

HOURS OF OPERATION

Winter Hours

Monday - Closed

Tuesday - Closed

Wednesday - Closed

Thursday - 10:00 - 4:00

Friday - 10:00 - 4:00

Saturday - 10:00 - 4:00

Sunday - 11:00 - 4:00



Closed

till further notice
due to COVID19.

Thank you
QVUP

LOCKDOWN AND BEYOND A COVID Insights Report

December 2020

‘STAY AT HOME – SAVE LIVES’?

Families affected by substance use live their lives under extreme pressure in normal times. These are far from normal times.

We are told to ‘Stay Home – Save Lives’, as if ‘Home’ is a place of safety and security, where harm and risk to yourself and others is reduced. Yet this is not the situation for families harmed by alcohol and drug use. Home can be a place of heightened harm and risk, and indeed during the COVID pandemic this situation has worsened considerably.

Substance use has increased, and some in long term recovery have relapsed. There are many reasons for this, including increased stress and anxiety, changing work and leisure patterns, and a reduction in available support – including formal services and informal social connections.

Compounding this situation, substance use which was hidden or less harmful to families has become more visible and present within the home. Alcohol and drug consumption may previously have taken place outside the home, whilst other family members were outside the home, or at lower levels so easier to conceal and less damaging to others. This has all changed with everyone being at home together for extended periods.

We may not be in lockdown in Scotland as we write, but millions are close to this situation. Many of the previous supports, protective factors and release mechanisms for families are not available, be that going out to work or university, going to the gym or for a swim, attending a local group, catching up with a group of friends, or even having a chat with your hairdresser.

Compounding this situation is the ongoing difficulty accessing alcohol and drug treatment services (as well as mental health services), for individuals and families who are now desperate for help. This could have been an initial ‘blip’ in the spring, as services had to close their physical doors and adapt to new virtual service models. However service access problems have now been sustained over a long period and across many areas of Scotland. This affects both existing service users and for people who are newly concerned about their alcohol or drug use, so seeking help for the first time. In our view, this is risking lives as people have no choice but to continue hazardous and harmful behaviours until they can access the treatment and support they need and want.

At Scottish Families, families are our inspiration and our motivation, and they are always at the heart of our work. We have walked alongside them and shared their sadness, anger, frustration and anxiety throughout these months as the realities of life under COVID have become clear. These are not stories which are visible in the media or in government briefings, which advise everyone to ‘Stay at Home – Stay Safe’.

This report tells our shared COVID story through the form of open letters from families and team members, statistical reports from our Helpline and other services, and information on our COVID response throughout the pandemic.

We hope it is a report we will only have to write once, and that it offers insight into the stark realities for families of life in lockdown and beyond.



Part 1: Dear Scottish Families

We asked some families and team members to write open letters to help us share our story. Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to write one of these lovely letters.

Dear Scottish Families

I really hope 2020 proves to be 'a year like no other'. Although I tell my kids we are living through history right now, it is not a period in time that many of us would wish to repeat. At the start of March this year we started COVID contingency planning, and told staff to be ready to work from home at short notice. In mid-March we closed our national office, and moved all family support to phone and online.

Pride is perhaps not the most attractive of traits, but I am truly bursting with pride when I reflect on how our organisation and our team has responded to all the challenges thrown at them this year. It has been a gruelling year for everyone. All of their normal working patterns have been thrown into the air for an indeterminate period of time, and our team of 'people people' have largely had to move away from face to face contact. They had to cope for months without access to their usual childcare, schooling and community supports. And of course they have had all the same stresses, anxieties and concerns about COVID and about their own families as the rest of the population.

#TeamSFAD has responded with unwavering sensitivity and compassion to families who have faced increased and sustained levels of distress, with the impact of lockdown and ongoing restrictions causing more harm for our existing families and bringing new families into support. Without exception, all staff have shown (and continue to show) incredible energy, drive, creativity and an ability to always look on the bright side of life. I am not exaggerating when I say this has kept me afloat on my own darker days.

Back in March, not for a minute did I think we would still be at home months later, and very likely until next spring. I have definitely learned I am not a natural home worker, and am desperately missing my 'out and about' job and the variety, stimulation and human interaction that went with this. It might have been exhausting at times traipsing around the

country, but there was rarely a dull moment meeting so many people and visiting so many places. Our Routes young persons' team have managed some periods of face-to-face support in between restrictions, and we have enviously described #TeamRoutes as having 'proper jobs' where they get to leave the house (although Monday night football in the rain is not that attractive, right enough).

I have been a working mum for the past 18 years, and one of my coping strategies with all the juggling has always been to keep a clear distinction between work and home. So that meant being 100% focused on work at work, and 100% focused on home at home (well that was generally the case). The mash-up of work and home this year has been really weird. I have enjoyed nosing into everyone's homes on Zoom, and getting to know more of the team's family members (and pets of course). My younger teenage daughter spent weeks listening in to all my meetings from the other end of the kitchen table, as she worked through her home-school work. She pretty much became my (unpaid of course) advisor on team relationships and stakeholder dynamics! Although there have been highlights of home working (like lunchtime walks on the beach which is not an option in Sauchiehall Street), I don't feel this mashed up existence of work and home is all that healthy for me, and have realised that a bit of compartmentalising your life can be a good thing.

We have always moved fast at Scottish Families (oh, how I love the third sector!) and our pace has not slackened at all this year, with a host of new services and initiatives getting up and running, six new team members joining, and of course our new #ChangeWillCome strategy being launched. So life goes on for all of us, and I will sign off this letter with an enormous thank you to my amazing team, and the hope that next year Change really Will Come.

Justina, CEO

Dear Scottish Families

Managing a virtual helpline needs a good bit of multi-tasking but with a great set up you can do it anywhere. Over the years in Scottish Families I have operated the helpline from many places and home being one of them. When the decision came in March to send us to home working to protect the staff from any potential Covid I did not bat an eye lid. We are already set up to facilitate home working so I had no headache around how to make that happen. Personally it would make no change to my working day other than I would be in one place rather than travelling across Scotland to meet/greet and support people. We went home working a couple of days before the official lockdown directive was made. Pre lockdown it was business as usual. When lockdown was announced it was a whole different vibe!

Straight away we saw an increase in contacts coming through the helpline and not all family members. The majority of people who were contacting us for help were people who use alcohol and/or drugs. With services closing their doors and having to implement new support measures primarily via phone left a lot of vulnerable people with no contact with those services and they had whole host of questions and no answers. In the early days we struggled to find out what services were providing support and how to access this. It took many hours of trawling social media and phoning services and contacts to find out what was really happening on the ground.

We noticed that phone calls received were very limited and we had lots of contacts via web chat, email, text etc. This was due to the fact families are all at home together and don't have privacy to chat about their concerns. We have seen an increase in issues with alcohol, cocaine and benzodiazepines and many people who did not identify as having a problem before realising that using substances at home alone needed help. Being a Freephone service that is open til 11pm was an easy way for people to get a response. We have found that a lot of people who use substances and some families have no credit for phone calls but have wi-fi access and that is the need for many ways to be contacted. It is the number 1 reason people contact us when they can't contact their service.

We have advocated on behalf of people who

use substances and families to ensure that they get the appropriate response from the services they need. There is a lot of pressure at times where we feel that we are the only link that individuals have and are conscious that we need to do everything we can for individuals and families as this is people's lives and that doesn't fit into a Monday to Friday 9 to 5 day. We have to be innovative, flexible and take on a little more than we normally would. This is not normal times.

Home working for me was and still is a pleasant experience most of the time. I miss my #TeamSFAD buddies and the support and banter that comes with it (and the cakes, you must never forget the cakes). I am also thankful for the opportunity to continue working supporting families of Scotland whilst keeping myself and my family safe. It's difficult to cut off from work mode and slide into family mode and there are very blurred lines. I do feel a pressure to do what I can to make a difference. I find Covid difficult at times and I live a very settled easy going family life.

How must the families we support be finding life, living in difficult settings with Covid on top. That must never be forgotten.

Suzanne, Helpline Development Officer



Dear Scottish Families

So since Corona Virus started a lot of things changed drastically very quickly. I really struggle with any sort of change and this was huge as everything had changed.

The schools were shutting, the shops were closing and only so many people were allowed in the supermarkets and that was hard because a lot of people were panic buying and it was really difficult to get all the stuff you needed and we really struggled but we had a lot of help from Scottish Families.

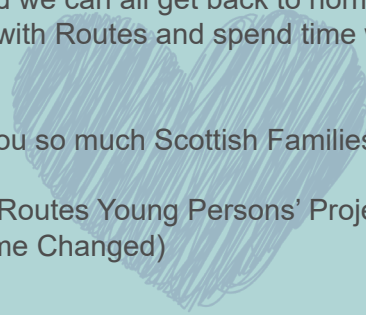
They done so much for us. They were delivering food parcels and well-being packs for both me and my mum and they did lots of Zoom calls and we cooked and they dropped the stuff off. We done make up on Zoom with Gemma and I have had a huge amount of support as has my mum.

A lot of bad things have happened this year. We had a separation in the family because my gran had a mental breakdown and that hit me and my mum really hard. It was severely traumatic and she had to move out and as most stuff was in her name, we weren't left with much. Claire & Pam helped us out as much as possible and they did things to help us both feel better. I do not know where we would be without them.

But next year I am hoping for things to get better and for us all to be able to meet without rules and we can all get back to normality and go trips with Routes and spend time with each other.

Thank you so much Scottish Families.

'Anna' - Routes Young Persons' Project (age 16) (Name Changed)



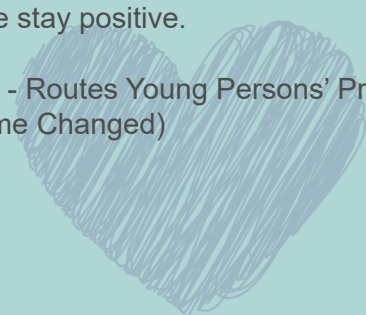
Dear Scottish Families

It has been a good and a bad year at the same time. I'm fed up of the virus and sick of hearing about it all the time.

Nothing in particular stands out as being really good but I've really enjoyed spending time with the SFAD team and coming to the big groups, going for food and I've really liked the walks we have went.

I'm trying to get on with life as much as possible and not let things get to me which helps me stay positive.

'Connor' - Routes Young Persons' Project (age 16) (Name Changed)



Dear Scottish Families

Where do I begin? 2020 was meant to be a blast. Lots of nice things planned with friends and family. Instead it has been like a game of opposites, and truth be told I never did like playing that game when I was a child. So 2020, the reality of a game of opposites wasn't much cop either.

For me this is where choice came in. Like the majority of people at the start of the pandemic I found it difficult to focus on things that previously felt trivial, even watching TV became strange. Seeing people outside or close to another person looked funny. I watched so much news that it felt that I was on first name terms with politicians and news readers. I made the choice to stop this, I felt that it was consuming my mind and rather than keeping me informed was making me scared and full of fear of what might be.

Instead I chose to use YouTube tutorials to learn how to crochet so that if I could do this instead of dwelling on what I would usually be doing and how I would be filling my time normally. Normal is a word that we have all heard a lot in 2020, now mostly associated with the word new. Saying to the kids that we need to embrace the new normal while screaming inside that I don't want the new normal I liked the old normal.

I liked getting up and getting ready for work, going to the office, hearing about what everyone else in SFAD was working on. Making Telehealth calls and having an input to other projects or pieces of work. Suddenly this became working from home, missing my colleagues and actually missing the horrendously busy rush hour journey in to work in the city centre of Glasgow after dropping the kids at school.

So, I found myself faced with another choice. Moan about the new normal or embrace it and make choices that helped to make it feel more normal. I now video call my colleagues, we have twice weekly team catch ups, I make a point of checking in with people.

I am lucky that fundamentally my job has not changed. I am so glad to say that the service we provide throughout Scotland has continued during the pandemic. We have continued to

support family members using CRAFT, offering listening and emotional support and have also managed to establish a virtual group for families to come together once a week.

A lot of family support focusses on self-care and the importance of looking after yourself. It can sometimes be easy to discuss this with others and not actually practice this personally. I have really been trying to embrace self-care, as well as crocheting I have been trying to get out for more walks to keep active. I used to love going to exercise classes at the gym and agreed with one man that I supported that it was like a reset button for the brain. Instead of dwelling on gyms being closed I have been doing exercise classes online. If the kids can embrace change and do dance classes using zoom then so can I!

In our group we recently had a session on change. Explaining that the feelings associated to change are often negative and are the same as the stages of loss. We go through denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. I mention this to highlight the importance of not giving yourself a hard time for not embracing change easily and quickly. Often even a positive change can bring on these feelings because we are scared of the unknown or the impact that change may have on other areas of our lives.

If one thing 2020 has shown us that choice is not always present and I think it is important to note that often this year choice has been limited by various things. Including: restrictions, rules, job loss, change of income and even fear.

Moving forward I feel that focussing on hope is important. Be kind to yourself, focus on what you have control over and if you feel apprehensive about the things in life that are out of your control try and share these worries with someone.

Often we can feel that something might sound silly or we are nervous to share our thoughts. From working for Scottish Families and also practicing self-care I know from experience that sharing your worries can help.

Take care in the future and hope that 2021 brings back more of the old normal

Gill, Virtual Family Support Practitioner

Dear Scottish Families

My Covid19 year (only 10 months but at times it has seemed a lot longer).

It started in March 20, confusion already with the Covid19 reference? Working from home and all the talk of lockdown was weirdly exciting. Maybe my passion for apocalyptic books, films etc. fuelled this excitement. 'I was there at the end'.

The first thing I remember in hindsight is the hilariously sad panic buying of toilet paper! I read loads about the virus but nowhere did it mention a dramatic explosion of your bowels, which would require the need for 200 loo rolls NOW!

My first practical worries in regards to my FSDO role within Scottish Families were how I was going to facilitate the two Family support groups. I had an advantage as I had used online SMART groups on BBB, big blue button, for a while a few years ago and remembered that they had been successful.

The problem of convincing the family members was not as hard as I thought as some had used face time and WhatsApp video for getting in touch with family and friends abroad or when on holidays.

The others had issues with the technology, knowledge and means of actually connecting. Luckily, we had digital funding in place very quickly and we had between 8 and 10 attending the Zoom meetings after two weeks with their new tablets. It was not all plain sailing as there were lots of teething problems as we went along. How many times do you need to mention the MUTE button? Or heard 'can you hear me', 'can you see me?' every two minutes and that was me!

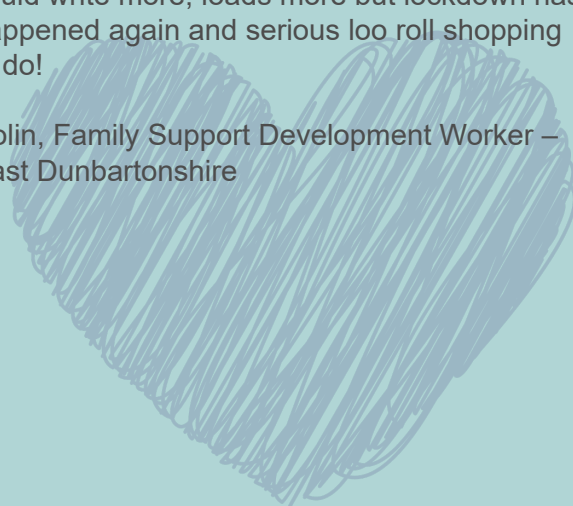
After a few weeks I felt that the zoom set up wasn't ideal for heavy or intense conversations. Everyone in the spotlight all the time anytime someone was speaking with nowhere else to look. At the church hall and library we used for the meetings previously were large and we had a table which had us all sitting at different angles from each other which stopped the intensity and the feeling of being watched, I felt.

I had an idea that if we had a theme or topic to speak around then this could help. I introduced a Mindfulness course, which we did with Monash University, Australia. They were running a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) 'Understanding Mindfulness, (Reading University) Wellbeing and Peak Performance' (Monash again) over 4 weeks with 4 hours study time per week available to anyone and if you upgraded you received a certificate. We studied as a group and on our own coming together once a week for an hour. This worked so well that we have taken on two more courses, 'Living a Mindful life' and 'Understanding Depression, Anxiety and CBT'. Great sense of achievement as well as enjoyment.

This hasn't meant that the group is not working on the issues that they came to the groups to have support with. What it has done is provide ways to deal with the issues that are talked about in a positive way rather than only getting the therapeutic value of sharing their issues and 'getting it all off their chest'. Most of the 1 to 1s are now facilitated on Zoom and are working for most. Some people are really getting comfortable and having a cuppa while we chat and usually the full hour, which was not the case on the phone. I find myself far more productive when working from home and therefore feel of more worth to my employers (honestly not a sound bite) as well as the family members I support. On a personal level, I am enjoying spending more time with my partner also working from home.

I miss the 'in person' part of my job but not all the travelling, which I used to love. I find that I could write more, loads more but lockdown has happened again and serious loo roll shopping to do!

Colin, Family Support Development Worker – East Dunbartonshire



Dear Scottish Families

I'd like to say thank you for your amazing support during Lockdown. You were giving me invaluable support before Lockdown, but you kept me sane once we were confined to our own four walls.

Our son was confined to his little rented flat in Edinburgh, along with his alcohol addiction and his work. He loves his work, but he also gets very stressed by presentations and reviews which he has to prepare regularly. We couldn't visit him to see with our own eyes how he was, and as he's never been the best at communicating, I had to rely on him answering his mobile phone to find out how he was. I knew that he was relieving the stress by self-medicating with cider or beer. In his mind he was making the required effort by substituting cider for the bottles of wine he'd consumed previously. I was concerned that all his calories were coming from alcohol, and from what he was telling me he was constantly exhausted and suffering from vomiting and diarrhoea when he tried to eat.

Often when I phoned, I got the voice that starts off, "I'm sorry, but the person you are calling ..." and my stomach would knot. A second call, the knot got tighter. The third call, even tighter. Meanwhile, Scottish Families were taking me through a Mindfulness Course online, but sadly that didn't teach me how to release that ever-tightening knot. My instincts were telling me that my son's life was in grave danger. What did help immensely was knowing that other mothers and wives were in variations of the same boat, and that our Facilitator had been there and done all that himself. The feeling that someone cares and understands all about the nightmare of addiction, and the caring goodie bags sent out by SFAD have been like a cosy blanket on a chilly night. The companionship of the group studying mindfulness, and the two other groups (keep fit and a writers' group) have been a real lifeline to me, and by extension to my husband and my three daughters. I have drip-fed them with an enormous amount of information on addictions and CBT. I'll be able to brighten our house with the creation of bright Christmas baubles supplied by Scottish Families, knowing that my wee friends from the group will be doing the same. It may sound silly, but

creativity is hugely therapeutic and helps distract from distressing thoughts.

In our case, my son's self-medication led to a weekend of crisis which nearly spelled the end for him as his sodium level had dropped to a critical low, and it was only by the grace of God that, after some frantic phone calls, he was persuaded by his son to go to A&E. Apparently it was touch and go whether they could pull him through to the next morning. Mercifully they did. Four days later he went back to his flat, and when the hospital failed to communicate his prescription and follow-up blood tests to his GP, he promptly went back to bottles of wine to relieve his frustration.

Four days later his best friend Ian brought him back to stay with us, and the journey continues. He had become desperately weak and could hardly walk upstairs. Taken on by our GP, he was very quickly sent to the QEUH for immediate assessment and they did a lot of treatment and tests. His stomach and liver had protested violently to such abuse, and he started retaining fluid badly and developed a horrendous all-over rash. With treatment he lost about 6 litres of fluid.

I'm happy to say that he's made great progress and is now eating well, starting to build muscle, able to walk and climb stairs with no problem. He's moving on with his life, and Scottish Families are keeping me strong enough to keep on supporting him. I know that the way ahead will have its challenges and that there will be times of testing and temptation for him, but I always have someone in Scottish Families to turn to when I start to flounder.

We don't know the extent of liver damage and how much is irreversible, but SFAD helps to keep our outlook positive, and we just have to trust that he makes a good recovery.

We are eternally grateful to Colin McIntosh and SFAD.

Onwards and upwards!!

With love from Karen. (Family Member)

Dear Scottish Families

2020...in years to come, when I'm sitting on my rocking chair, boring my grandchildren with tales of old, what will I tell them about this particular year? The first word that comes to mind is 'surreal.' Sometimes I still think I'll wake up and do a 'Bobby Ewan,' realising it's all been a dream. Several months on, we're much more used to queues at supermarkets, face masks, hand sanitisers and people glaring at us if we cough or accidentally stand too close. These are inconveniences which affect us all. It helps that we are all facing the same storm, however there is no doubt it is hitting some of us harder than others.

I have an annoying habit, actually I have several, (just ask my husband) but this one is work-related. When people ask about my job, I often find myself getting emotional. I usually manage to compose myself before I become a sobbing mess but I definitely have to fight back the tears. I've never stopped and wondered why this might be until I had to write this letter and once again felt those tears surfacing. It's not because I feel sorry for the young people we support, they don't need or want anyone's pity, it's because I feel so privileged to be able to do the job that I do, and never more so than during this pandemic.

Three days before the lockdown in March, we had a 4 week well-being group planned for the Routes young people. For once I was organised and had bought everything for the course; mindfulness colouring books and pencils, a lavender pillow spray, hot chocolate and mini marshmallows, face masks (the kind you smear over your face and relax with, not the ones we've come to know and hate) and an alarm clock – I can't tell you how many teenagers sleep with their phone UNDER THEIR PILLOW because 'I need my alarm to wake up.' As soon as the lockdown started we were getting texts from teenagers struggling with the new regulations. For many, school and seeing their friends, was respite from what is often a fairly chaotic and unpredictable home environment.

We decided to use the well-being group items to make up gift bags which we delivered to the young people within a few days of the lockdown. It was so rewarding to bring a bit of relief, in

what was otherwise, a very bleak time for many. We had a socially distanced chat and found out how things were going. It was so much better than talking on the phone because, as you probably know, teenagers are not known for their sparkling phone etiquette. Younger siblings came out too, desperate to see a new face and keen to see what was in the bag.

After that initial bag drop off we realised it was even more important than ever for our young people and families to feel connected. The whole Scottish Families team quickly pitched in, thinking of new & innovative ways to ensure delivery of the best service possible during these uncertain, and often frightening, times. The 'can do' attitude of my wonderful colleagues made me even more proud to be part of the Scottish Families Family.

Since March we have delivered over 800 wellbeing bags to Routes young people and their siblings (it was too cruel to miss them out after the first delivery!). We've held hundreds of Zooms covering countless topics from make-up application to cooking to Tik-Tok (if our young people weren't traumatised after lockdown they certainly were after seeing me and Pam trying to Tik-Tok). We've provided families with numerous take-away meals, foodbank parcels and technology. But most of all, we've provided connection where there was disconnection. Each Tuesday during lockdown I would step out of my house to find my entire path filled with bags of food, clothes, and once even a TV, donated by neighbours. Every week the Foodbank would allow us to take what we needed for families, Asda donated pyjamas, Boclair Academy gave us weekly bags of food, a stranger put £100 donation through my door, funders made applications easier and faster, Tesco donated 100 Easter eggs... the list of people's kindness was endless. Now that our Christmas campaign is underway, the generosity of strangers has, once again, blown me away. As I come to the end of my letter, I'm desperately trying not to sound corny but there is no way round it...having the resources and the ability to make the lives of the resilient, amazing young people we support, a little bit easier has been the highlight of this incredibly tough year (oh-oh, here come the tears again).

Claire, Senior Family Support Development Officer- Young People

Dear Scottish Families

2020 has been a challenging year for everyone, but for some, more than most.

While my family has been fortunate not to have been struck with COVID-19, there are other afflictions which have had a huge impact on our lives and in our case, the most serious has been the drug addiction and associated mental illness of our son.

After yet another year of watching his life spiralling out of control, (he was living with us and so we were acutely aware of what was going on on a daily basis), and after a particularly traumatic month, he announced that he was leaving home. He gave no details but said that he wouldn't be back. This was late February this year when the dangers of COVID were just becoming known.

He left, without giving us any details and I confess to an initial feeling of relief - he would be gone, there would be peace and I could breathe and perhaps sleep a little easier. The past year had been almost unbearably stressful. However, this feeling of relief was soon replaced with anxiety, (the usual see-saw of emotion).

Two weeks later he telephoned to apologise for not being in touch. He was in France. His phone had been stolen, he had been sleeping on the beach, and he hadn't been able to contact us. He had gone to France to try to join the Foreign Legion. He had talked about this before. He feels that this is his last hope to get some structure into his life - and to get clean and sober. (Of course, because of the current global health crisis, he was turned away at the gate and told to come back when the epidemic had passed.) This call was made 2 days before all flights were grounded due to the epidemic so he was about to be stranded with no accommodation, no money and no contacts. We managed, with great difficulty, to get him back on the very last flight.

Due to restrictions put in place by the Government and because his father is an 80 yr old with diabetes and therefore very vulnerable, he could not return to the family home and so we put him into holiday accommodation for two

weeks. However, this was expensive and could only be a temporary measure.

Fortunately, by this time I now had contact with SFAD. This was a huge blessing as now I was almost out of my mind with worry and, I think, possibly close to having a breakdown. I realised my son could not return to the family home, firstly because of the virus and secondly because I knew that we could no longer stand the strain that living with him involved. Until I made contact with SFAD, I really had nowhere to turn for help. I had tried all the obvious places, and found them to be of no real use. In particular, the medical profession proved to be a huge disappointment as I tried to get help from them for my son over a period of many years. The impression I had from them was that my son's condition was self-inflicted and they were not interested - they do not see the mental pain he lives with which is almost unbearable and invariably ends up leading to substance misuse - or feeling that The Foreign Legion offers him his only chance for a meaningful life!

SFAD, through Martha, has (very), patiently tried to point me in a different direction - showing me how to step back a little and stop trying to control my son's life. I hadn't realised before this how much I was taking from him by trying to manage things - my way! With Martha's guidance, I stepped back enough so that my son was forced to apply for homeless accommodation and for the moment has a place of his own. I believe that this awful virus has been a catalyst for getting people off the streets and for that I am very grateful.

My son is still not well. However, I have seen some small changes in him and there has been a big difference in my life. I see my son most days - sometimes it's good, sometimes not, but I am not living with him and so have some peace in my days. Had it not been for this dreadful epidemic, and the continual, amazing support from SFAD, I don't think I'd be able to say this.

With much gratitude.
Elizabeth, Family Member

Dear Scottish Families

I found Scottish Families back at the start of the year when I was feeling completely broken and desperate for help to cope with my loved one's drug addiction. I spoke online to someone who referred me onto a Family Support Practitioner. I was extremely nervous and anxious and did not know where to start, but I was immediately made to feel welcome, at ease and listened too. We had weekly one to one sessions where I felt able to vent honestly about how I was feeling and was given practical guidance and lots of support.

Through our phone sessions my practitioner helped me to learn that I could not change my loved ones behaviour but encouraged me to find strategies that I could use to deal with the situation in ways that were positive, firstly to me then to my loved one.

I had not long been receiving support with Scottish Families when Covid hit us all and we went into lockdown.

At that time, I was having weekly phone sessions with my practitioner, I was finding these sessions a tremendous support to my ongoing situation around me dealing with my loved one's drug addiction. This support did not stop because of Covid, my practitioner continued to call me on a weekly basis from home. Scottish Families offered so much help throughout lockdown which I found a tremendous help to me and my mental health!

Through SFAD I took part in various online activities such as exercise workouts, one to one personal trainer advice, distant reiki, coping with stress, self-care, meditation, mindfulness to name a few but the one thing that was my saviour through out the whole of lockdown was my Friday afternoon zoom sessions with other families affected in the same way as myself. I got so much out of this group listening to the practitioners talk about a different topic each week then we would have an open discussion. It is so therapeutic to listen and discuss your life experiences with others who really 'get the way' you are feeling. None of us knew each other as we are all from different parts of the country but that did not matter. We continue to have this group now on a Tuesday evening, I get so much

out of it and look forward to it. There is always such support from the practitioners that facilitate it, they are always there at the end for a phone chat if you have been affected by anything discussed that evening.

Through the support and interaction with the activities offered by SFAD throughout this year, my confidence, my mental health and my need to change the way I deal with my life have all improved for the better. I have learnt ways to move myself forward in my life whereas before I felt stuck in such a dark place.

I am currently enrolled in a course with The Recovery College about understanding substance misuse and have got involved with a working group about the lack of provision and support for families in the Highlands where I live that SFAD are running on behalf on Highland Alcohol & Drug Partnership (HADP).

My hopes, thoughts and plans for 2021 are to continue to help and support my loved one but now that I have really learnt the importance of my self-care is to continue to take the new positive me forward and look to the future with hope. I have applied and been accepted to a local community-based charity to volunteer and train as a mentor. Such positive help and support from SFAD have helped me realise the importance of asking for help at a time in our life where we may be struggling, no stigmas attached. I think I have a lot to give and hopefully can make a positive change to others. Thank you SFAD you have so helped me to make changes in my life for the better.

Zoë, Family Member



Dear Scottish Families

Reflecting is a difficult thing to do when you are living with a family member who has issues around drugs and alcohol. In order to cope you often have to erase the 'stuff' that happens because of their choices.

Before lockdown my son had issues with alcohol and drugs including cannabis, ketamine and cocaine for a couple of years. Friends, relatives and colleagues would say (and still do) 'it's just a phase', 'he'll grow out of it' and in the early days I would be convinced that this was the case. We have witnessed the destruction his choices have had on his life (and ours). A relationship breakdown, broken friendships, a car accident and debt. No parent should ever have to pay off a drug dealer.

My son was furloughed at the start of lockdown and I had to call paramedics to respond to him after he accidentally overdosed twice within a fortnight. The first time involved Valium and acid and the second time was ketamine and alcohol, but we don't know for sure.

He regularly attempts to binge drink alcohol in his room. Sticking to social distancing and not being able to see his 'friends' during lockdown has been a struggle for him.

In December 2019 I emailed SFAD in desperation. I felt that I couldn't go to work and I could not cope with my feelings. I had never heard of SFAD before and it was through a local family support group that I heard of the Telehealth support service. This is where I met Gill. Previously I had tried face-to-face individual and group support and was a bit apprehensive about the Telehealth support, however I have never looked back. During Covid I attended family support group sessions, and attended a workshop on audio writing and fitness sessions. And I was fortunate to obtain counselling sessions.

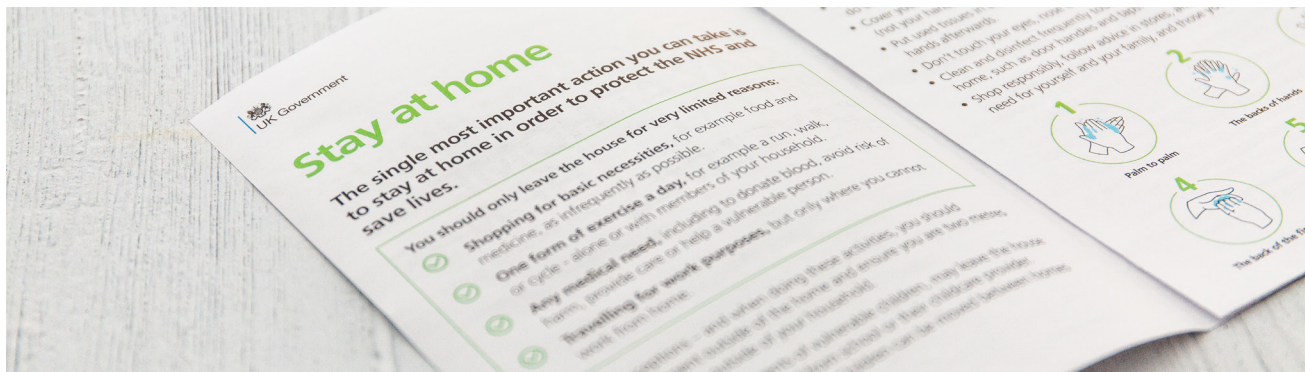
How can I put into words how SFAD have supported me? Apart from all the knowledge and practical skills that Gill and Martha have shared, the main thing is that I now know I am not alone. There are others like me with family members - sons, husbands, daughters, mothers - who are in similar situations and are struggling alone without a voice. Our individual situations are all

different but we all face the same challenges, share the same feelings and the same stigma. Looking ahead to 2021 I will continue on my journey towards healing myself and my family so that I can relearn how to love and support my son. I hope that I will find the courage to use my voice and help to support others in the way that SFAD have supported me.

Margaret, Family Member



Part 2: COVID Insights



1. Scottish Families Helpline

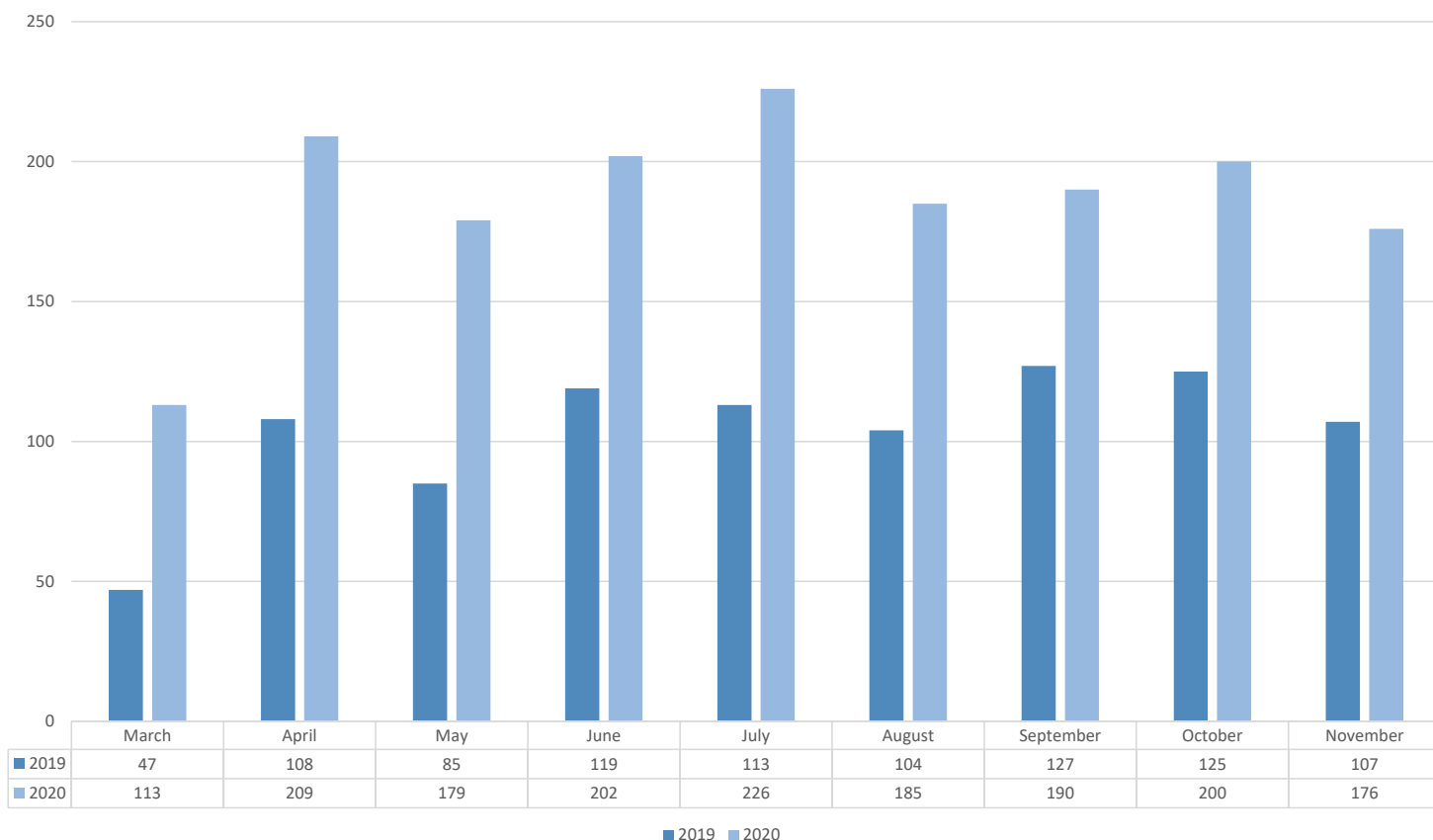
Scottish Families’ Helpline offers support to anyone who is concerned about someone else’s alcohol or drug use. The helpline advisers offer chat, advice and information, and link people into one of our own services, or to other family support services in their own community.

Before March this year, our Helpline would receive a small volume of calls from people concerned about their own alcohol or drug use, so seeking support for themselves. We would

link them into substance use services in their own area, and in most cases this was relatively straightforward.

Life on the Scottish Families Helpline since mid-March this year has been a wildly different experience. We have had a huge increase in demand, currently sitting at an **80%** increase in contacts compared to the same period last year, but at times spiking as high as **140%** increase.

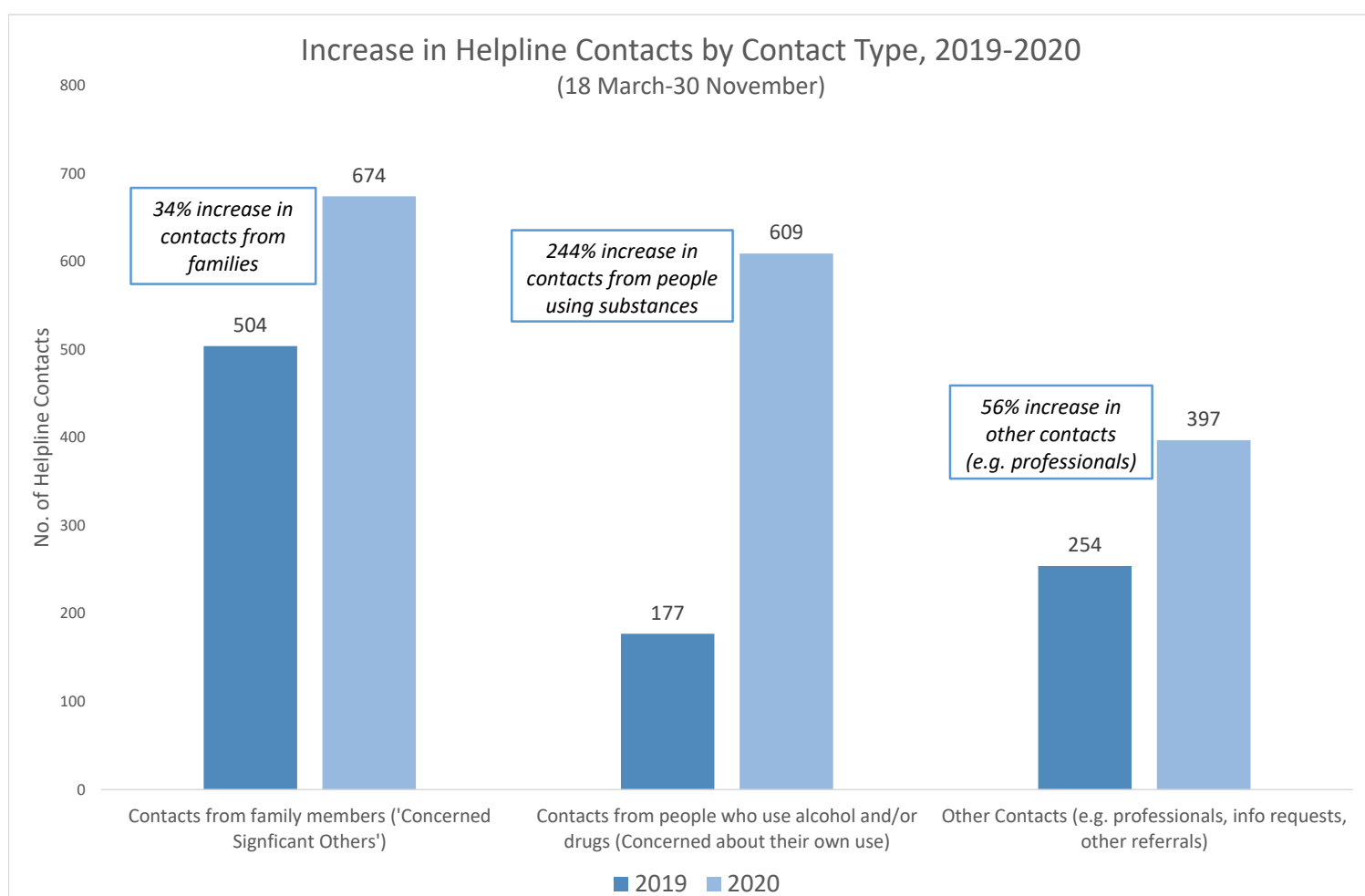
No. of Helpline Contacts by Month, 2019-2020
(18 March - 30 November)



Month	% Increase in Helpline Contacts, 2019-2020 (18 March – 30 November)
Mar	140%
Apr	94%
May	111%
Jun	70%
Jul	100%
Aug	78%
Sep	50%
Oct	60%
Nov	64%

The largest percentage increase in Helpline demand came from people concerned about their own substance use, but either unable to contact their local treatment service or unsure where to turn. Over the year to date we have

seen a **244%** increase in contact from people seeking help for their own substance use, compared to a **34%** in contact from family members (and a **56%** increase from others such as professionals).



Amongst those additional families (**34%** increase) reaching out to our Helpline are those who were already aware of substance harm within their families, but the situation has worsened to breaking point ('existing families')

and those who are only newly aware or newly harmed. For these families ('new families'), being in the house together may have exposed previously hidden substance use, either because use has moved from outside to inside

the home, or the family member is at home more often. Similarly levels of substance use may have increased from recreational to harmful, or people who have been in recovery have relapsed.

So we have seen a pattern of **substance use** (which may not have caused harm to others) becoming **substance harm** for an increasing number of families.

Given our primary purpose is supporting families affected by others' use, rather than individuals using substances, we know that people concerned about their own alcohol or drug use have come to us in desperation and often at a point of extreme crisis when they have nowhere else to turn. For example their methadone prescription has run out and they can't reach their worker; they have no credit on their phone but have no other way to contact their service; or they are aware their substance use has increased to dangerous levels and they need to get help quickly or risk significant harm including risk of death.

For people already linked into services, they have come to us having exhausted their attempts to contact their own treatment service. For example key workers have been redeployed or off sick and not replaced; phone numbers ring out; answerphone messages are ignored; and community-based provision is not available for drop-in or same day help.

For those seeking support for the first time, it has been even more challenging to find out what their support options are, and how to reach these. This is a critical group, with alcohol and drug use and harm increasing during the lockdown, people actively seeking help and motivated towards this, just as services have become less visible and available.

From the start, third sector providers were relatively pro-active at communicating their contingency service arrangements, however statutory treatment services (where most prescribing services and clinical treatment is placed) have made little information available about what is available and how this can be reached. Through some outstanding and time-consuming work by our Helpline Development Officer Suzanne Gallagher, we produced an internal document for our own Helpline Advisers, outlining what we knew about

the latest local provision in each area. National attempts to do similarly were not updated by local leads and quickly became obsolete.

Even with this, we continue to have to search multiple online sources to respond to Helpline calls, and very few areas list up to date, accurate and detailed information about service provision. Many areas continue to list pre-COVID service arrangements, or include a 'COVID-19' web link which just redirects people to generic Council or NHS information e.g. about bin collections, burials, grass cutting and so on.

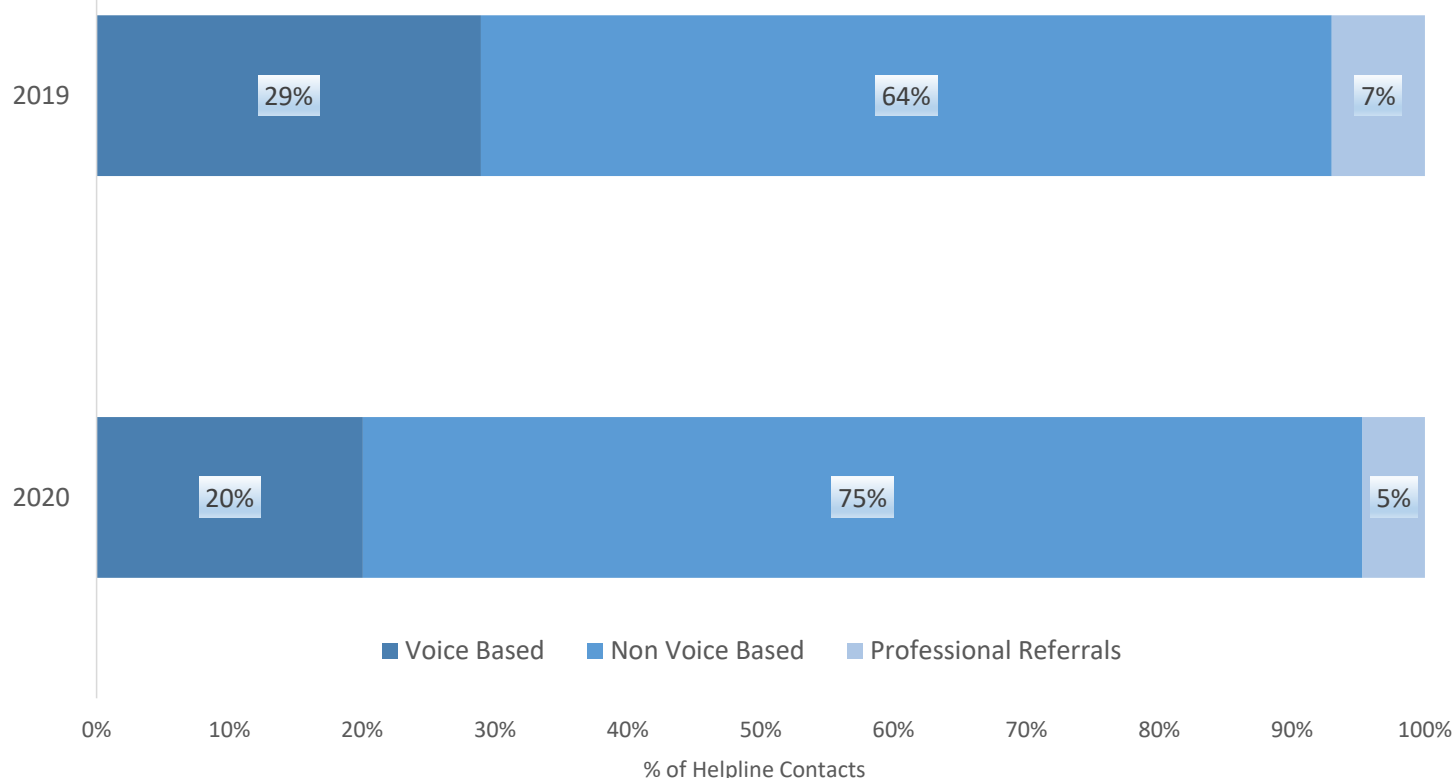
We work in the alcohol and drugs sector, have an exceptionally good understanding of services across Scotland, and yet we have also struggled throughout this period to link people in to the treatment services they need. We have continued to face exactly the same difficulties finding out what services are available and how to reach them as people seeking support for themselves. While we thought this may be a temporary situation, as treatment services closed their face to face support and had to shift to phone and virtual support during the spring, there are still many areas of Scotland where this service invisibility and inaccessibility has continued for months.

Our Helpline may not be the right place to come on paper for people concerned about their own substance use, but we offer a 'No Wrong Door' approach no matter who contacts us. We also offer Freephone access, a wide range of voice and non-voice contact options (including web chat, email and text) and out-of-hours provision.

These non-voice options now account for **75%** of our Helpline contacts, with just **20%** being voice based (i.e. phone calls). There was previously a steady trend away from voice-based Helpline contact (reflecting wider social trends), however COVID has expedited this shift dramatically. People have been seeking more discreet and confidential methods to access support than phoning from a house full of people. For example someone can be sitting on the couch along from other family members, discreetly receiving support via web chat, email or text, and with others being completely unaware.

Change in Helpline Contact Channels, 2019-2020

(18 March - 30 November)



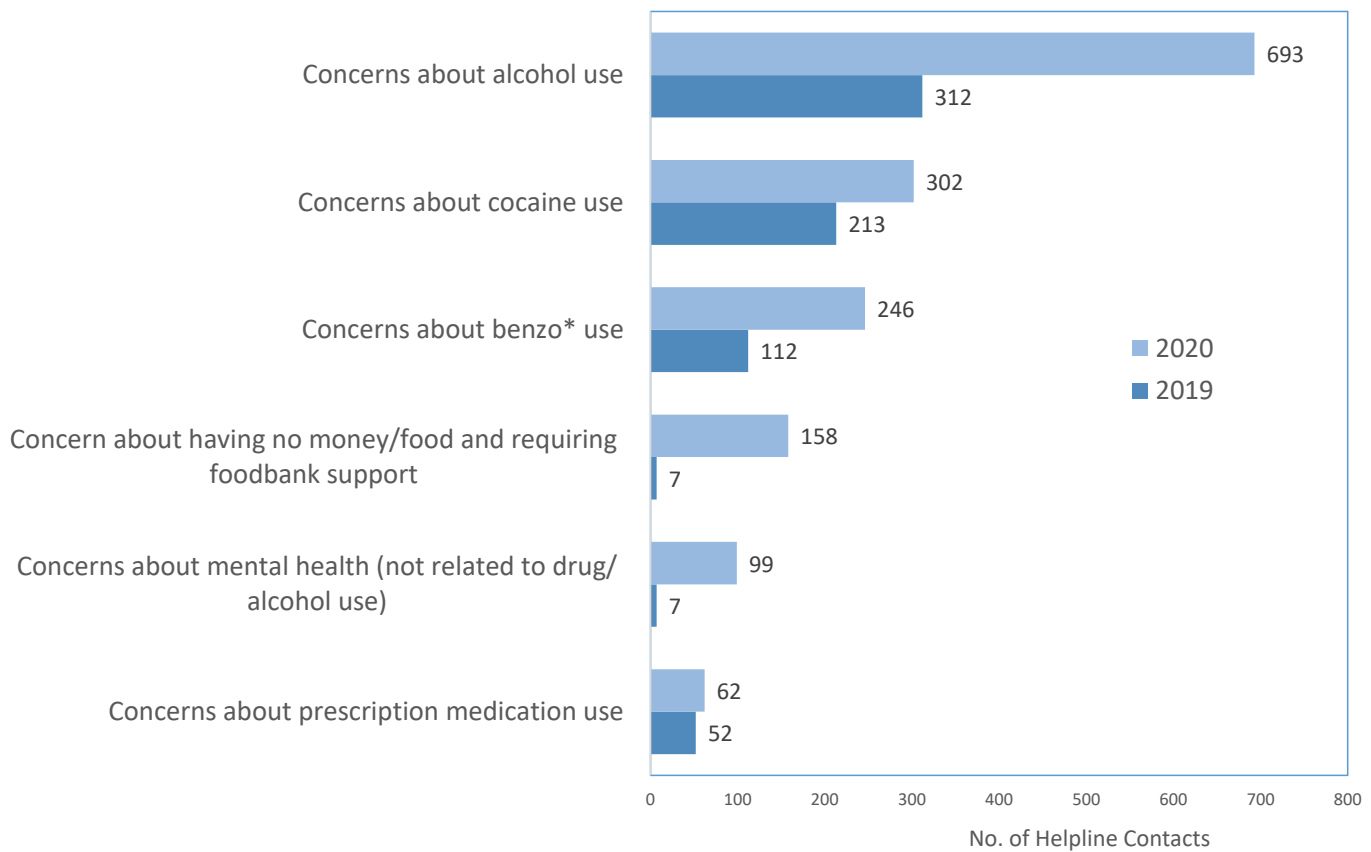
Contact Channel	Channel Type	% Share of Contacts 2020
Webchat	Non-voice	24%
Email	Non-voice	20%
Offline contacts*	Non-voice	15%
Callbacks	Voice	11%
Calls	Voice	9%
Text	Non-voice	8%
Webform	Non-voice	7%
Professional Portal	Professional Referral	5%
Social Media	Non-voice	0.2%
TOTAL		100%

*Offline contacts refer to messages left via our webchat service when it is not available

We have also seen significant increases in certain types of concern via the Helpline, with a **122%** increase in concerns about alcohol use; **120%** increase in concerns about benzodiazepine use (Valium/ Diazepam) and a **42%** in concerns about cocaine. We have also

had a flood of new concerns which would rarely be raised before, such as concern about having no money or food (**2157%** increase from 7 to 158 contacts) and concerns about mental health (unrelated to alcohol/ drugs) (**1314%** increase from 7 to 99 contacts).

Increase in Helpline Contacts by Concern Type, 2019-2020 (18 March - 30 November)



Concern Type	% Increase 2019-2020 (18 Mar – 30 Nov)
Concern about having no money/food and requiring foodbank support	2157%
Concerns about mental health (not related to drug/ alcohol use)	1314%
Concerns about alcohol use	122%
Concerns about benzodiazapine* use	120%
Concerns about cocaine use	42%
Concerns about prescription medication use	19%

*purely street Valium/Diazepam does not include other benzos

2. ‘Stay At Home’

As noted at the start of this report, the phrase ‘Stay at Home’ is used as a call to reduce risk and harm to yourself and for others. However for families affected by substance use, home can be the very setting where there is most risk and harm. COVID lockdown and ongoing restrictions have also removed many supports and protective factors for families, including options for them (and their loved ones) to leave the house and connect with others.

At Scottish Families, we are used to supporting families in crisis and distress. However the period since March 2020 has brought a stark escalation of such situations. For example staff have reported a significant increase in:

- Police attending family homes due to conflict, threatening behaviour and domestic violence;
- Social work and child protection involvement in families’ lives due to wellbeing concerns;
- Family breakdown, including couples splitting up and the dissolution of family units through young people or adult children suddenly leaving the home.

In a single week, one of our team reported that five of the families they were supporting had broken down, including parents splitting from adult children and people splitting from their partners. The same week there was a suicide attempt by a young person, relapses and overdose deaths of people’s loved ones, and other bereavements (both COVID and non-COVID). These would be terrible situations at the best of times, but the lockdown situation meant these were even more complicated and more stressful.

Families’ levels of stress, anxiety and conflict have increased at times due to their loved ones not always respecting the social distancing and stay at home guidelines. This includes mixing with other households and bringing risk back to the family home, with many family members also having their own long term and underlying health issues.

“My son is not taking COVID situation seriously. Is causing more tension than usual.”

“My loved one hasn’t fully grasped the precautions needed.”

So while the lessening of restrictions during the summer did help in some respects (e.g. meeting up with friends and family), this also brought additional risks and anxiety for some, including the increasing mobility of their loved ones who were not always respecting the social distancing, hygiene or household mixing rules.

Our Routes project supports young people aged 12-26 years affected by others’ substance use. Prior to COVID, just over one in four (27%) of our Routes young people lived outwith their family home, for example with kinship carers, in homeless accommodation or in a young persons’ residential unit. During lockdown, a further 10% of young people were accommodated in one of these options, away from their family home due to the risk of harm if they remained at home.

Since March, our Routes team have attended an increased number of child protection meetings, and responded to a high volume of contact from teachers and social workers asking for updates on young people. This includes young people who respond to our Routes team but would not respond to statutory contact. Whilst routine information-sharing is supported, at times we have become concerned at the lack of proactive contact with, and outreach to, vulnerable families by education and child protection professionals. During the first lockdown, Routes staff were even asked to carry out statutory child protection ‘Wellbeing Checks’ on young people as part of doorstep drop-offs, as “you are going anyway”. (We are obviously not a statutory service, nor are we funded via statutory sources).

The closure of schools for five months from March onwards was generally damaging to young people's wellbeing, including due to the reduction in their social contact and connections. However there were also concerns in August about the ability of many of our Routes young people to return to a school routine. They had had little structure or routine since March, a number were already at risk of exclusion or on limited timetables prior to lockdown, and there were high levels of anxiety about a return to school. By November, in fact some have never returned to school. The ongoing lack of access to school buildings to meet young people one-to-one has also given us fewer options to help them re-connect and settle back in.

In September we surveyed families supported via our local Family Support Services in Aberdeenshire, East Dunbartonshire and Forth Valley¹, asking a range of questions about their COVID experience as well as our usual service monitoring questions.

Less than one in four family members (23%) said COVID "has had no effect" on their situation, for example feeling *"It hasn't affected us in a huge way. A lot of the new rules have become like the norm now."*

However almost half (46%) felt the pandemic "has negatively impacted on my mental health" and 42% reported "feeling more anxious than usual". Almost three in ten (29%) agreed they were "finding it harder to keep in touch with family or friends who support me":

"I have only seen my Mum briefly once in 6 months. Only being able to see my sisters at a distance was hard."

"I feel so cut off from my family, living alone is hard at any time, but because of COVID-19 it's even harder."

"I have been unable to see my grandchildren who give me immense joy."

Around a fifth of family members said they were unable to access services which help them cope, which *"has affected my confidence and I feel very lonely"*:

Around a fifth (21%) of family members had concerns about increased verbal abuse by their loved one. 10% were more concerned than usual for their safety, with 4% expressing concerns about increased physical abuse by their loved one.

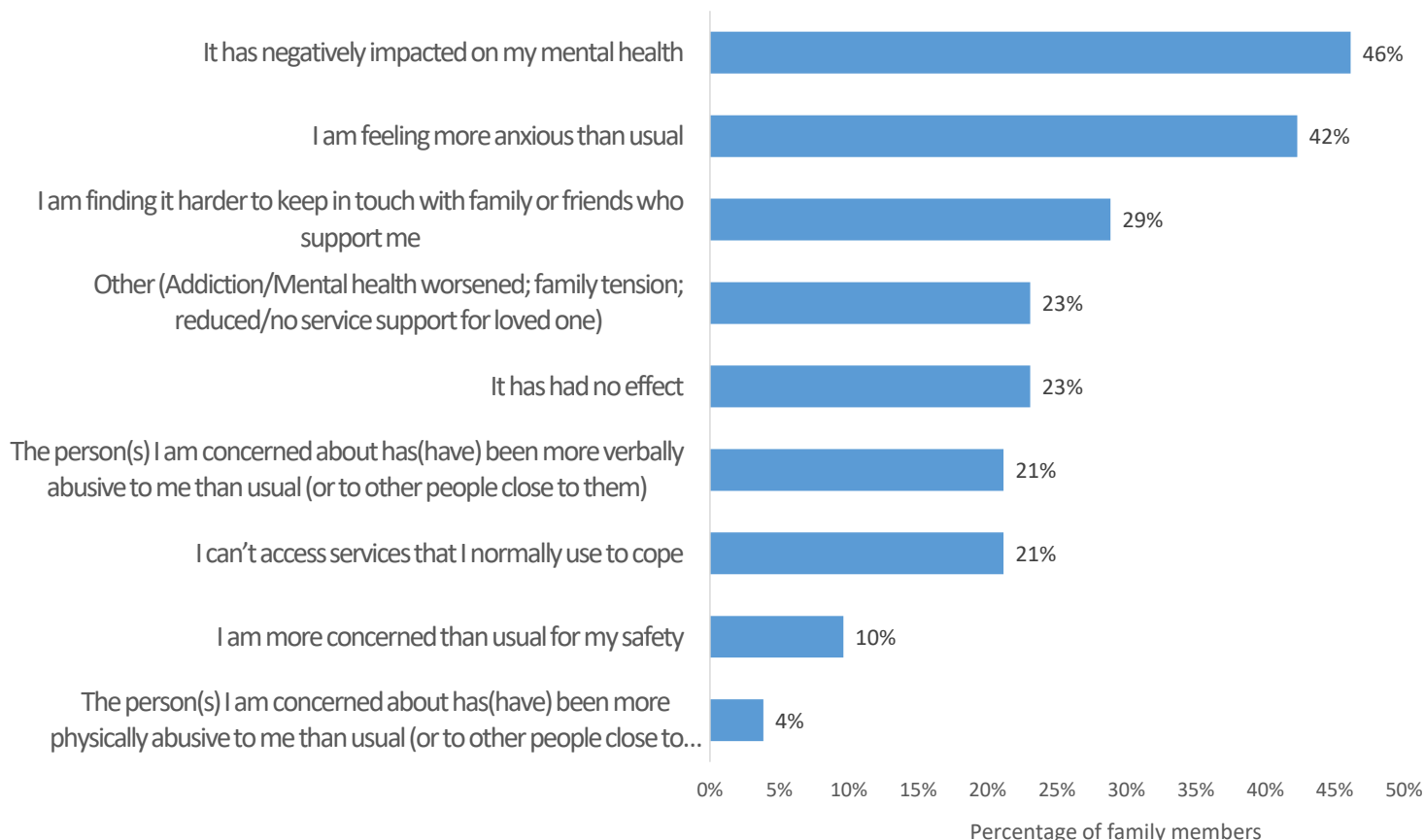
Family members reported that *"Things have worsened since Covid"*, not least as the situation has *"Exasperated addiction behaviours"*, including an increase in substance use and all that goes with this (*"my dad's drinking has gone out of control"*; *"as a mother of sons, I have watched them use alcohol more to help cope with the pandemic"*).

¹ Our newer family support services in South Lanarkshire and Inverclyde will be included in future surveys.



Has your situation been further impacted by the on-going COVID-19 pandemic?

(Please tick all that apply)



This increase in substance and mental health issues has happened alongside a reduction or withdrawal of treatment services, leaving family members coping alone. As one person noted, *"the care was poor before, it's drastic now"*:

Some family members felt that not seeing their loved one during COVID had caused an increase in substance use and mental health issues, as well as a deterioration in their relationship:

"I have had to shield through health issues. My son has found it easier to try and hide more drinking as he doesn't live with me. Other sons have developed more low moods and suicidal moments. I have found all of this difficult with not being able to get out and see friends as well."



3. Reaching Families

“Still an absolutely amazing service. Covid has not changed this.”

“I couldn’t have coped without my support worker. She helped me look at things in a different way and made me realise that I deserve to look after myself. She was an absolute godsend when I was at breaking point.”

“I will be eternally grateful that I found SFAD last year. An absolute God-send. Thank you!!!”

(a) Digital Support

As an organisation, we are well set up in terms of IT equipment and support (from SCVO), and so moving all staff to home working was very smooth in this respect. All staff already had laptops, mobile phones (where required for their post) and access to all files on our cloud-based Sharepoint site. We also already had a corporate Zoom Pro account although we had not made much use of this. So far, so good!

However many of the families we support were not so lucky, and we are grateful to the Scottish Government who provided additional funding for digital support, including phones, data and tablets. This meant:

- Families could stay connected and at home, without having to worry about the cost, going out to buy top-ups or missing out on support;
- Families could participate in online opportunities to learn, socialise, exercise and relax; and
- Families had improved access to telehealth and other virtual support from Scottish Families and key partners.

Digital support orders were submitted by frontline practitioners, using a menu of options and taking account of the family member’s digital literacy and ability to use phones/tablets/Wi-Fi

Hubs. This process was made as easy as possible for people to connect. All equipment and top ups was on a Pay As You Go (PAYG) basis, with suitable equipment being ordered on the family member’s behalf.

Purchases included:

- Smart phones
- Tablets
- PAYG Wi-Fi
- PAYG Sim/top ups

This funding was supplemented by a number of free mobile phones and sim cards for families from Tesco Mobile and GiffGaff (who provided 15 phones, 10 sim cards and mobile credit).

By the end of November 2020:

- 52 digital devices were issued (31 tablets, 21 phones).
- This reached 188 beneficiaries (impact on wider family)
- 16 top-ups for data and minutes were issued.

Family feedback has been extremely positive about our digital support, which enabled them to stay connected to each other and to us – for example using Zoom and WhatsApp for one to one support and virtual family support groups. We also provided digital advice via email and over the phone to ensure family members were supported to set up their new devices, and felt confident to use them.

Thanks to their new devices, a number of East Dunbartonshire family members have been able to participate in Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) across a number of different topics. One family member wanted to join in the MOOC course but had no way of accessing it, as they only had an old phone. After issuing them with a tablet, the next barrier was that they had not been involved in education since school and did not think they could do it. After mastering the tablet, they subsequently ended up finishing the course, and came first in the group!

In our Forth Valley Family Support Service, two family members were issued with Phones; one

with a Wi-Fi hub; one with a Nintendo Switch Console; and seven with Kindle Tablets - all used to great effect to connect with service support, wider family members, sort out benefits etc, and have some much needed fun and distraction from the day to day stresses of continuing to support loved ones in lockdown.

Greater use of technology has also helped families to support each other through WhatsApp groups as well as virtual family support groups.

Here is some feedback on our digital support programme:

‘Thank you so much for the fire tablet. I am working on getting going on it. ‘T has always been my technical guy and now he’s not here so it’s all too much so it might take some time. Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity’.

‘Got on good thanks. Most helpful and patient and did not rush me at all. Very useful information. Thank u so much for all ur help with this and for checking on my sim too. You are all very efficient, caring and most helpful.’

“These have been useful in helping people to feel less isolated, enabled family members who have never met before to make new connections and strengthen their support networks, and we’ve had some fun while try to get their tech sorted!” (Staff Member on virtual family support groups)

(b) Virtual Family Support

Scottish Families’ national services (Helpline, one to one Telehealth, and Bereavement support) have always operated as virtual services which can be accessed from anywhere. So reaching families (and families reaching us) via these platforms did not change at all.

However all of our other services and activities relied heavily on face to face contact, including our local Family Support Services, Routes Young Persons’ Project and Communities programme. All of this work moved to virtual platforms (phone, email and online) in March.

For our Routes young person’s project, some face to face work resumed in August, in line with the national youth work guidance. This included outdoor activities (including outdoor games, arts/crafts and football); some Routes groups meeting in community venues (although it has been challenging to find venues and schools are not available to us); and one to one meetings in cafes and outdoors for ‘walk and talk’. With the arrival of Level 4 restrictions in November, much of this has again halted.

In terms of adult support, we briefly tried out ‘walk and talk’ in Forth Valley before household mixing limits prevented this continuing. For our All in the Family service in South Lanarkshire (which just started in late July) there has been limited face-to-face support at The Beacons recovery hubs (which are classified as alcohol and drug services). This includes small, distanced family support groups (with everyone wearing face masks) and the offer of one to one support. In other areas the lack of available venues, commissioner’s instructions not to run group activities, and the ongoing guidance to deliver online wherever possible has prevented a return to face-to-face support.

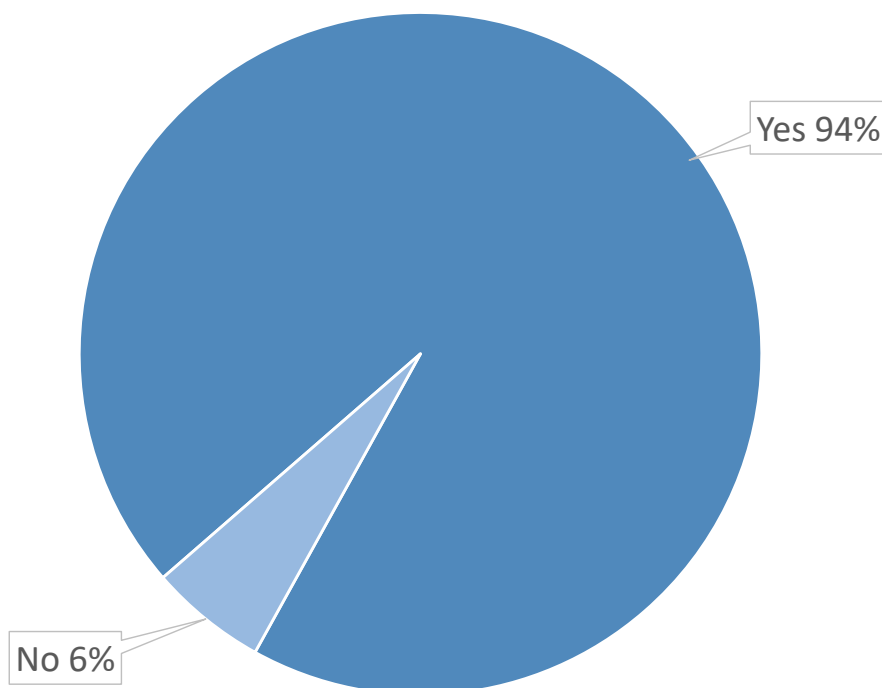
So overall, our adult family support has been largely virtual since March, with our Routes young persons’ project also offering significant virtual delivery.

We have had reasonable engagement from families using Zoom and WhatsApp for group meetings. It has taken some family members time to get used to the technology and to feel confident and relaxed using this. There is also considerable phone support, via calls and texts. Family members have appreciated *“regular texts and phone calls”*, reported their worker was *“easily contactable”*, *“always available for a one to one chat when I need it”*, and felt it is *“easy to access support when I need it”*. New family members have also felt well supported, for example saying *“Very pleased with the quick support I’ve been offered since being referred”*:

In total, **94%** family members who responded to our September survey felt they had still been able to access support from Scottish Families in this way. This is very positive feedback for our

team, in particular given the challenges so many people have experienced trying to access other services during this period.

Our Family Support Service moved to virtual contact (phone, email and online) to comply with COVID-19 guidance.
Do you feel you have still been able to access support from the service?



However some have not found it easy to engage virtually, describing it as *“Restricted”* and saying *“I am missing fortnightly meetings. I am not IT savvy for zoom meetings”*:

“Although I knew there was support available I felt unable to seek help as my confidence has been affected.”

Family members often have little privacy at home, and this has been heightened with everyone being at home more often. This can make it is very difficult for them to engage discreetly or confidentially via phone calls or online meetings, particularly where others in the family do not know they have been accessing support.

There is no doubt however that everyone (staff too!) are desperate for a return to face to face contact (*“I just wish we could meet in person more”*; *“Just hoping that group meetings will re-start in the not too distant future”*), and all of the benefits of this (*“It’s been easy but feels less personal”*).

Face to face support in a community venue also offers family members respite and privacy from their home situation. But we are likely to continue to offer the option of virtual support groups across all of our services into the future, as this has helped us engage effectively with people who would struggle to attend a group due to transport or caring responsibilities, for example.

(c) Advice and information

Within days of moving to home working, we had published two dedicated web pages for families, with a further page on Wellbeing Activities following later:

- [Support for Families about Coronavirus](#)
- [FAQs from Families about Coronavirus](#)
- [Wellbeing Activities](#)

We changed our website home page banner to make clear 'We are still open!' and we continued to emphasise across all communication platforms that all of our services remain

operational and accessible.

Our web pages continued to share the best of available resources, but (becoming aware of information overload for everyone – including families) we focused our new content on video and podcasts, offering a human approach and clear communications across our platforms.

We have been very active across social media throughout with a mix of serious and light-hearted content, and again an emphasis on 'human' content showing team members and others.



4. Our Response



“I think SFAD have done a fantastic job during this pandemic allowing us to access zoom meetings, reiki sessions, guided meditation, giving care packages so that we could take time out to think of ourselves, they have still maintained the fantastic support even during this pandemic, thank you Scottish Families.”

“I enjoyed meeting up for a walk. Have enjoyed zoom calls once got the hang of it. Great support. Keeping us updated and helping reduce stress about covid. Looking forward to mindfulness course and really enjoyed self-massage.”

One of the biggest challenge for the Scottish Families team of positive helpers and problem-solvers has been the realisation that we don't have all the answers just now, and many of the common tools in our solutions-focused, problem-solving toolbox are not what families need at this point.

While this has been extremely stressful, we have realised that it is OK not to have all the answers, and that families are still very appreciate of

somewhere to vent, for someone to listen, and to connect with others for some respite, self-care and just a distraction too.

Thanks to additional funding from the Scottish Government and others, we have been able to run a busy programme of family support throughout the pandemic using all of our creativity and innovation!

(a) Online Wellbeing Programme

This programme was designed by staff members based on feedback from families about previous wellbeing activities which they had enjoyed and found beneficial to their emotional and physical wellbeing. Where there was capacity, some of these sessions were available for anyone to link in with (not just our own family members), however registration was required to ensure online security.

We offered the following wellbeing activities:

- Distance reiki
- Guided meditation
- Personal training classes
- Personal training videos
- Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC)
- Voices Together Virtual Choir
- Skin care and make-up
- Mindfulness group training course (8 week course)

- Facial massage
- Emotional Freedom Technique
- Self-care massage
- Wellbeing webinar.

This programme was closely linked with the wellbeing packs, for example prior to some activities families would receive a specific wellbeing pack linked to that activity. For example in preparation for the facial massage session, everyone taking part was sent a pack including a massage oil, headband, Relaxation CD and herbal tea bags.

As a way to bring people together during the lockdown, and in a show of support for people affected by someone else's substance use, we launched our very first virtual choir – Voices Together. Glasgow based choir leader and vocalist, Emilie Boyd arranged the song and put the final video together.

Everyone and anyone was welcome (regardless of singing experience) to lend us their voice and be a part of the choir. We had **26** participants from across Scotland (including East Ayrshire, Glasgow, The Borders, Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Forth Valley and Shetland) who submitted a video recording of themselves singing acapella. The final video has been viewed 819 times on Vimeo and more on Facebook. [You can watch it here.](#)



Our Communities team ran a variety of projects to connect families together during the spring, including Anon Pen Pals, Together in the Distance art project, and Connecting Conversations drop-in chats. We also launched a series of [Alcohol Shorts](#) podcasts exploring the issue of alcohol use, and offering support to family members and individuals who are experiencing additional pressures because of stay-at-home advice.

A number of these activities are now ongoing for families, including a weekly online fitness group, ongoing MOOC courses and two further rounds of our Voices Together choir.

Voices Together:

“I thought it was a very worthwhile cause especially in this difficult time where individuals in recovery can’t access some services, It cheered me up, and was great fun being a part of it, even though I am not a great singer, the end result was amazing. Thank you for the experience.”

“Absolutely loved it, had so much fun recording myself and my husband. Really empowering and uplifting at this difficult time.”

Our experience of running this wellbeing programme inspired an successful funding application to the SCVO/ Corra COVID Wellbeing Programme to deliver a more concentrated wellbeing programme over the summer. This led to the [Connect, Communicate, Learn and Thrive #CCLT2020 Festival](#) which offered a lively programme of 11 different online activities, including 36 workshops for families affected by substance use. #CCLT2020 Workshops on offer included:

- Introducing Audio Writing
- Stress Less: Learning about Mental Health and Effective Coping Strategies
- Bach Flower Remedies: A Short Course
- Make Do Grow Presents: ‘The Kid’s Tent’ Create Sessions
- #VoicesTogether Virtual Choir
- Exploring Stigma and the Power of Kindness
- Love Makes You Family: Special Screening of our New Animation
- Introducing Podcasts: Everything You Need to Know About Podcasting

- Communication Workshop
- JustB Presents 'The Kid's Tent' Story Sessions.

159 people took part over a three week period. 54% of people who participated had never taken part in a Scottish Families activity prior to the Festival and we reached people from 27 of 32 local authority areas in Scotland (as well as in Northern Ireland, England and the USA!)

(b) Family Meals

At the start of lockdown, we trialled 'Friday Night Pizza' for our Routes young person's project families, arranging home delivery of a free family meal for the young people and their families. Hunger is a significant issue for our Routes young people, and all of our usual weekly activities include food as a core part. Additional funding from the Scottish Government was used to continue this provision for our Routes families until the schools re-opened in August. We also linked families in to local food bank and community food provisions wherever possible, but knowing that one family meal per week is organised for them as a treat significantly reduced pressure on the household.

We organised for **99** hot, cooked family meals to be delivered to the Routes families over a five month period (April – August). Through other funding and partnerships we also delivered **338** food parcels, 100 Easter eggs and fifty £35 supermarket vouchers to the Routes families during this period.

We know the family meals made a huge difference during lockdown. In week one of the lockdown, our senior worker Claire received a text from one of the Routes boys saying,

'Can you tell my mum to make me something for dinner, I'm hungry and she's been drinking.'

Claire didn't text his mum as she felt it could have made the situation worse but ordered a take-away pizza to his home and took him some easy to cook Pot Noodles etc the next day. This exchange highlighted that many of the Routes young people were going hungry - normally they would be getting fed at school and at after school clubs like ours, but this was impossible

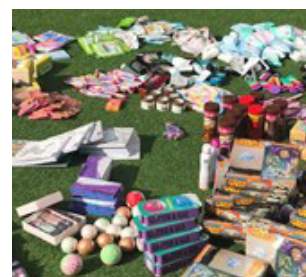
during lockdown.

We know that none of our Routes young people went hungry during lockdown. Here is some family feedback on this, demonstrating how much of a help this was to parents/ carers and other family members too:

"In times like these as a family you find out who is there for you. The gift bags, food shopping and takeaways have really lifted our spirits as a family. As a business owner this is a really hard time for us and your gifts have really put a smile on my face."

"Thank you so much for the delicious pizza we got the other night, yummy as always and the desserts were fabulous. It was such a lovely treat."

(c) #Stayinthehouse Wellbeing Packs



In March we delivered #StayInTheHoose wellbeing packs for our Routes young people, and we received additional funding from the Scottish Government to continue to do this and roll the model out across all our services.

The frontline staff decided on the contents of wellbeing packs, and arranged for packs to be made up and personally delivered through distanced doorstep drop-offs. The packs could contain any items which staff felt families would find helpful at this time to maintain their physical and mental wellbeing.

By 30 November, we had delivered **1149** wellbeing packs across Routes (914 packs) and our adult family support services (235 packs).

WELLBEING PACKS FOR ROUTES YOUNG PEOPLE'S PROJECT

The Routes team made up and delivered wellbeing packs for young people and their siblings each fortnight during lockdown. Including the young people's siblings in these deliveries was really important and well received (by the siblings and the parents).

The packs were customised as much as possible with personal touches such as car magazines for car fanatics, favourite sweets etc. We started off with games, mindfulness colouring books etc, but soon realised most of the girls preferred the fake tan and eyelashes! Contents were sometimes themed for the season (e.g. we delivered 100 Easter eggs and 73 pairs of pyjamas...) or to match upcoming virtual activities on zoom (which also encourages engagement), such as cooking, make-up, keep fit and Halloween.

This helped reduce barriers to participation. For example for the make-up classes, each week we delivered a new item of make-up to the young people (thanks to additional funding from Corra) and the make-up artist would demonstrate how to use the same item of make-up. The day before the cooking Zoom, we dropped off all the ingredients and utensils required to make the recipe so no one had to worry about not having the right equipment. We delivered sports and keep fit equipment before our exercise classes.

Many of the young people we support were already living in quite stressful environments and the lockdown exacerbated this significantly. It was therefore important that we continued to support our young people to reduce the extreme isolation and anxiety many were experiencing. We contacted the young people every week of lockdown either in (socially distanced) person or by phone – with the doorstep deliveries a key part of this.

For many, our wellbeing pack deliveries were the only time they saw anyone other than family members during lockdown, so as well as bringing them treats it also meant that they had someone to talk to (even though it was from two metres away!). It also gave us the chance to check in on the young people and assess their wellbeing.

The packs have been really well received:

“Thanks so much for all my gifts and for dropping them off. I am so bored so it was good to chat to you even if it was from miles away.”

“Thank you for all the stuff I love it, I like everything in it btw.”

“Pam, you and Claire are so thoughtful. I love my necklace. You both always know what to do and what to say to make things that tiny bit better. Now I have something to remind me of mum.” (Young person who lost her mum, when we put a mum/daughter necklace in one of her wellbeing packs)

We have had a very positive response from parents, including around wellbeing packs also being provided for siblings:

“I just wanted to say thank you so so much for everything. This has been a horrible year but kind people like you make it much better.”

“X was so chuffed to see you today (sorry we were still in PJs). He was coming on so well at your group and he is desperate to come out again with you. He loved his gift bag and Easter Egg. Thank you it means a lot to know you're still thinking about him.”

WELLBEING PACKS FOR ADULT FAMILY MEMBERS

As with the young people, there was a real benefit to seeing adult family members on the doorstep face-to-face where packs were personally delivered (which was the case for most of the packs). Both individual and family wellbeing packs were created, and as noted earlier some packs included items connected to wellbeing activities which family members had signed up for. Packs included sweet treats,

pampering items such as bath bombs and candles, books, flowers, cooking ingredients, and much more.

‘...when you came with the flowers and chocolate it cheered me up and I had happy tears which doesn’t happen often. So thank you Carly. The work time and effort you put in to helping people is appreciated...’



‘By the way, thank you SO much - you and SFAD - for the truly appreciated goody bag. It’s very therapeutic to feel cared for! You do a fantastic job!!!’

‘Thank you for the parcel, it cheered me up, I don’t find it easy to speak on the chat group but I know if I need you your there and that is a comfort, so thank you again x

(d) Counselling Support for Family Members

We already work with freelance counsellors across Scotland to deliver our Bereavement Counselling Service, and identified a number of counsellors to deliver telephone support to Scottish Families staff as part of our COVID-19 wellbeing programme.

Additional funding from the Scottish Government allowed to offer free counselling sessions to families under pressure, to support those who need additional support at this time. This funding aimed to support 6 sessions of counselling for 30 individual family members or 180 sessions of

counselling support overall.

As of 30 November 2020, **29** family members have been referred for counselling and we have allocated **190** hours of counselling sessions in total.

By including counselling within our package of COVID support, we recognised that coronavirus was dominating headlines around the world, however while the media focus was on the impact on people’s physical health and what’s being done to prevent the spread of the disease; anxiety about the virus can also have an impact on people’s mental health and wellbeing. Free telephone or online counselling sessions was offered to individual family members aged 16+ years who are under pressure and have additional support needs at this time. Additional pressures could include areas such as relationships, feelings of stress, anxiety, loneliness, hopelessness and low self-esteem (this was not an exhaustive list).

Family members undergoing the counselling noted *“it has completely changed her thinking and made her feel so much more ‘content’ in her life”* (staff report) and felt they were *“getting so much out of it”* (staff report).

(e) Click and Deliver Take Home Naloxone Service

With support from the Scottish Drugs Forum (SDF), we launched Scotland’s first national ‘Click and Deliver’ take-home naloxone service on 18th May 2020. This provision is targeted on families, however it can be accessed by anyone living in Scotland. This has only been made possible via a statement on prosecution policy by the Lord Advocate. Previously, only registered drug and alcohol treatment services could supply naloxone, however due to the current restrictions on the availability of these services, the Lord Advocate has stated that other services can supply naloxone to save lives without fear of prosecution (as long as a number of requirements are met).

This service was launched within three weeks of our first conversations with SDF, which is an impressive achievement. This is a good example of a service improvement which has been facilitated through the COVID situation, with developments which seemed impossible

previously becoming possible.

As at 30 November 2020, we had distributed **155** kits across Scotland (covering all but two Alcohol and Drug Partnership areas). These had been issued to:

- **18** people who use drugs / at risk of overdose
- **82** service workers and
- **55** family and friends

Service workers remain the biggest proportion of kits that we distribute. These individuals do not work within the alcohol and drug field, but have included taxi drivers, train staff, security guard, students, community link workers, social work and housing staff, and volunteers/ community responders working on COVID community outreach and homelessness. These individuals did not have easy access to Naloxone before.

First supply remains the biggest reason we issue Naloxone to individuals. We have an individual who works with the public and was previously Naloxone trained however never had a kit. They obtained their first kit from us and are now on their 7th issue kit, having used the previous 6 on another person. The majority of the replacement kits we issue are due to the fact it has been used on another person. Two kits which we issued within the first two weeks of the service were used in instances of overdose, potentially saving two lives. A family member from a remote island community ordered a kit, saying that previously she didn't ever want to ask for a kit locally as people would then know how bad her situation was. So we are meeting a real need and there will be lots of learning from this new service (which of course we hope will continue post-COVID).

[You can see further information on the new service here.](#)



5. And Finally...Thank You To Our Funders



Scottish Families was awarded a number of COVID-specific grants (amounting to £55,000) to assist with our COVID response, as listed here. We are extremely grateful to all of these funders for their generosity. This enabled staff to respond quickly and effectively to significant additional pressures on families, and to help them stay supported and connected to us and to each other.

Additional COVID-19 Funding	Summary
Scottish Government	Supporting Families Fund: Emergency Fund (including digital support); family meals; wellbeing packs; online wellbeing activities; counselling support.
SCVO COVID Wellbeing Fund	#CCLT2020: Connect, Communicate, Learn and Thrive wellbeing festival for families
Corra PDI COVID-19	Wellbeing Packs for Routes Young People's Project
Tiny Changes COVID-19 Fund	Digital Support, Wellbeing activities and Food for Routes Young People and their families
Cash for Kids COVID-19	Supermarket Vouchers for Routes families
W M Mann Fund	General Scottish Families COVID appeal
Tesco Bags of Help COVID-19	Food for Routes Young People and their families
Neighbourly Community Fund	Food for Routes Young People and their families

HOURS OF OPERATION

Winter Hours

Monday - Closed

Tuesday - Closed

Wednesday - Closed

Thursday - 10:00 - 4:00

Friday - 10:00 - 4:00

Saturday - 10:00 - 4:00

Sunday - 11:00 - 4:00



Closed

till further notice
due to COVID19.

Thank you
QVUP

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