

How community connectors utilised trusted relationships to meet unmet need during COVID-19

Cernach Housing Association



“In order to succeed you must be trusted by the community – this is fundamental.”

Ted Scanlon, Community Connector,
Cernach Housing Association

What was the emerging need?

The community response to COVID-19 in Drumchapel was immediate and wide-ranging. The Community Connecting Team recognised the need to take a step back and think about how best to meet need in a strategic way. To do this, intelligence on unmet need was gathered from Cernach Housing Association, some community groups, coupled with the team's knowledge of local issues and a touch of intuition! From this two priorities for support were identified which was shared by Ted Scanlon, a Community Connector with the Cernach Housing Association:

Support for people who were furloughed and found it challenging to access the government's support scheme

“Self-employed people in the community such as hairdressers, taxi drivers, window cleaners etc. have been left with no income stream due to COVID-19 and the lockdown restrictions.”

Support for people caring for family members with additional needs.

“Through engaging with local schools and the five community-based housing associations, we identified that families where there are additional support needs are also feeling the impact of COVID-19 in terms of financial hardship and respite from caring responsibilities.”

Background to the response

The Thriving Places strategy in Drumchapel was set up through Glasgow City Council and the North West Health Improvement Team and is one of ten Thriving Places across Glasgow. Cernach Housing Association is the anchor organisation and the Thriving Places team engage with a wide range of statutory and voluntary organisations who have a presence in Drumchapel.

The Thriving Place team is based in the Chest, Heart and Stroke charity shop in Drumchapel and consists of three local people - Charles Bailey, Tracy McKenzie and Andy Lynch together with Morven Clark, the monitoring coordinator and Ted Scanlon, the community connector, all of whom have been engaging as a team with the community since 2016.

The COVID-19 lockdown has meant that the face-to-face support provided by the team in the community has had to be put on hold, with support now being offered remotely.

Based on the intelligence gathered on the need in Drumchapel, the team successfully applied for £40,000 of funding from the Scottish Government's Supporting Communities Fund.

Insights into how health and wellbeing needs are being met in an equitable way during COVID-19

How are things different?

A new form of support has been set up to meet community needs directly

“Once we identify where support is required, we provide people with money to support them, reaching a maximum of £500 so far, as each family’s circumstances differ. This is administered by Cernach Housing Association using its financial structure. Funds are sent to the recipient’s bank account through Cernach. “

Social distancing has changed how support is being provided to the community – potentially meaning lost contact with some people

“Prior to the introduction of restrictions and the need to work from home, we engaged with the community from the Chest, Heart and Stroke charity shop situated in the local shopping centre. This made us visible in the community. The shop had coffee making facilities, IT support and access to free wi-fi. This meant that we would see lots of different people in the community, often dropping in for a coffee at first but engaging with us over time. Unfortunately, we are not seeing these people at the moment.”

Existing needs have become more pronounced since COVID-19

“The issues faced by people in the community may become more pronounced post COVID-19, and there is particular concern around unemployment, increased physical and mental health as well as poverty in general. COVID-19 has highlighted existing issues we already knew were there.”

Ted Scanlon, Community Connector, Cernach Housing Association

Key insights: Ted Scanlon, Community Connector, Cernach Housing Association

Strong connections between local organisations and communities have made it possible to find out about need and meet it rapidly

“We have been able to act quickly due to the existing partnerships and community structures. As a community organisation we know Drumchapel and our intuition and local knowledge has allowed us to identify those most in need.”

The structure provided by Cernach Housing Association has enabled support to get out the door to where it’s needed

“Cernach is the anchor organisation for Thriving Places allowing us to use its structures to channel funds directly to Thriving Place people that need them. Ever since the start of Thriving Place in 2016, Cernach has always facilitated and supported anything we need - demonstrating its ability to look beyond its own tenant base, reaching out to the entire population of Drumchapel for the good of the whole community.”

Being a trusted organisation is a key enabler

“There is a strong value base within Cernach, the Thriving Place team and partners, all of which benefits the community. In order to succeed, community workers must be trusted by the community – this is fundamental! We believe that in Drumchapel most people know who we are, what we are all about and trust us.”

If you are interested in exploring something similar in your area or to find out more, please get in touch.

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