



**THE LASTING
DIFFERENCE**

Sustaining nonprofit organisations,
leaders & impact

CYPFEIF and ALEC fund

Notes from online sustainability workshops summer 2020

Session 1: Reaching the next horizon

1. Overview and outcomes

This report shares the learning and notes from the first of three workshops designed to help grant holders achieve:

- Greater ability to sustain the learning from their responses to Covid-19
- Improved understanding of how to sustain their work and/or its impact, using the sustainability capabilities within The Lasting Difference and Lasting Leadership.
- Improved readiness for transitioning out of the current fund, with clearly identified exit strategies.

2. Presentation: The paradoxes and principles

[See separate slide presentation and pages 6-10 of [the Lasting Difference toolkit](#)]

The paradoxes and principles make sense but it's not easy to implement them. We need to allow ourselves time to reflect and remind ourselves of what's important. If we're too action-led we won't have time or capacity to keep moving forward.



Breakout discussion

Has Covid brought new challenges, or has it just intensified existing ones?
How has your organisation responded to these and other challenges during the Covid crisis?

The Change Paradox: adapting and evolving – responding to different needs while keeping focused on our core services has meant making decisions to stop certain things. This supports staff to work within capacity and look after their wellbeing – e.g. taking holidays! New ways of working have improved efficiency for some organisations but decreased it for others – e.g. online communication reduces travel but still takes time. Overall, balancing *flexibility* with *focus* is what has helped keep things going.

Remote support and online services – many services have begun or accelerated online delivery. This has often increased capacity and expanded their reach. More remote support has helped to address families' existing and emerging needs. Staff may need more supervision and support to cope with complex issues that can no longer be left 'at work'.

Demand – Many services have had extra demand, with poverty and inequality on the increase. Where demand has reduced, this could be because of fewer public sector referrals; people not reaching out to their usual sources of support; or wanting Covid-specific (non-standard) services. Reduced demand can provide an opportunity to catch up on waiting lists, but there are worries about the 'tidal wave' of referrals that will follow.

Reach – this has expanded for many services. Looking to future, digital services could allow us to reach more people – particularly in rural communities – and raise our profile. Some clients report feeling overwhelmed, with information overload, while those who don't have online access (or who find it challenging to use for other reasons) are missing out. We need to be innovative to find new ways to provide support.

The Myth of perpetual motion: planning and contingency – There's less crisis management now and we're starting to think ahead. Still, plans for reopening and restarting services keep changing, so there's lots of uncertainty. As time goes on, transitioning back to our old ways of working gets harder – and less likely. The Scottish Government's four stages help, but we're left making best guesses about the timeline and transition periods. It's vital to keep monitoring cashflow for different medium-term scenarios. Longer term, we need to manage the financial implications of the crisis.

Lasting Difference tips:

- Look at the RSA's strategic questions introduced by our guest speaker below.
- When resources and capacity are limited, focus on those that help you learn.

Managing staff – Managers are making extra efforts to make sure everyone's mental health and workloads are okay. Staff have adopted IT and flexible working positively, with different ways of collaborating and communicating. But after the initial adrenalin rush of managing workloads, sustaining energy and enthusiasm is a challenge. Communication is also hard, when there are so many unanswerable questions and when new arrangements (furlough, home-working) are easier for some than others.

Lasting Difference tip: remember the myth of perpetual motion applies to people too! People will burn out because they are so committed, so they need strong support to take breaks and holidays and work their contracted hours. If we don't look after ourselves, we won't be any use to anyone!

Learning: paradoxes, principles and practices

Note: Children in Scotland invite people to add learning to the Children and Young People's Voices Evidence Bank – it's open to anybody

<https://evidencebank.org.uk/>



Some of the adaptations above can only continue if they're in line with our long-term priorities and ways of working. Some services are providing core services resources for new beneficiaries, or new services for existing ones.

Lasting Difference tip: Look at these tools to avoid becoming an octopus!

- **Idea screening matrices** – help to plan sustainability from the start:
<https://www.thelastingdifference.com/resources/five-organisational-capabilities/>
- **Ansoff Matrix** – great for assessing new ideas e.g. at board or team meetings
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ansoff_Matrix

Outcomes are changing because needs and services are changing. Funders have generally been supportive of innovation, for example accepting new approaches that weren't in funding applications, like building communities' ability to support each other.

Collaboration with partners has been vital. The appetite to work collaboratively and think outside the box has helped coordinate services and reduce duplication. Online communication makes it harder to keep properly connected with existing partners or build trust and rapport with new ones, but positive partnerships have still developed.

Feedback from families is even more important now. Case studies are helping to capture impact stories, either for the usual outcomes or CV-19 related impact (e.g. on children's education). This is good evidence for future planning and funding applications.

New opportunities have arisen – new partnerships are forming; volunteers and staff are producing new content; and we're sharing it more widely. It's important to ensure staff and volunteers feel part of the longer journey by getting their views on strategy development e.g. via staff and volunteer surveys to get their thoughts and opinions.

Focus: saying yes and no – focusing on the really key things gives us permission to say no to other things, improving our effectiveness and making the most impact.

Guest speaker: Steven Marwick, Director of Evaluation Support Scotland

"Using learning from the last four years – and the current crisis – to identify what to sustain."

<https://youtu.be/xZBGUNOGD4g>

Steven focused on ensuring evaluation is proportionate, relevant and useful. What are you trying to *understand*? What's the *whole story* of your impact? And what's *practical* to do?

He outlined four sources of evidence that can help, balancing stats and stories:

- **Feedback from the people you work with** e.g. not just consulting about what's needed, but about impact – and emerging needs
- **Third party feedback** – e.g. from partners, referrers, parents and carers
- **Staff/volunteer observations**: this is key evidence, seeing impact in practice
- **Internal files** – records, case notes, inspection results etc.

Evidence gathered in these ways creates a 'patchwork', with evidence of different types and quality being collated to create an overall picture. This tool can be useful both for planning evaluation in advance and analysing data once it has been gathered:

<http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/resources/226/>

Other ESS resources we referenced on the day:

Covid page <http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/covid-19/>

Webinar: Evaluation in a time of Change

<http://evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/resources/532/>

Webinar: Outcomes are everywhere but which are mine?

<http://evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/resources/512/>

Stats and stories in community settings –

<http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/resources/474>

Steven also suggested an RSA article which sets out four possible responses to Covid:

- What have we **started doing** that we'll **continue**?
- What have we **started** doing that we **won't keep doing**?
- What have we **stopped** doing that we really **need to go back to**?
- What have we **stopped** doing that we **won't go back to**?

(We also noted that there may be things we want to resume, but maybe in a different way to before – we can get the same outcomes or results in different ways?)

<https://www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/rsa-blogs/2020/04/change-covid19-response>

Breakout discussion



What *evidence* does your organisation have of effectiveness and impact?
What has your organisation *learned* over the last four years and from its Covid response?
How can this learning and evidence be *used* to help into the future?

Evaluation needs to be built into project planning at the outset – what difference are we trying to make? Don't leave it until the last year of funding! While there are evaluation challenges at the moment (information might be in the office or otherwise inaccessible), some services have gathered even more evidence of impact. Many are measuring existing outcomes as well as Covid-specific ones, generating some brilliant case studies that tell useful stories about need, effectiveness, impact and reach.

Databases and systems may need to adapt as delivery adapts. For example, outcomes might look different in practice, so there will be different measures of success. If you don't already have one, introduce an [evaluation framework](#) to cover all your services. This allows you to collate and make sense of evidence from a wide range of services and sources, as well as reducing the burden on children, young people and families. In turn, it helps you map and report on different funders' outcomes.

Evaluation is for service users not just professionals, so it needs to give them what they need and be accessible to them. This means one size won't fit all, we'll need to use methods to suit different people.

Types of evidence being used by funded groups – there are lots!

- Training evaluation – needs analysis, ongoing, at the end and longitudinal follow up
- Simplified scoring system for phone helpline
- Case studies
- Stats from partners
- Shanarri indicators to look at org, project and family level
- Contact being made by another member of staff than the family's key worker, with data integrity check by admin worker
- Annual survey – staff, parents, professionals etc.
- Web analytics, metrics and tracking to understand engagement
- Using other engagement opportunities to get consultation information e.g. the Young Carers Festival uses creative methods like graphic artists, video, emojis etc to make it easy and fun.
- Baseline assessments at the start of engagement
- Postal questionnaires
- Text messages

Learning

The challenge is always to have time and capacity for organisational learning, though some people are finding it easier to reflect with colleagues just now. The last four years of learning have enabled us to respond to current challenges from a position of strength. The RSA questions above can help us to sustain change.

Children are isolating: there will be some work needed to help children feel safe going back to school again. Children's mental health and wellbeing have become mainstreamed as an issue. Parents and teachers will also need support, to support children and young people e.g. with life transitions and missed transitions. Safeguarding issues will be just as important once lockdown is lifted and children go back to school.

Building good relationships with the organisations we support is hugely important, joining together and being responsive to their needs. We don't need to reinvent the wheel – we can make links with other orgs to avoid duplicating of support and resources.

The importance of relationships features in the December Future of Childhood podcast, run by Unicef, at <https://www.togetherscotland.org.uk/resources-and-networks/resources-library/2020/03/future-of-childhood-podcasts/>

Our digital systems work well and widen our reach. New online methodologies will continue for the foreseeable – this can be daunting but once we get used to them, they work well and enable us to stay connected. However, we will still need face-to-face as it is a positive means of engagement for both the staff and communities. We just need to get used to working differently and support the children we work with to do so as well.

Understanding of the needs of clients based on evaluation. We need to seek further funding to respond to need. Service users tell us they want us to remember the wider context of their lives, including other services. They want us to work with others to measure impact, including the impact that comes from what other services do (or don't do).

Capacity and finance – capacity is vital. Sustainability is not about continuation of funding but how you build that resource into your core. Being sustainable helped us to adapt for Covid, but short term increases in investment may mean longer term reductions. We must be ready for that challenge. We need to plan for sustainability in funding applications and income generation, evidencing our value, costs and outcomes.

Intermediary organisations can find it difficult to evidence the impact on the real end user. Another helpful ESS resource is here: <http://evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/resources/thematic-guides/intermediaries-impact/>

Our teams' effectiveness has been interesting – they are collaborating really well online in a way that didn't happen before. This has been really useful, something we had been trying to achieve but hadn't managed. We're learning together and discovering our different skills, e.g. people who are great at making videos. People are trying things they wouldn't have done before. Flexible working and innovation are going to be ongoing now.

Relevant links and resources

The new edition of The Lasting Difference toolkit:

<https://www.thelastingdifference.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/The-Lasting-Difference-2020-5th-Ed.pdf>

ACOSVO Lasting Difference masterclass notes on sustainable leadership

<https://www.thelastingdifference.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Lasting-Leadership-Masterclass-One-notes.pdf>

...and the free sustainable leadership guide <https://www.thelastingdifference.com>

Idea screening matrices: avoid being an octopus!

<https://www.thelastingdifference.com/resources/five-organisational-capabilities/>

External evaluation of CYPFIEF/ALEC fund – useful reminders about different sorts of capacity that have been built

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/evaluation-children-young-people-families-early-intervention-adult-learning-empowering-communities-fund-final-report/>