

Insight Briefing Poverty

October 2019



About this insight briefing

Corra Foundation has the privilege of working alongside many charities, groups and communities. As it does this, Corra seeks to understand the positive changes communities aim to make towards:

- Reducing isolation
- Improving health and wellbeing
- Reducing inequalities

Evidence is gathered through insights from staff, learning from communities, as well as from applications and progress reports.

This short insight briefing highlights some key learning from 2019, both about the challenges communities face and the responses that they themselves are leading in response.

Main challenges

The main challenges people highlight to Corra are:

- Poverty, particularly around social security sanctions.
- Isolation and loneliness, many highlighting the added barrier of stigma.



Trends and insights

Stigma

Corra Foundation's Community Co-ordinators are regularly engaging with people who are struggling to cope. People talk about the daily pressures they face, including a lack of necessities and a need to access food and clothing banks. This often comes with significant stigma which can stand in the way of people accessing services.

Several communities have found that renaming local services is crucial to making them feel accessible and acceptable to people. For example, some now refer to 'food shares' instead of foodbanks and talk about 'recycling' or 'preloved' school uniforms instead of clothing banks. Community use and leadership of these initiatives have increased as a result.



Person speaking to
Community Co-ordinator,
Blacklands

In Langlees (Falkirk) use of the local soup kitchen had been declining. Following feedback from community members, the Community Co-ordinator found that people did not want to use the soup kitchen because they associated it with homelessness and poverty. The name has now been changed to 'natter and a bite to eat'. By altering the language and promoting a safe space that welcomes all local people to come along, have some food and meet other people, they have managed to engage a wider group of people who can benefit from the initiative.

Isolation

The stigma people feel because of poverty can be the catalyst for social isolation, which in turn has many well evidenced impacts, including on health.

Partnership Drugs Initiative (PDI) continues to support children and young people who experience isolation and stigma associated with their parents' alcohol or drug use. In 2018 the *Everyone Has a Story* small practice fund supported children and young people to tell their stories in a range of ways, including through photography and art. Children and young people powerfully illustrated the complexity of their experiences, with stigma and isolation strong themes throughout the work.

Learning from across Corra's work – particularly through Henry Duncan Grants – highlights the need for support that is tailored to men or women, and to different age groups. In 2018 four applications were received to support Men's Sheds across Scotland and nine applications from Home-Starts supporting isolated young parents.

Supporting people to connect and build relationships is vital in tackling isolation, and in turn can help individuals and communities develop greater confidence. Regular insights from Corra's Community Co-ordinators reflect how participation in activities helps to support this relational approach.



This picture was made by a young person to describe how alone a child can feel.

The walking group in Castlehill is supported by the Community Co-ordinator and was initially set-up in response to interest from the community. There are two groups running including a family walking group. The groups are a way to get people including families to talk to each other, share their days and what they would hope to do in the future. The groups were keen to do more and included parents developing a range of summer activities around the walking group. Increasingly it is the community who run the groups, with less support needed from the Community Co-ordinator.

Conversations with people in the communities show that the barriers experienced are often interlinked with a feeling of isolation. There are consistent messages about what has helped people to engage and feel comfortable in speaking with Community Co-ordinators, including:

- The importance of observing to really understand people's situation, including recognising that people might not always know what the issues are and may need support to identify these.
- The need for compassion, active listening and to pick up generally on what people are feeling, being aware that a small passing comment can be someone asking for support.

A toddler trip was organised in Blacklands (Kilwinning). One parent attending struggled with her mobility and as part of the activity was outside, she decided to take her son home. The Community Co-ordinator offered to take the person's son to the play area, while she watched from across the park. Both parent and child were delighted. The Community Co-ordinator got chatting with the parent about the difficulties she faced and how she relied upon her three older children for help. The parents said she would be bringing all her children to the family fun day.



Rising need

Many of the applications received by Corra Foundation relate to poverty and isolation. Corra's Henry Duncan Grants regularly receives applications from Citizens Advice Bureaus (10 applications in 2018). Many other organisations that apply, while not CABs, also support people with debt, social security and basic needs. Corra has seen a notable rise in grants made (through Henry Duncan Grants and Partnership Drugs Initiative) towards reducing isolation (43% in 2018 compared with 28% in 2017).

Children 1st Recovery Families project received funding of £87,398 for three years in May 2018. The project reports that many of the families are experiencing a range of issues, particularly poverty. A Money and Debt Advice Worker has helped families and the project also secured additional funds to help families buy household appliances and Christmas gifts.

Conclusions

- ✿ Poverty is a fundamental source of unfairness in Scotland and is a contravention of people's human rights. People have the right to an adequate standard of living, as well as a range of other rights that are undermined by poverty. It can lead to isolation, reduce people's confidence and prevent them having control over their own lives.
- ✿ Listening to people who experience poverty is crucial.
- ✿ As well as bigger structural issues (for example designing the economy and social security to protect against poverty), communities often want a small amount of support to enable them to make changes that matter to them. This often starts with communities creating ways to come together, build relationships and grow in confidence.

More information

To find out more please visit www.corra.scot or contact the team: 0131 444 4020 / hello@corra.scot

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