

Papur 2

Paper 2

Submission to the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee inquiry into the impact of Covid-19 on the Voluntary sector.

Fiona Liddell. Helpforce Manager Wales

Helpforce perspective

[Helpforce](#) aims to develop the potential of volunteering in health and care services, working in England mainly with NHS organisations and across the UK through national partnerships.

In Wales, [Helpforce Cymru](#) is hosted by Wales Council for Voluntary Action, part funded by Welsh Government, informed by Wales own policy context and supported by a Wales steering group.

During Covid-19 the work broadened to engage with all aspects of the volunteering response to the pandemic.

Volunteering and community resilience - themes and issues

Conversations and meetings during the first three months of Covid-19 have been analysed to distil key themes and issues. These are presented diagrammatically in Annexe 1, under the headings of a) volunteer response, b) volunteering through Covid-19 and c) Volunteering post Covid-19.

A presentation at a UK research conference of the Voluntary Sector Studies Network, delivered jointly with Wales Centre for Public Policy, explored the preconditions for effective volunteer response, based on analysis of over 50 collected case studies. These fell under four broad headings:

- Local knowledge
- Resourcefulness and flexibility
- Relationships
- Infrastructure and support in place

The presentation is included in Annexe 2 and a blog (not yet published) based on this work in Annexe 3.

Future opportunities and challenges

The spectrum of volunteering includes a very wide range from informal, community action to more formally managed and focussed roles and tasks. (The presentation in Annexe 2 highlights examples which fall between these extremes).

In considering the strategic opportunities to be gained from volunteering, these need to be considered separately; a few comments therefore are offered on each below.

Informal community volunteer response

This unprecedented response proved to be speedy, creative and effective, bringing existing resources and initiatives together locally and attracting new support.

There is a challenge to build on this by:

- Supporting the sustainability and the independence of local groups
- Connecting with other local provision by statutory and voluntary sector partners, to enable joined-up services
- Conversation and better mutual understanding about appropriate levels of risk associated with different activity and context

Formal volunteering eg to support the NHS

It was notable that during Covid-19:

- a) no local CVC or Health Board experienced a lack of volunteers
- b) formal opportunities for volunteering were in short supply, largely because of the need to reassess and redefine or adapt existing roles and processes, or to develop new ones.
- c) health boards took very different approaches to volunteer involvement, including pausing all volunteering, focussing on patient welfare and developing frontline roles in field hospitals.

d) some effective working partnerships with local County Voluntary Councils and voluntary organisations were demonstrated.

There is a challenge to build on this by:

- Promoting cross sector working between statutory and voluntary organisations in order to enable more rapid and flexible involvement of volunteers
- Encouraging conversations at strategic levels about the role of volunteering, including risk and governance issues, the planning and investment required and benefits to be gained
- Building up a trained and flexible volunteer base in order to complement ongoing clinical care and to meet future unexpected demands.

Volunteering & Covid-19

key themes

**a digest from conversations with local authorities,
Health Boards, CVCs and third sector
March - June 2020**

Fiona Liddell
Helpforce Cymru Manager, WCVA

volunteer response

30 - 40 % want to continue to volunteer

maintaining individuals interest

individuals experience difficulty in volunteering

local collaboration to help supply of and demand for volunteers

improving infrastructure for future emergency response

generic Covid 19 opportunity created in every county

website 'a godsend'

signposting to CVCs and to Volunteering Wales website

new interest in volunteering

volunteering brokerage

many normal opportunities closed and insufficient new opps

value to staff of grassroots engagement

volunteer response

increased profile of volunteering

Good Sam scheme confusion in Wales

Volunteers Week, #power of youth #nevermoreneeded

spontaneous community response

impact of campaigns

data reporting from Volunteering Wales

data collection and management systems

need for guidance

variable links with eg Town and CCs LAs, CVCs

management and safeguarding issues

service gap if groups disband?

'organic' engagement style

alternative recruitment platforms promoted in some areas

overall picture unknown

sustainability post Covid?

speedy, informal response to community need

volunteering through Covid



volunteering post Covid 19

new patterns of volunteering

training to support digital approaches

digital inclusion issues

potential of Volunteering Wales Task app

need to be based on good practice eg WCVA/Wales TUC Charter and IIV

more online volunteering

micro volunteering

more Employer supported volunteering?

minimise red tape

emerging from lockdown

need for guidance

confusion caused by UK differences on easing restrictions

improving infrastructure for future emergency response

access to PPE - who pays

transport issues

community transport volunteer shortage

less use of public transport

new opportunities/needs

increased poverty and unemployment

changed community needs

mental health/confidence needs

changed volunteer demographic

new partnerships

clarity needed about who does what (eg CVC/Council)

kindness in public policy

capture learning to inform developments

culture of public services

more permissive; less bureaucracy

new narrative around risk - recognising 'ordinary vulnerability'

co-production of volunteer solutions

embedding new relationships between third sector and statutory partners

strategic vision for volunteers in workforce and operational planning



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Pandemic recovery and volunteering in Wales

Challenges, opportunities,
and a research agenda

Emma Taylor-Collins, Wales Centre for Public Policy (presenting)
Dr Fiona Liddell, Wales Council for Voluntary Action (presenting)
Dr Hannah Durrant, Wales Centre for Public Policy
7 September 2020, Voluntary Sector & Volunteering Research e-Conference

Our approach and theme

Analysis of conversations, research, events, between March-July 2020 led us to the question:

What pre-conditions seem to have aided the volunteer response to the pandemic in Wales?

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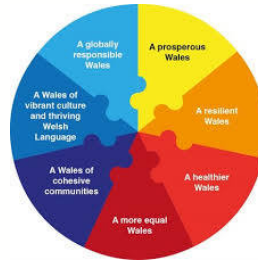


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Policy and practice context

Wales-wide

Well-being of
Future Generations
(Wales) Act 2015



► **Prosperity for All:
the national
strategy**

Taking Wales Forward

 Gwirfoddoli Cymru
Volunteering Wales

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Cymru Iachach:
ein Cynllun Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol
A Healthier Wales:
our Plan for Health and Social Care

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Local coordination

- Local authorities
- County Voluntary Councils (CVCs)
- Town and community councils

Volunteering to support statutory services



Denbighshire County Council



Blood Bikes Wales



NHS Health Boards

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Community-based response



Nanny Biscuit, Flintshire



Briton Ferry Covid-19
volunteer response,
Neath Port Talbot



Llandegla Community
Shop, Wrexham

What pre-conditions seem to have aided this volunteer response?

- **Local knowledge** (see Taylor and Wilson, 2020; Alakeson and Brett, 2020).
- **Resourcefulness and flexibility of existing volunteers/volunteer services**
 - ‘Resourcefulness’ rather than ‘resilience’ (see McCabe et al, 2020)
- **Effective working relationships**
 - Mobilisation of existing networks (Macmillan, 2020a; Taylor and Wilson 2020)
 - Pooling of resources and signposting
 - Five Ways of Working (Well-being of Future Generations Act)
- **Infrastructure and support**
 - Digital tools (Volunteer Wales)
 - Volunteer support infrastructure

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Thoughts on a research agenda

- What other factors might have facilitated the volunteer response to the pandemic? What might have hindered it? What about other kinds of volunteer response not covered here (e.g. Mutual Aid)?
- How have the preconditions for effective working between the voluntary sector and statutory public services enabled or undermined:
 - Effective and equal sharing of power, responsibility and roles
 - Service and user experience
 - Accountability and safeguarding
- How effective has the response been? What needs have gone unmet during the crisis, and what might we put in place now to address anticipated need during future lockdowns or pandemics?

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References

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A red trapezoidal shape containing the text 'WcVA' and 'CgGC' in white, separated by a horizontal line.

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A white rectangular box containing the text 'helplu' and 'helpforce' in dark blue, separated by a horizontal line.

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Building on strong foundations: the volunteer response to the pandemic in Wales

Emma Taylor-Collins, Fiona Liddell, and Hannah Durrant

Over the past few months we've heard a lot about the significant volunteer response to the pandemic. As in the rest of the UK, volunteers and the third sector in Wales have responded nimbly and innovatively. In May 2020, [over a third \(35%\) of people](#) in Wales looked after or gave help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others – an increase from 29% in the previous year.

But it is unlikely that this response has sprung out of nowhere. Keen to understand what the pre-conditions might be that made this response possible in Wales, we examined a range of case studies on volunteering and Covid-19, collected by WCVA. We looked for the enabling factors which seem to lie behind them.

Support for statutory provision

Several volunteering schemes were set up to provide intentional support to statutory services. The local County Voluntary Council (CVC) in many cases appeared to be a vital link between the local authority, community organisations, and volunteers.

For example, early in the pandemic Denbighshire County Council recognised its need for additional capacity to meet the needs of shielded and vulnerable people. From the outset it discussed with its local CVC how volunteers could help, with the CVC setting up and running a referral scheme for coordinating a community volunteer response.

Volunteers were recruited via the Volunteering Wales website, and either referred to other organisations or matched with requests for support, such as shopping, prescription collection, and dog walking.

In this way the community response was organised in line with safe practice for volunteers and those they supported, and linked in with local voluntary and statutory provision, aiming to ensure the most effective use of volunteer resources.

Bringing the community together

In Briton Ferry several community organisations came together to form a coordinated network in response to the pandemic, drawing on their particular services and expertise.

Just before lockdown, the conductor of a local choir instigated a meeting with representatives of local community groups including elected members, businesses, social services and the local CVC. They put in place systems aiming to help the most vulnerable community members through the crisis and help to 'take the strain off the NHS' if the situation worsened.

Individual organisations offered their resources and engaged volunteers to provide services. For example, the community hub became the distribution point for essential supplies; the foodbank expanded its service to include weekly deliveries; another set up activities to support women's mental and emotional wellbeing; and the Boys and Girls Club developed and distributed activities for children.

Adapting to meet new needs

Llandegla Community Shop and café has been run by volunteers and two part-time paid staff for several years. The cafe had to close during the pandemic, the shop operated reduced hours and there was risk of using up financial reserves just to keep running. Since the nearest shopping town is a round trip of 18 miles, the shop is vital to the local community and especially so during lockdown.

A small emergency grant from a local business, administered by the CVC, enabled them to continue and to develop their service, including providing home delivery to isolated individuals and a prescription collection service. The group is looking at how to sustain these newly developed services in the future.

What might have made this response possible?

From these and other case studies collected we identified four factors which seem to have been especially important in enabling the volunteer response to the pandemic in Wales.

- **Local knowledge**

Place-based organising, with knowledge of the local area, was important for identifying local needs and for understanding how those needs changed in relation to the pandemic. [Recent literature](#) on community organising in the pandemic suggests local knowledge has enabled a speedy community response in other parts of the UK.

- **Resourcefulness and flexibility**

Having a strong volunteer base already in place – with the capacity to be flexible in terms of the services they provide – enabled a rapid pivot from existing to new activity in response to the pandemic. [Angus McCabe and others](#) refer to this as ‘resourcefulness’ rather than resilience to shift focus away from the idea that communities are responsible for ‘coping’ with a crisis and towards the idea that with limited but essential resources communities can respond effectively.

- **Relationships**

Most of our case studies showed that effective working relationships between bodies seemed to result in a joined up and speedy response. We saw these relationships manifest through, for example, joint calls for volunteer recruitment between councils and CVCs and joint or coordinated delivery of services. These demonstrated an ability to pool resources and signpost to redirect support where it was needed and could be accommodated.

- **Infrastructure and support in place**

Digital infrastructure was already in place to support voluntary activity through the all Wales website www.volunteering-Wales.net. Existing infrastructure in the form of local authorities, health boards, CVCs, town and community councils was also important in coordinating and facilitating the response.

What can this tell us?

Our review of the case studies in Wales suggests that across different geographies, types of activity, and stakeholders, there are some similarities in the existing networks and practice which may have helped enable the volunteer response to the pandemic. We also saw some of this earlier in the year, before the pandemic. The community response to the floods in Wales at the start of 2020, though reacting to a different kind of crisis, also drew on the established local knowledge, relationships, and infrastructure, and demonstrated flexibility in responding to local need (see for example [stories](#) on the Storm Dennis response in Rhondda Cynon Taf). This suggests that maintaining these conditions will be important not just in responding to future lockdowns or pandemics, but also in responding to the increasingly common environmental crises we’re likely to experience in future.

What we don't yet know is what other factors might have facilitated the volunteer response to the pandemic or crises such as the floods, or what might have hindered it. We also don't know enough about how effective the response has been, and what needs might have gone unmet over the past seven months. Greater understanding of this might help to identify what we might put in place now to address anticipated need in the future.

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