed to ameliorate the potential dangers.

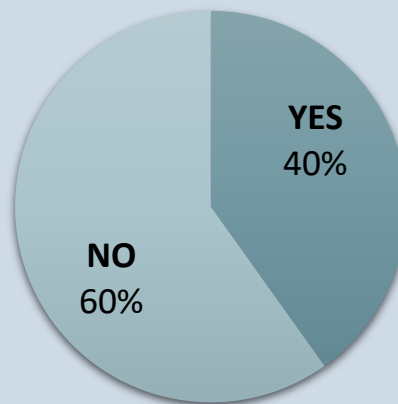## Do Profiled Projects Report Better Mental Health Awareness?

YES
40%

NO
60%

Chart 10 – Over a third of projects reported efforts to alleviate increasing stresses and mental health pressure

"With support from the Scottish Government & Tiny Changes we have been able to develop a full Digital Mental Health support programme. We have distributed 30 Android Tablets & offer both individual & group support via Zoom sessions. One of our staff members is a 4th Year Psychology student & leads on this programme supporting emotional awareness & mental wellbeing."   **EASTHALL RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION**

Members of Glasgow East Hall Residents Association enjoying socially distanced exercise

"Online conflict resolution workshops delivered via Zoom alongside our partners, Cyrenians, have tried to respond to the possibility of increased tensions in the home while under lockdown."   **WORKINGRITE**

It is widely expected that there will be long term negative impacts on wellbeing and mental health, but there are also some unexpected stories of hope and positivity which can encourage and inform longer term efforts for broadly enhanced wellbeing.

"J is 82 and lives in Lanark. He has multiple health challenges and due to Covid-19 he has not been able to see any family and friends. J was referred to Healthy Valleys by the Lanark Helps well-being line after it was identified that he would benefit from some extra social support now that he is living alone, having lost his wife a year ago. His referral was passed to our service for older adults.

The Project Worker rang and spoke to Jack, to assess his needs. She was then able to support him via our volunteer buddy scheme and matched J with our volunteer S – himself an older man. Research shows how crucial companionship is to older adults, recent research shows that loneliness – as measured at the start of the study – was associated with a 40 percent higher risk of developing dementia over the 10-year follow-up. Healthy Valleys has a variety of programmes tailored to suit older people, with the sole aim of supporting social connections, peer support, group work activities, and volunteer buddying support to access local services and amenities.

Following the volunteer match, the Project Worker was happy to report that "S and J hit it off straight away, they found that they had lots of things in common, including areas where they grew up, a coincidence but a beneficial one!" S and J now chat at least once a week, ensuring that Jack gets some much-needed social interaction. J was keen to tell us how uplifting he has found their calls, saying "I look forward to S's call. It's the highlight of my week.

Our volunteer also supports another isolated older man and has made plans with them that the three will meet up once the lockdown is over and potentially go for a meal at a local café once a week. Post lockdown, J will have an established relationship with a buddy and potentially a new friendship to look forward to."

HEALTHY VALLEYS

Shaping a better future

The evidence is that the crisis has increased the gap between the haves and have-nots and laid bare the fragility of social and economic mores. If wealth is the greatest shield from infection and serious illness, then disadvantaged communities are the most exposed.

SURF's network feedback on what is happening on the front line, shows these same communities responding nimbly and effectively to immediate needs. The scale of the challenge remains extreme and will not be quickly resolved despite the work of individuals and agencies in the most disadvantaged of areas who have been stepping up, adapting and responding with impressive creativity, cooperation and resilience. Meanwhile the larger scale, national regeneration partners, are striving to support local community responses in the most appropriate and sustainable way. The majority of these organisations would not have been able to deliver their services without direct or indirect support from Scottish Government, the National Lottery Community Fund and other national funding organisations.

The COVID 19 crisis has further exposed the vulnerability of Scotland's most disadvantaged communities. It has also demonstrated the capabilities and resourcefulness of those same communities to act in support of each other. But the 'immune systems' of the poorest people and places have been dangerously depleted by years of disadvantage. Their ability to stay mobilised, to sustain a 'war footing', without substantial support is limited.

SURF has long argued that even those communities with recognised local assets, skills and knowledge, require secure and sustained investment to develop and fully exploit their potential to regenerate. The additional burden imposed by COVID 19 has brought them to breaking point and exposed the most vulnerable people and communities to exceptional hardship.

The positive news is that even now, while the crisis continues, there is widely shared recognition that to rebuild better will require unprecedented levels of collaboration and cooperation to ensure that these impressive local efforts are not lost with a return to the old 'normal'. The learning from these frontline responses reflects needs already being recognised by policymakers and funders in the form of reviews and, in some cases, action already implemented. Among examples which support the themes identified in this report are work around the Digital Divide, Volunteers and Funding.

The *Connecting Scotland* initiative[5] has been set up in direct response to concerns about the impact of the **digital divide**, with it being estimated that some 260,000 people are digitally excluded and isolated during the current crisis. These concerns have been

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[5] https://connecting.scot/

reflected in SURF's findings, with many organisations highlighting the way in which digital exclusion has amplified the isolation and knowledge gaps which existed pre-COVID[6].

£5million has been allocated to be spent on creating digital bridges to online access by providing equipment and, crucially, training to those most in need. The initial phase is focused on those in clinical need, but an additional programme has been agreed to provide 25,000 laptops or tablets with internet access, to support learning among the most disadvantaged children when they return to school.

Scottish Government is funding the programme, but it is being developed in collaboration with local authorities and public and third sector organisations are already working in this area and which have welcomed the initiative.[7]

One obvious resource that has been identified during the crisis and which would be worth sustaining is the new army of **volunteers** which has stepped up to support their communities. Previous work by SURF[8] and research colleagues[9] has identified some of the pressures on volunteers in communities and the consequences of burn-out and volunteer fatigue when the same small number of 'usual suspects' find themselves repeatedly supporting a whole community without adequate resources.

The COVID crisis has seen tens of thousands of new volunteers actively working to support their communities. Although there has been a drop in 'formal' volunteering with 41% of 21,000 Scottish charities reported decreased volunteer numbers, recent research found that three quarters of adults have been involved in volunteering activities since the lockdown began[10]. More than 50,000 signed up to the Scotland Cares Campaign alone and almost all of the frontline response organisations featured in SURF's e-bulletins were dependent upon volunteer support to function.

If Scotland's communities are to recover, regenerate and be prepared for future crisis these volunteers need to be resourced and supported in new and imaginative ways. Findings from pre-COVID SURF shared learning events have suggested a range of policies that could encourage these new volunteers to remain engaged. These include:

- Volunteer meetings/events to be arranged around volunteer timetables – and not around those of the paid professionals who may only be available at times when volunteers are juggling jobs and family commitments.

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[6] https://storage.googleapis.com/scvo-cms/digital-participation-charter/tackling-digital-exclusion-in-scotland-a4.pdf

[7] https://www.surf.scot/scotregen/the-digital-divide-disconnection-in-a-virtual-world-kyle-scott-july-2020/

[8] https://www.surf.scot/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/SURF-2016-Manifesto-Final-Draft.pdf

[9] http://www.smart-urban-intermediaries.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Socially-Smart-Cities-Report-2019.pdf

[10] https://www.volunteerscotland.net/for-organisations/research-and-evaluation/publications/covid-19-research/impact-of-covid-19-on-volunteering-participation-in-scotland/

- Ensuring that volunteering is practical and does not cost the volunteers, by providing child care and reimbursing travel costs

- Encouraging employers with financial incentives to encourage workers to take regular 'volunteer days' in the same way that enrolling in the Territorial Army is seen as a personal/professional development asset.

Several national **funding** organisations, including Creative Scotland and the National Lottery Community Fund have been name-checked by frontline organisations as among those funders who demonstrated flexibility, trust and understanding in their responses to the changing needs of frontline organisations during the COVID crisis. Funding recipients were given the go ahead to adapt existing programmes to meet more immediate needs and new funding was allocated to meet unanticipated challenges.

Given that pre-COVID, there have been long-standing criticisms of the inappropriate rigidity of some funding criteria, the benefits derived from the successful reduction in red tape during the crisis suggests that there is the possibility of longer term positive change.

Funding bodies have already demonstrated their willingness to review and change their processes.

The Scottish Government Investing in Communities Fund (2019-22) rolled up several funding streams into one to offer multi-year funding across any community led activity that tackles poverty[11].

SURF initiatives like the SURF Creative and Heritage Creative Alliance[12] have demonstrated the benefits of combining horizontal and vertical partnership working – both between funders and with communities –in the reduction of duplication and more precise deployment of resources.

These examples of welcome actions on the part of Scottish Government, local authorities and other funding and policy organisations indicating a willingness to adapt existing programmes and initiate new processes to support and sustain those frontline responses which have been tackling inequality at source.

There is agreement that building back better means to address the long standing inequalities and disconnections that degenerate communities, and to invest in building more responsive, resilient and cooperative local economies and social and cultural interactions. SURF will be consulting widely in developing strategies and policies towards achieving that goal. They will be at the core of SURF's 2021 Manifesto for Regeneration which will be presented and debated in advance of the forthcoming parliamentary elections.

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[11] https://www.gov.scot/policies/community-empowerment/empowering-communities-fund/#ICF
[12] https://www.surf.scot/projects/alliance-for-action/surfs-heritage-and-creativity-alliance/

SURF is next undertaking a more concentrated piece of research to better understand the challenges of COVID and to learn more from our communities about how to rebuild better. This report will inform the next stage, which is to 'deep-dive' into a representative sample of the organisations featured here, focusing attention on examples of cooperative resilient action in place based communities. This further research into lessons learned will form part of our national conversation about the best way forward.

Meanwhile SURF's distinctive skill in linking and coordinating place based groups and individuals with national policy and funding agencies, will continue to be used to further direct and invest support where it can be most effective in embedding the resilience already demonstrated by those communities most at risk.

Elaine Cooper
SURF August, 2020

APPENDIX

ORGANISATIONS WHICH CONTRIBUTED TO SURF'S E-BULLETINs

A Heart for Duns
Aberdeen City Council
Aberdeenshire Council
ACVO
Aberdeen FC Community Foundation
Angus Council
Apex Scotland
Arbroath Community Council
Argyll & Bute Council
Auchinleck CDI
Barrhead Housing Association
BEMIS
Big Hearts Community Trust
Blochairn Housing Association
BRAG Enterprises
Bridgend Farmhouse
Built Environment Forum Scotland
Capital City Partnership
Carnegie UK Trust
Cassiltoun Housing Association
Castle Douglas Development Forum
Castle Rock Edinvar
Castlemilk Together
Celebrate Kilmarnock
Celtic Football Foundation
Clyde Gateway
Clydebank Housing Association
Coalfields Regeneration Trust
Colinton Village Enterprise
Collydean Community Centre
Community Links South Lanarkshire
Concrete Garden
Copperworks Housing Association
Cornerstone House Centre
Corra Foundation
Cowdenbeath FC
Creative Scotland
Community Resources Network Scotland

Dumfries and Galloway Council
Dundee City Council
Dundee Int. Women's Centre
Dundee United Community Trust
Dunoon Burgh Hall
East Ayrshire Council
East Dunbartonshire VA
East Lothian Council
Easthall Residents Association
Edinburgh Old Town Development Trust
Edinburgh Poverty Commission
Eildon Housing Association
Elderpark Housing Association
Engage Renfrewshire
Falkirk Council
FareShare Glasgow and the West
Federation of Small Businesses
Feldy-Roo
Fife Council
Findhorn Bay Arts
Firstport
Foundation Scotland
Fuse Youth Café
Fyne Futures
G53 Support Group
Glasgow City Council
Glasgow Disability Alliance
Glasgow Canal Co-op
Glasgow's Golden Generation
Glen Housing Association
Go Forth Stirling
Govan Community Project
Govan Housing Association
Govan Youth Information Project
Govanhill Housing Association
Greener Kirkcaldy
Health Valleys
Historic Environment Scotland
Highlands and Islands Enterprise

Cyrenians

Development Trust Association Scotland

DRC Youth Project

Kinning Park Complex

Kirkcaldy YMCA

Lanark Helps

Langholm Support Group

Larkhall & District Voluntary Group

Lerwick Community Council

Licketyspit

Life Changes Trust

LinkLiving

Linstone Housing Association

Linthouse Housing Association

Lochwinnoch Cares

Maryhill Housing Association

Masks for Scotland

Midlothian Council

Muir of Ord Development Trust

Museums Galleries Scotland

National Lottery Community Fund

National Lottery Heritage Fund

New Cumnock Development Trust

New Gorbals Housing Association

NG Homes

North Ayrshire Council

Nrth Edin. Covid-19 Foodshare Group

Ochiltree Community Hub

Orkney Islands Council

Paisley Housing Association

Papay Co-op

PEEK

Perth and Kinross Council

Platform

Point and Sandwick Trust

Port of Leith Housing Association

Pulteneytown People's Project

Queens Cross Housing Association

Rangers FC Charity Foundation

Regional Screen Scotland

River Clyde Homes

Rosemount Development Trust

Sanctuary Scotland

Scone & District Community Council

Scotland's Improvement Districts

Scotland's Towns Partnership

Scottish Community Development Centre

Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust

Kingdom Housing Association

Kincardine and Mearns Area Partnership

Scottish Enterprise

Scottish Fed of Housing Associations

Spire View Housing Association

Saint Paul's Youth Forum

Starcatchers

Stayin Inn

Stenhousemuir F.C.

Strathaven & Glassford Comm. Council

The Atholl Centre

The Brunswick Centre

The Gaiety

The Larder

The Maxwell Centre

The Senior Centre Castlemilk

The Star Project

The Stove Network

The Urban Fox Programme

Thenue Housing Association

Thistle Housing Association

West Dunbartonshire CVS

WHALE Arts

Wheatley Group

Wise Group

WorkingRite

Young Scot

Sculpture Studios
Scottish Council for Voluntary Orgs