



THANKS TO STAFF PAST AND PRESENT  
FOR 20 YEARS OF SUCCESS

## **Scottish Government Decision Making Framework**

### **TPS Response**

Turning Point Scotland works with adults who are experiencing a range of support needs in relation to problematic drug and/or alcohol use, involvement in the criminal justice system, homelessness, learning disability and mental ill-health. We work from the belief that people matter, that they are the experts on their support needs and that it is for us to work creatively with them and with partners to ensure that those needs are met

We welcome the Government's transparency in their response to this crisis and we support the approach and principles that have been set out to guide their decision making.

Glasgow Disability Alliance have talked about how this crisis has "supercharged inequality", making the ways in which people are excluded and marginalised increasingly evident. We see this among the people we support, but we also experience this ourselves as voluntary sector service providers. We have demonstrated our value and the essential role that we play in our health and social care system, but rather than being treated as key partners we are often an afterthought. We have faced significant costs in ensuring that we continue to deliver during this time, costs that will need to be met. Many organisations within our sector will not survive this crisis unless the Scottish Government, who have committed to meet the additional costs faced by local authorities in responding to this crisis<sup>1</sup>, makes an equal commitment for voluntary sector providers.

The challenge has been clearly laid out, and we support the Government's position that what happens next should be informed by the evidence. Based on what we've learned in recent weeks and our experience and expertise in supporting vulnerable adults, there are some key factors that we believe should be considered as we move forward.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/news/social-care-at-heart-of-response-to-coronavirus/>

## **1. Learn from the evidence**

We wholeheartedly endorse the Scottish Government's commitment to be guided by the evidence as we work to tackle this virus and build our new reality, but we would like to broaden the range of evidence considered. The scientifically gathered data and analysis from experts in public health and the economy are vital, but the experience of third sector organisations like TPS, organisations who are connected to people and to communities and part of delivering our response, can enhance this picture. Importantly, we must also learn from the experience of the people that we support, people who are often already excluded and isolated and among the most vulnerable in our society. Learning from their experience as we move forward is not only essential to ensuring that our actions do not create further harm, but also in considering how our policy aims and approaches must adapt in the future.

In the short and medium term, as we work out how to move safely from this crisis response towards a state of maintenance, lessons can be taken from people's lived experience. People who have been supported and people who have delivered support in new and different ways can tell us what impact these changes have had, what has worked and what hasn't and of any unintended or unanticipated consequences of these shifts. This evidence can help us to shape what comes next.

An example of the kind of evidence we believe should be considered comes from the rapid and inspiring drive to ensure that people who were rough sleeping had somewhere safe to self-isolate. We need to understand how people experienced it and how it helped, but perhaps more importantly we need to know why it didn't work, what opportunities did we miss, how could we have strengthened our response? TPS have learned from our services that people with problematic alcohol and/or other drug use could not always benefit from this support because they were too intoxicated. Others did not stay in the accommodation provided or refused to engage at all as a result of their mental ill-health. The evidence that their experience provides is important, not to criticise a welcome approach but to strengthen it, and to ensure that whatever comes next addresses these gaps and is even more effective.

## **2. Digital opportunities**

Another key area where our experience can inform our progress is in relation to digital approaches to recovery and support. Our enforced isolation has led to leaps forward in our willingness and ability to engage with these tools and we have seen great examples of people adapting – visiting support shifting to phone calls, online group work sessions, even using video calls to enable someone to furnish their new home. Some services have even seen an increase in engagement rates as a result of these new options. Further, these tools

have supported our internal connection and continuity as we have adapted to online recruitment, management, supervision and team meetings.

However, the way that support has shifted on-line has also shone a light on how many people are left behind, and that these people are often among the most excluded; an example of the “supercharged inequality” referenced by GDA. We are working with people who cannot engage with online support because they don’t have the smartphones, data packages or at-home Wi-Fi that this requires. Others do not feel comfortable engaging with support over the phone for varied reasons, often related to their mental health. We also support people in our Forensic Learning Disability services who are not allowed access to the internet as part of their licence conditions.

However we proceed, we believe that digital tools will play a key part in the short and medium term. With the right approach these tools can complement support delivery in the long term, providing effective and efficient supports to our work, and enhancing people’s choice and control over how they receive and engage with their support. We welcome and look forward to working with the Connected Scotland programme but we must revisit our broader digital strategy in light of what has been learned, and focus on addressing digital exclusion as a priority that connects to virtually every area of policy development.

### **3. Supporting the workforce**

We are members of the Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) and support the points they have made in relation to voluntary sector organisations as employers. Like businesses and public service providers we will have to work out how to ensure physical distancing measures can be observed in the workplace, and we will face additional costs in relation to office refits and enhanced cleaning, for example. Our management, recruitment and training practices have largely shifted on-line and within this we have to manage the confidence of employees returning to work. We ask the Scottish Government to ensure that any guidance or assistance designed to support businesses and/or public service providers through these challenges includes voluntary sector organisations.

With particular reference to the Test, Trace, Isolate, Support approach, we must ensure that the needs of the social care sector workforce within the voluntary sector are given equal consideration with those in the public sector. Time spent in close contact with the people they support is an essential element of many Support Practitioners roles, meaning they are at increased likelihood of being listed as a close contact by a person being tested for COVID-19. Staff members having to self-isolate, along with anyone that they themselves have been in close contact with, potentially on multiple occasions, could have a disastrous impact on support provision. We must see prompt testing and rapid provision of results for Support

Practitioners, at an equal level with those working for public sector providers, so that staff are not required to isolate for any longer than is absolutely necessary.

We ask for as much clarity as possible as the situation progresses, and as we make decisions around how we adapt. We have to balance our commitment to delivering the support that people need with ensuring a safe and healthy working environment for our staff and with the financial reality in which we operate. We need to be able to justify these decisions and clearly explain our reasoning to staff, to people we support, to Trade Unions and to service commissioners, so we need guidance that is flexible enough to allow us respond while setting clear parameters in which we must operate.

#### **4. Voluntary Sector Providers as Partners**

The value and importance of voluntary sector organisations has been clearly evident in Scotland's response to this pandemic. First and foremost, TPS has been able to quickly adapt our practice to respond to changes and continue to deliver face to face care to people who need it most, while keeping them and our staff as safe as possible. We have also responded to change and to challenges by diversifying what we do and how we do it as new needs are identified; this innovation is important and demonstrates our value in this field, but no more so than the fact that we have maintained support, at a high standard and in challenging circumstances, throughout this crisis. We have not left anyone behind.

The reshaping of Rosie's Café in Aberdeen is an example of how we have adapted.

##### **Rosie's Café – Aberdeen**

**TPS Rosie's Café is a social enterprise in Aberdeen providing vocational training, support and work experience for people recovering from acquired brain injury, mental ill-health and a range of other conditions. Since the café has had to close we have restructured to deliver soup and sandwiches to people supported by TPS Outreach Housing Support Service. We reach approximately 100 people per day, people who are isolated and excluded during this crisis and among the most vulnerable in the city.**

**This crisis has made us think differently about how we support people – how we use the resources we have to respond to what people need. It has encouraged us to build connection and coordination between separate services in the city and to build links with the private sector – Morrisons are providing us with food donations, showing how all sectors have come together with a shared goal.**

***"It has been amazing to watch the teams working so closely and beginning to understand each other's roles and the challenges they face on a daily basis. The teams out delivering are also flagging anything that they may be concerned about to the support practitioner on a daily basis...feedback has shown that it's more than just receiving the food they need, it's the 'not being forgotten' that is so important"*** Rosie's Service Manager

This responsiveness and innovation is evident across our work. Our staff teams are delivering people's methadone prescriptions, have developed a postal harm reduction service, and have trained in administering insulin so as to be able to step in for any gaps in health care provision. We have developed a food delivery service for people unable to access food banks, developed safe ways to transport people to testing centres and adapted Rosie's café in Aberdeen as a meal delivery service. Our dynamism and connection to the people who need this support, our ability to deliver 'outside the box' approaches quickly and effectively; this is extremely valuable. We are a resource that can support work to tackle the challenges ahead.

However, we can't help if we're not there. While we have demonstrated the valuable resource that we can be, if this resource is not invested in, not supported, it will not exist. We know that many voluntary sector organisations will simply not survive this crisis, and their loss will dramatically impact on the support that is available at a community level. TPS has responded well to this crisis in large part because of our financial stability, but that stability has taken a hit. We are going to face financial challenges as a country, and our experience through recent years of austerity has shown that voluntary sector providers of social care services are easy targets for funding cuts when local authorities are under pressure. We will not be able to carry on as we have, to deliver the same person centred and values based support that is so effective, to adapt and support public service providers or to face any future crisis if we are not able to cover the costs that we have incurred.

We are not naïve to the economic challenge that we are facing but we believe that as we rebuild, there are opportunities to grow. We must fight against the pull to revert to business as usual and move forward, from here. We have achieved progress that would have previously been thought impossible. We have found ways past barriers such as information sharing because we have all been focused on shared priorities and driven by a shared urgency. We have the opportunity to consolidate these gains and start our rebuilding from a stronger foundation. We have the opportunity to capitalise on the groundswell of public support for our health and social care workforce to develop a sustainable way forward that emphasises the part that we all must play. We have the opportunity to spend smarter, not just spend more, to build a collective approach that recognises how our policy aims intersect, that delivers our National Performance Framework, our Sustainable Development Goals and to create a Wellbeing Economy.

We are committed to supporting this work. We have resources that can help. We will continue to engage with our staff and the people we support on these questions and to share evidence and learning as it emerges. We urge the Scottish Government to remember and support our sector, and all the ways in which we can support this work, as we move forward.