

LITERATURE REVIEW: THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE JUSTICE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

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Contents

Executive Summary.....	4
Methodology.....	4
Gaps and Limitations	4
1. Introduction.....	6
2. The impact of Covid-19 on people in the justice system.....	7
3. The impact of Covid-19 on third sector organisations: overarching themes	9
Service Delivery and Adaptability	9
Sustainable Funding	11
Staff Wellbeing.....	13
Partnerships and Collaboration	14
4. Conclusion.....	15
Recommendations.....	15
References.....	17



Executive Summary

Community Justice Scotland (CJS) published its Outcome Activity Annual Report in March 2021 which makes a recommendation for CJS to “scope out research, in collaboration with the Criminal Justice Voluntary Sector Forum (CJVSF), to assess the impact of the pandemic on third sector services” (Community Justice Scotland, 2021, p. 10_11). In direct response to that recommendation, the purpose of this review is to collate and analyse available literature and information to help establish the extent to which any themes relating to the impact of COVID-19 on the justice voluntary sector (JVS) and third sector organisations (TSOs) have been identified.

By conducting an overview of research already undertaken in this area, the primary aim is to develop our understanding of the overall impact on TSOs and any subsequent challenges experienced throughout the national lockdown periods since March 2020, as well as to identify contradictions, gaps in knowledge and sector-specific needs going forward into Scotland’s recovery phase of the pandemic. The evidence gathered can then be used to better inform CJS and CJVSF of any good practice for driving future transformations across all sectors in attaining the delivery of justice in Scotland.

Methodology

The themes presented herein were retrieved using a combination of systematic and comparative analysis methodology techniques to critically assess the available information and research found in government policy reports, TSO surveys, websites, news reports and blog posts directly related to the impact of the pandemic on the JVS. As literature is currently limited at this time (sourced only since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020) the findings of this review seek to form a foundational basis (Phase One) for a future research project on the impact of the pandemic on the JVS and TSOs (Phase Two) which, collectively, aims to answer the following research questions:

1. *What impact has Covid-19 had on the justice voluntary sector in Scotland?*
2. *What have been the main challenges?*
3. *How have organisations adapted the way that they work and what lessons can be learned?*
4. *What can be learned from other sectors experience of and response to the pandemic?*

Gaps and Limitations

As the current review has been carried out within a short period of time and the available literature at the time of writing is limited, the extent of information presented is confined and requires further exploration and development at the next phase of the project.



Findings at this point are largely based on the overall response of the JVS to the pandemic, with little information available from **individual TSOs and how the delivery of justice specific services** has been impacted. Whilst the impact of the pandemic on the JVS and TSOs has been uncovered to an extent over the past eighteen months, the majority of data available is from 2020 when the initial lockdown restrictions were in place and where immediate responses were gathered, making it unclear what plans for the **sustainability of both policy and funding arrangements** are going forward. The **impact of the pandemic on individuals** who have come into contact with the justice system (pre/pro and during the pandemic) and **what the reduction in support services has caused** for them has yet to be explored. Whilst this paper includes some evidence which looks at the **TS involvement with local justice partnerships**, the research is only very recently upcoming therefore further exploration which looks at the changes and processes which the pandemic has presented for partnership working is needed. Furthermore, there is a recognition that the **digital shift has exacerbated digital poverty and exclusion** within society and in turn this affects TSO services as well as individuals able to access services, however at this stage, the current review has not explored the impact of this.



1. Introduction

Founded on adopting a preventative approach, The Scottish Government's (SG) National Strategy for Community Justice aims to "create a more just, equitable, and inclusive society" which is committed to tackling inequalities and supporting the needs of people who come into contact with the justice system, whilst ensuring "public resources are made best use of." (The Scottish Government, 2016, p. 2). Scotland's justice system and the delivery of justice services involves a collaborative approach from public, private and voluntary sectors and includes a broad range of statutory and non-statutory partners and stakeholders with interests in justice, housing, employability, social care, health and wellbeing. The SG vision, set forth in the 2016 National Strategy, underpinned by the Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016, primarily aims to help partners and communities work together to improve community justice outcomes.

The TS, a key component for the delivery of justice in Scotland, comprises a variety of bodies including charities, large national organisations, highly local groups, profit-making social enterprises and voluntary organisations which aim to deliver essential services, improve people's wellbeing and contribute to economic growth (Buchan, et al., 2021; The Scottish Government, 2021). Existing literature on the impact of the pandemic on the JVS suggests that whilst TS service providers across Scotland have effectively demonstrated admirable resilience and adaptability in continuing to crucially meet the needs of the most vulnerable members of our society, organisations and services on the whole have been adversely affected in a number of areas (SCVO, 2021; The Scottish Government, 2020). Some of the issues highlighted throughout this review have been previously recognised as challenges for the delivery of justice in Scotland prior to the pandemic but have become intensified over the past year (Christie, 2011; Sparkes, 2021).

The current review begins by drawing on evidence which shows that the impact of Covid-19 has not only affected the JVS and TSOs and their ability to maintain the delivery of key services but also the individuals and communities who remain at the heart of community justice and whose reliance on these services remaining sustainable in the future has become more apparent than ever before. The themes highlighted thereafter illustrate that TSOs have endured having to adapt, expand and diversify services to meet the changing demands of individuals and communities; whilst at the same time have been faced with their own challenges relating to fears around financial sustainability in the future, organisational capacity concerns caused by loss of staff and volunteers, and the overall impact of the pandemic on TSOs affecting the mental health and wellbeing of staff.

The paper will then draw on the recognition that there have been some positive effects emerging from the impact of the pandemic on the JVS, such as improved collaboration in partnership working, and the development of better communication routes between partners due to the 'online shift'; but there remains concern among TS partners that the sector is not as 'visible' as statutory partners (SPs) and other public sector bodies, and therefore calls for more recognition for the sector continue to be expressed.




The findings will conclude by demonstrating the need for future research to consider the ways in which these themes intersect and interact with one another (understanding that no single theme has happened or is happening in a vacuum) to uncover the collective impact of the pandemic on the JVS and TSOs and to ensure plans for community justice and policy incentives can be better informed and developed going forward.

2. The impact of Covid-19 on people in the justice system

Recent reports on the Scottish justice system and its response to the pandemic have essentially drawn attention to some of the previously recognised and yet ever more persistent inequalities among certain groups within our communities which include issues relating to health, poverty, homelessness and the disproportionate impact on those already disadvantaged in our society (COSLA, 2020; The Social Renewal Advisory Board Report, 2021; Sparkes, 2021). In supporting the often-complex needs of these groups, particularly those who have come into contact with or have been affected by the justice system, the JVS and services provided by TSOs play a fundamental role within our communities. As part of a blog post about public services and Scotland's Voluntary Sector during Covid-19, Andrew Burns, Accounts Commission Member of Audit Scotland commented: ". . .it is clear just how fundamental Scotland's voluntary sector has been in supporting communities tackle the multiple impacts of Covid-19. Their role as the country recovers can't be underestimated" (Burns, 2021).

Evidence demonstrates that the Covid-19 pandemic has affected everyone, from all backgrounds, on a global scale and brought unprecedented changes to the way we all live our lives. There are, however, particular groups within our society who have been further disadvantaged throughout the Covid-19 crisis and who are now at risk of becoming more vulnerable than ever before. For example, a project conducted by Glasgow University researchers: 'Scotland in Lockdown', aimed at understanding the impact of Covid-19 on members of society who are already exposed to high levels of exclusion and isolation, found that prisoners, refugees and asylum seekers, disabled people, and survivors of domestic abuse have been faced with the most challenges due to lockdown restrictions (Armstrong & Pickering, 2020).

Moreover, a UK wide publication by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) reported on the effects of the pandemic and highlighted, inter alia, issues concerning justice and personal security; with a particular focus on violence against women, access to justice, and the human rights of prisoners (Equalities and Human Rights Commission, 2020). The EHRC, (2020) made recommendations for the UK Government ". . .to ensure services are adequately funded. . .to capture and assess data on the experiences of court users. . ." and ". . .to monitor and mitigate disproportionate adverse effects of restrictions on prison regimes" (*Ibid*, 2020, p. 45). Concerns about the management of Covid-19 in Scotland's prisons were augmented by The Scottish Human Rights Commission's (SHRC) letter to the then Cabinet Secretary for Justice, Humaza Yousaf MSP, earlier this year which drew attention to the rising prison population alongside increasing infection rates and associated risks



to those who both live and work within Scotland's prisons (Scottish Human Rights Commission, 2021). The SHRC expressed concerns relating to the lack of accessible data throughout the pandemic and the suspension of independent monitoring and prison inspections, which created a major barrier to ensuring prison conditions and prisoner's fundamental rights are being satisfactorily conformed to.

In reponse to the Scottish Parliament's Equalities and Human Rights Committee Enquiry (Scottish Parliament, 2020), Social Work Scotland (SWS) together with the Scottish Association of Social Work (SASW) recognised that whilst the Covid-19 pandemic has exhibited new equality and human rights issues, some of the already existing inequalities have been intensified (SWS & SASW, 2021). Some of the impacts of the pandemic and lockdown restrictions on these groups of people listed in the report are: increased levels of poverty among many households with added financial pressures, food poverty and housing issues; exacerbation of the pre-existing 'digital divide' for already disadvantaged households who have not been able to access the same essential support services or knowledge as other groups in society (similar restrictions impacting prisoners as mentioned above); disruptions to social work and care referral routes and services available (through schools, GPs and voluntary organisations), and; disruptions to community services whereby due to many of the the public, private and voluntary sector providers of support being forced to close, those individuals who rely on care packages and/or opportunities available to them have been significantly impacted.

Not only has the pandemic affected the most vulnerable individuals and groups, but also the services available to them and the people who's job it is to protect their rights. Social workers in Scotland for example, who provide crucial access to a wide range of support in children, adults and justice services, recently voiced that the impact of the pandemic has obstructed their ability to meet the needs of the most affected individuals due to working from home restrictions, absence of staff, limited PPE and the services not being as accessible to individuals due to remote working. As the SWS & SASW (2021) response notes, corporate bodies such as local authorities who have a duty to uphold the rights of individuals within our society ". . .are really just organised groups of people, all with their own needs, vulnerabilities and rights" and that the pandemic has resulted in employers having to divert the urgency of meeting service user's needs to meeting the needs and protecting the welfare of staff (*ibid*, p. 2).

It is imperative therefore, that future research explores the changing needs and rights of *all* individuals impacted by the Covid-19 crisis (including those who work within justice services across all sectors) in conjunction with measuring the impact on the services in place to meet the needs of those in contact with the justice system.



3. The impact of Covid-19 on third sector organisations: overarching themes

Service Delivery and Adaptability

“...many of the organisations and staff we spoke to said that demand for their services had increased sharply during lockdown but this was not accompanied by increased resources at their disposal.” (Armstrong & Pickering, 2020, p. 59)

Research carried out by the Glasgow Third Sector Interface Network (GTSIN) highlighted the crucial role played by the TS in providing communities with essential services during the first lockdown period in 2020, whilst drawing on some of the major issues which the city's TSOs faced (GTSIN, 2020). The GTSIN report, based on interviews with key contributors to the TS response noted that the speed and flexibility of TSOs in their delivery of services throughout the pandemic demonstrated their ability to effectively “adapt to the needs of the community swiftly and innovatively” (*ibid*, 2020, p. 5). Many TSOs did close during the initial lockdown phase, but others quickly changed the nature of their services to meet the demands of the crisis situation. The GTSIN report draws on examples of organisations tailoring their normal activities and services such as: opting to deliver food and door-to-door services; expanding support through use of technology and using social media community pages as a means of connecting with other organisations and to inform people; creating apps and providing devices to service users, and; finding innovative ways to aid the elderly and vulnerable to go shopping and collect medicines. Moreover, CJVSF members response to the pandemic and meeting people's changing needs and demands show that whilst some services remained open, most were forced to operate at a reduced service and move everything to remote delivery via phone, email and websites; some services were suspended completely; other services adapted by setting up emergency Coronavirus funds to ensure support was still able to reach the most vulnerable. (CJVSF, n.d.)

Drawing on feedback captured from TSOs about the impact of both local and national lockdowns, CJVSF highlighted some key points around the implications for TSOs service delivery which included: the need to immediately build flexibility into services to ensure the continuation of support, such as by operating under the varied lockdown restrictions put in place across different areas; the redesigning of services to meet the support needs of service users and being open to adapt to deliver both face-to-face (when necessary) and through the use of technology, and; extending services to provide additional support and advice on any practical implications to service users in relation to changes in governmental guidance and lockdown measures (CJVSF, 2020). Inspiring Scotland also drew on the uncertainty throughout the sector on the implementation of new and fast-changing restrictions and concerns were raised about the delivery of services in the long-term (Inspiring Scotland, Oct 2020). Those who work in delivering services in health and social care, reported that there has been an increase in demand for counselling support and clients seeking face-to-face interactions, leading to service providers having to



continuously adapt their service delivery methods to meet the different and changing needs of service users as well as staff (Inspiring Scotland, Nov 2020).

The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) conducted a series of quarterly reviews in 2020, focusing on the impact of the pandemic on voluntary organisations from which it was reported that a number of themes around service delivery, finance and the effects on people working in the sector had remained consistent (SCVO, 2021). It was found that 90% of charities reported a negative impact on their ability to maintain the delivery of services with 77% of TSOs having to adapt the ways in which services were previously delivered. The SCVO (2021) review acknowledged that it does not identify how individual organisations have been impacted in their response to the pandemic and they have since secured funding to carry out a longitudinal panel study of TSOs. Further investigation into the impact of the pandemic on individual TSOs is an important area for future research which will help identify any specific challenges experienced across the diverse range of service providers and the needs of different organisations going forward.

Echoing some of the themes found in Scottish literature, a report covering the impact on the JVS in England and Wales draws on the challenges to continuing the delivery of services and supporting staff and service users whilst trying to ensure the long-term sustainability of organisations (Clinks, 2021). For example, as a result of restrictions being put in place throughout the UK, TS staff and service providers have not been able to access prisons or meet with prison staff or prisoners face-to-face over the course of lockdown periods, thus TS service providers have had to rely on communication via telephone and email systems to continue service delivery and confer with prison staff; which has reportedly impacted the number of individuals being able to receive support as well as the quality of support available to them (CJVSF, 2020; Clinks 2020).

Moreover, with the suspension of Unpaid Work (UPW) activities under the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020, and the continued use of Community Payback Orders (CPOs) in sentences by the courts, SWS reported concerns of Justice Social Work (JSW) becoming overwhelmed and facing significant challenges in delivering the backlog of UPW hours whilst restrictions are in place (CJVSF, 2020; Social Work Scotland, 2020). Throughout ongoing discussions seeking to plan for and prevent the backlog from affecting the justice system more widely, CJVSF gathered the views of TSOs who reported that they are either already contributing services to UPW activities, have tailored existing services, or in some instances, established new services in order to help reduce the backlog (CJVSF, 2020). There have also been reports that SG are not meeting community justice targets and when court business picks up, the use and demand for community justice services will continue increase (Audit Scotland, 2021; BBC, 2021). Whilst it is difficult to determine at the time of writing, how this will impact the TS going forward, it is inevitable that proper plans and support mechanisms are put in place to help TSOs manage these increases.

In their response to the Scottish Parliament Justice Committee's scrutiny of the Scottish Government's budget for 2021-22 (The Scottish Government, 2021), SWS reported that much of the work required throughout the justice system to relieve the backlogs is significantly reliant upon criminal justice social work (CJSW) inputs,



whose capacity has, at the same time, been reduced through lockdown measures and restrictions (Social Work Scotland, 2020). Commenting on the SG's new measures which aim to effectively ease pressure on local partners and authorities in dealing with the backlog of UPW hours, James Maybee, chair of Social Work Scotland Justice Standing Committee, said: ". . .it's right with regard to unpaid work that we consider the capacity and safety of those professionals to continue doing that. . ." (The Scottish Government, 2021). Further, SWS note that the delivery of certain programmes of activity in relation to bail supervision, electronic monitoring (EM) and CPOs, requires greater investment and additional funding provided to support the needs of the TS and statutory service providers.

Whilst some organisations have expressed barriers to the continued provision of services throughout changing lockdown measures, it is necessary to gain insight into which services have been most affected and how these barriers may have affected the support and quality of services available to individuals. An important area to explore further therefore, is whether there is evidence of a divide between the types of services which *have* been supported throughout the pandemic and those who may have fallen through the gaps. Research looking into the types of services or individuals who use particular services who don't get the same 'sympathy' as others – for example, prisoners, drug and alcohol abusers, asylum seekers, and what effect the pandemic has had on these groups and services available to them.

Sustainable Funding

"The rapid funding response from the Scottish Government and other funders has been welcome, but sustainability will be an ongoing concern. . ." (The Scottish Government, 2020, p. 14)

A recurring theme reported in the literature by the JVS relates to lack of finance, uncertainty around the future funding of services and an overall fear that organisations will not be able to recover from the pandemic or remain sustainable in the near or long-term future (SCVO, 2021; Clinks, 2021; CJVSF, 2020). In the early months of the initial lockdown period in 2020, The Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) reported that 20% of Scottish charities expected a rapid decrease in their finances within 12 months, 11% of those foresaw a critical impact to their services happening over a 6-month period, and at the time of reporting, 51% had already lost fundraising income (OSCR, May 2020). However, these figures had decreased in OSCR's November findings where only 9% reported foreseeing a critical threat to their finances, and 89% had managed to raise income from donations and fundraising; but of those, 55% continued to report witnessing a significant decrease (OSCR, Nov 2020).

Aiming to gain a greater insight into the pressures faced by the TS, the Corra Foundation, one of lead distributors of grants and funding in Scotland, reported that the most significant financial challenges for TSOs throughout the pandemic stem from: the UK Government's furlough scheme, uncertainty on their eligibility to apply to the scheme, and a reluctance to furlough essential members of staff; the reliance on reserves and pressures to secure funding through trusts; loss of income from



being unable to attend events or continue fundraising, as well as the suspension of membership fees (Corra Foundation, 2020). Clinks, (2020), further conveyed similar disruptions to the VS in England and Wales. Critically the Clinks report noted that organisations are suffering due to struggles in accessing grant funding for non-pandemic related services, whilst criminal justice specialist organisations reported having limited access to government funding, with 77% of respondents having to, instead, apply for emergency grant funding from trusts and foundations. The report also drew attention to the limited availability and access to government financial support schemes for voluntary organisations working in the justice system, given that the schemes were primarily designed for businesses.

The Social Renewal Advisory Board (SRAB) noted that the TS was majorly impacted by the restrictions placed on income-generation during lockdown, and highlighted that alongside the TSs need to adapt and change their usual operations and services, the sectors reliance on short-term funding and ongoing lack of secure funding has meant some organisations struggling to survive during the pandemic – when services have been most needed (The Social Renewal Advisory Board Report, 2021). Of importance is the GTSIN (2020) report which noted that the flexibility and responsiveness of TS funders in allowing organisations to modify how they used additional funding and grants was key to the response during pandemic but that there are many TSOs who remain concerned about securing funding in the future due to having already received large funding increases during Covid (GTSIN, 2020). It is not however clear how much funding was distributed between organisations or if it was distributed evenly in terms of meeting the needs of service users spread across the TS or the levels of flexibility which organisations experienced. One TS respondent in the report commented: “. . . Funders were giving tens of thousands to people to do food distribution, but I couldn’t get a couple of grand for activity packs. . .” (*Ibid*, p. 6).

The SG announced the Third Sector Resilience Fund (TSRF) which provided £20 million in the form of emergency funding for charities, community groups, enterprises and voluntary organisations to help TSOs who fell into financial difficulty caused by the pandemic (SCVO, 2020). Further funding has since been put in place to support TSOs respond to challenges caused by the pandemic as Scotland heads into its recovery phase (SCVO, 2021). As well as funding, additional support has been made available to the TS which includes the Community & Third Sector Recovery Programme, and the Adapt & Thrive Programme (both include grant funding support) which aim to help organisations adapt, manage and develop their services and recover from the pandemic impacts (SCVO, 2021).

Future research should seek to determine firstly, how the TS are expected to continue to deliver the same level of vital services, with minimum financial security; and should Scotland be faced with a crisis in the future, how can these financial strains in the JVS be mitigated? Furthermore, with little information sourced at this stage detailing which TSOs were able to access grants or extra funding and/or how much they received throughout the pandemic, measuring the true scale of the financial threat is another important area of research interest. It should therefore be established what the stance is now (mid-2021), and whether there has been continued significant impacts to the financial sustainability of TSOs across the sector



(caused by the pandemic). It will be useful to seek details from individual organisations on what their financial situation looks like currently and moving forward. These should be explored in line with government funding sources which have been made available throughout the pandemic and any other financial funding sources distributed across the JVS and TSOs (such as the sources mentioned above).

Staff Wellbeing

The impact of the pandemic on both the delivery of TS services and the well documented concerns around the financial sustainability of organisations (mentioned above) are key to understanding how workers across the JVS have been affected. Evidence suggests that due to the increases in demand for services, and contributing factors relating to staff redundancies, furloughs and a rapid decrease in volunteer numbers, a major concern to the JVS is that there is a risk of staff 'burnout' (SCVO, 2021). Earlier this year, an in-depth study which explored the immediate and emerging risks faced by organisations in the charity sector, found that 44% saw staff 'burnout' and challenges related to the pandemic as a major threat to their ongoing operations (Ecclesiastical, 2021). The findings of the Ecclesiastical study included that organisations had reported concerns around staff working remotely from home during lockdown periods, with two thirds experiencing increases in staff stress levels and 71% referring to Covid-19 as a reason for future impacts to their usual business activity.

Furthermore, Inspiring Scotland found that the mental health of staff was continuing to be affected due to lockdown measures, with stress and absence being major causes for concern affecting usual service operations. JVS leaders providing services from home, further reported feeling low moods, anxiety and fatigue which in turn had affected their ability to work pro-actively whilst continuing to meet the growing needs of service users (Inspiring Scotland, Nov 2020). The Clinks (2020) report also pointed out that the needs of individuals had increased during lockdown measures, with heightened issues relating to mental health, wellbeing, isolation and anxiety or service users leading to an increase in demand for support from TSOs who have continuously adapted to meet these needs. It is also important to note that staff across the TS have had added pressures of worrying about job security alongside increased workloads from the reduction in JVS volunteers (OSCR, Nov 2020) whilst at the same time (as with the majority of people affected by the pandemic) have had to consider how to best support their own wellbeing and balance home-work priorities when delivering services remotely (SCVO, 2020).

Attention has since been drawn to the JVSs renewed focus on wellbeing of leaders and staff and the sectors plans to ensure that mentoring, coaching and training strategies can be developed in support of staff's needs going forward. Therefore, it is necessary to take into account, and investigate further, how the impact on the wellbeing of staff has in turn impacted the level of support available to service users. Research should explore what can be done to ensure staff are supported to be able to effectively manage operations in the future – and moreover, how this focus within



organisations turning to staff wellbeing and development plans may affect their usual operations.

Partnerships and Collaboration

From the available literature at this stage, it is clear that attention has been drawn to the broad importance of the TS throughout society over the course of the pandemic but of equal importance is their stance within local partnership working - as more recent research begins to demonstrate (Buchan, et al., 2021). The Buchan et al., (2021) (interim report) project explores the negative impacts and key challenges to local partnerships in their response to the pandemic over the past year whilst seeking to identify the successful and innovative practices and lessons to be learnt should Scotland be faced with a crisis in the future. Drawing on the views from a range of organisations involved in the delivery of public services, the findings of the Buchan report present that some aspects of partnership working have indeed improved with better communication routes and working arrangements, but challenges around volunteering and TS partners remain. Respondents from the TS and local Third Sector Interfaces (TSI) recognised that TS partners have “stepped up and co-ordinated local responses in the absence of any leadership from the council or community planning partners” (*ibid*, 2021, p. 10). Whilst this does demonstrate the TSs vital, independent role in responding to the pandemic, it is argued that in comparison to the more reputable and often more financially secure public sector partners, TS partner work is less acknowledged across sectors, thus calls for ‘greater visibility’ have been expressed.

Evidence points out that where partnership working and collaboration with the TS flourished most in local communities was where organisations had strong links to each other and an understanding of the benefits to coordinating resources and the shared values of partnership working (GTSIN, 2020). As suggested by the GTSIN report, there is a need for the development of the TS infrastructure to continue strengthening partnership working in the future as Scotland recovers from the pandemic.

The SG aspires to get national and local government, businesses, voluntary organisations and people living in Scotland to work together to achieve national outcomes provided under the National Performance Framework (The Scottish Government, 2021). This includes improvements to public services through encouraging partnership working and collaboration, focusing on preventing problems before they start and doing things more efficiently. The COSLA report which looks at the broad range of negative effects caused by the pandemic across Scotland’s National Outcomes, on for example health, economy, fair work and business and culture, also highlights the need for the public, private and third sector collaborative response within our communities to be embedded going forward (COSLA, 2020). The SRAB, set up to formulate transformative ideas for Scotland to change moving through and beyond the pandemic, put forward twenty ‘Calls to Action’ asking the Scottish Government and/or Local Government to “step up and do more” and to focus on helping the people who have experienced the worst impacts (The Social Renewal Advisory Board Report, 2021, p. 4). The SRAB report focused on three key



principles: money and work; people, rights and advancing equality, and; communities and collective endeavour. The 'Call for Ideas' of the SRAB report further highlighted that partners and the government should be doing more to recognise and support the TS capabilities going forward, with a particular focus on long-term sustainable funding which can enable services to develop outside the central belt. 'Call to Action 18' relates to a shift towards long-term changes to ways of working between the public sector and partners based on what went well during the pandemic, with aims to create a more sustainable TS.

4. Conclusion

A broader picture of the impact of the pandemic on the JVS has been presented by highlighting the effects on individuals and communities who rely on TSO services, as well as workers across the justice sector, whose rights and needs require, now more than ever, to be understood and protected by the justice system whilst Scotland recovers from the Covid-19 crisis. The evidence gathered points to four main themes in relation to the impact of the pandemic on TSOs. The first relates to the strain on TS service delivery due to the increase in demand for services and the sectors continued adaptive response has meant organisations are now doing more, with the same resources as before which affects the quality of support and capability of TSOs to continue operations. Secondly, TSOs continue to express concerns around funding, financial insecurity and sustainability in the future with resources being stretched and demand for services going up, it is not clear how the sector can manage to recover. A third theme draws attention to the wellbeing of staff being a major concern across the sector whereby staff have been impacted by the increase in demand for services, loss of volunteers and pressures of job security causing stress and worrying effects on mental health. Lastly, partnerships and collaboration with local partners has been recognised as a positive response throughout the JVS but the TS stance within partnership working remains to be less 'visible' than other partners. Overall, the presented themes, when considered as intersecting, can be better understood as being likely to 'supercharge' the broader impacts of the pandemic on the JVS. For example, the strain on service delivery combined with lack of funding and financial uncertainty; as well as the increase in demand for services combined with staff 'burnout' and the negative impact these can have on the continued operations of the JVS moving forward.

Recommendations

Based on the presented findings and the gaps/limitations mentioned above, it is firstly recommended that the impact of the pandemic on the JVS should be explored further in conjunction with measuring the changing needs of all individuals impacted by the Covid-19 crisis, including both service users *and* those who work within the JVS.

Secondly, in order to identify the specific needs of TSOs and to gain a better understanding of the challenges experienced across the broad range of services (as opposed to the JVS as a whole) research should scope out the views of individual



organisations in different geographical areas and establish any variances to what is needed going forward – with a particular focus on the needs of justice services.

The third recommendation relates to the limited information at this point on how the JVS and TSOs will recover from the pandemic and remain sustainable in the medium-long term, it is necessary to analyse what government policies and plans are in place to support the sectors needs going forward.

A fourth area of future research is to seek the views of service users and individuals who have been impacted by the strain on services. This will also help TSOs and the JVS plan and implement changes best suited to the needs of individuals who use the services in the future.

A more general recommendation is to analyse the impact of the ‘digital shift’ on services and how this has affected operations with further consideration to how service users have adapted and ways to ensure equal access to technology across the JVS and within communities.

Finally, with evidence pointing to the positive impact of the pandemic on partnership working, and the hope that this continues to flourish in the future, it is vital to understand the best working practices which resulted from the pandemic collaborative response and how these can be enhanced going forward.



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