

How housing associations used their status as community anchors to address need during COVID-19

Govan Housing Association, Linthouse Housing Association and Elderpark Housing Association.

“It’s been a complete revelation in terms of urgency and the need to turn things around quickly to get money to targeted needs.”

Fiona Dickson, Glasgow City Council



What was the emerging need?

Early in the pandemic Govan Housing Association, Linthouse Housing Association and Elderpark Housing Association recognised that people’s needs were changing due to COVID-19. Through informal telephone and in-person check-ins with residents they found that many people needed help with things such as:

- food provision
- supply of household essentials
- welfare and fuel poverty
- mental health
- digital inclusion
- access to information about COVID-19, and
- employability.

It was also recognised that many of the people who now needed support had no previous experience of seeking support and did not know what to do. In response to this, the housing associations came together to discuss how to met this emerging need.

This discussion led to a joint bid to the Scottish Government’s Supporting Communities Fund to distribute resource to community organisations within Govan. £200,000 was secured and a Temporary Emergency Funding Group was set up. The role of this group was to distribute this new resource locally based on intelligence on need gathered from the community.

Background to the response

Significant inequalities persist within Govan, as shown by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. This is also supported by the in-depth understanding of community needs from each housing association’s role as community anchor organisations.

Working to improve people’s quality of life is a key part of the vision and values of these community-controlled housing associations.

Work had already taken place in Govan to improve people’s quality of life through the Thriving Places initiative, established through community planning and supported by Glasgow City Council and the Health and Social Care Partnership. This recognised the assets available within Govan, in particular its people and the many community groups and charities operating in the area.

While the structures are in place to facilitate improvements in people’s quality of life in Govan, it has been acknowledged that securing funding to sustain this has been a challenge.

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

How are things different?

A new group has been established to distribute funding across Govan

Govan Housing Association, Elderpark Housing Association and Linthouse Housing Association set up the Temporary Emergency Funding Group to distribute the funds secured from the Scottish Government's Supporting Communities Fund. The group includes representation from Glasgow City Council and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. The housing associations had the corporate and governance structures necessary to distribute funding and were able to act quickly.

A new approach to uncovering and meeting need has been set up

This group developed a series of online surveys to find out what the community's needs were and circulated this among local organisations, social media groups and housing association residents. The latest survey received 140 responses and this guided the distribution of the first tranche of the Supporting Communities Funding. These surveys complement activity carried out by each housing association to uncover need across the whole community by knocking doors and asking residents whether they need any help or support.

Need is being met in the community directly and in a coordinated way

So far, 12 community organisations have received funding through this process. The group were able to take a strategic approach to meeting need by establishing the priority needs within Govan through a ranking exercise. This involved consultation with the community via a survey. This process has been transparent, with the decisions of the Temporary Emergency Funding Group being made available online.

Key insights, Irene Campbell, Linthouse Housing Association

Housing associations status as community anchors enabled a rapid and strategic approach to meeting need

"Community anchors are key organisations who are used to developing strategy and moving through change quickly, they're also regulated with existing governance which is good and quick to serve the community."

New need is being picked up by housing associations during COVID-19

"Mental health, unemployment figures increasing - people who were in, what they thought, were safe jobs are now out of work. A lot of people work in the hospitality industry or on zero hour contracts and it's going to be challenging for parents to get kids back into routines."

This joint work will be continued beyond the immediate crisis and into recovery

"Naming the partnership as an emergency response group was due to political terms but we hope to keep this going because the tenants are already in one of most deprived areas of Glasgow. Even after lockdown there will be implications, this is not an affluent region so health and financial pressures will remain for some time."

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

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