



THE DEMAND HAS BEEN OVERWHELMING AND HUMBLING



Valleys Kids - Impact Report 2020/2022

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April 2020 to March 2022

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Charity Number: 1074840
Company Number: 3717865

3,907

People supported

6,938

Play Packs delivered to families throughout
Rhondda Cynon Taf

92,028

Meals distributed

402

Personal shopping support for vulnerable people

14,724

Wellbeing telephone contacts

£159,000

Estimated retail value of food over 2 years

101 TONNES

of food distributed to vulnerable families

8,711

Wellbeing packs

288

Virtual Art classes for isolated people

105

Members of the local community volunteered

INTRODUCTION

A report on the impact of Valleys Kids' response to Covid-19 from April 2020 to March 2022

'I REALLY CANNOT PUT INTO WORDS THE DIFFERENCE YOU HAVE MADE.'

When Wales went into lockdown at the end of March 2020, we found ourselves entering uncharted territory. Suddenly, our Community and Family Hubs were closed to the public. Potentially, the impact on our ability to support local people facing unprecedented difficulties was devastating.

It soon became clear that there were multiple issues facing children, young people, families and adults: social isolation, food poverty, declining mental health and wellbeing, and digital exclusion.

We realised that communication was vital. Families, couples and individuals faced falling into poverty due to lost opportunities for work or furloughing. Lack of access to technology created major obstacles for both young and old.

Children and young people were unable to engage with schoolwork and became isolated from their friends. Older people faced a dual challenge: cut off from family and friends, and lacking both equipment and knowledge to use digital technology.

The funding we were able to raise very quickly ensured that Valleys Kids could provide:

- free lunches for children
- food hampers for families
- iPads that could be loaned to families and adults
- resources such as activity packs for children, young people and adults.

By April 2020, everything was in place and we were ready to go. In fact, staff had already been acting on their own initiative within the communities they serve. They were already shopping, making phone calls, developing their ideas and planning.

Novel ways of working and of engaging with people and their needs continued much longer than anyone believed at the outset and with increasing intensity. Over the next months, sometimes buildings could be opened for activities but then closed again. Staff coped with it all – trying new approaches, making quick adjustments and making themselves indispensable.

During all this time, the staff and volunteers did what was needed without fuss, even when they and their families were also experiencing the negative impacts of Covid-19.

An important part of Valleys Kids' approach to community development is to encourage local people to get involved as volunteers. We could not have delivered the programmes without their input and sustained commitment.

The pandemic was no different; without the 100+ volunteers, the packed lunches, food hampers, activity and feeling good packs would not have happened. Without the support from local businesses, we would not have had enough food to make the lunches and food hampers. As always in the Valleys, everyone pulled together to help each other.



Participants prepare for the exhibition of 940 pieces of artwork created throughout the pandemic

CHILDREN

'WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK VALLEYS KIDS FOR DOING A FABULOUS JOB WITH THE ACTIVITIES PACKS ... THEY ARE LIKE A LIFELINE FOR A FAMILY.'

1,145

Children supported

6,938

Play Packs delivered to families throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf

23,718

Individual children's meals

22

Videos to explain, entertain and encourage

THE NEED

Lockdown created a very difficult situation for children and their families:

- They could not meet their friends or go out to play
- Everyday experiences were just not there
- The stimulation so important to a child's development was greatly limited
- Tensions in the home became more pronounced and difficult to avoid
- Parents struggled to find ways of keeping children occupied all day every day
- Parents could not attend groups or other opportunities for socialisation
- Family members could not get together. Babies missed developing relationships with cousins, aunts, uncles and grandparents.
- Schooling became irregular, demanding new skills and equipment.

OUR RESPONSE

- Play packs
- Zoom sessions
- Videos
- Phone calls
- Outdoor play sessions
- Educational support

The staff developed a programme of weekly phone calls to the parents who came to Stay and Play. Just a friendly call to have a chat to see if we could help in any way. Group meetings were arranged using Zoom.

Guided by the activities the children would usually experience in the Hub, staff and volunteers developed 'Play Packs'. These contained various things to do (quizzes, craft activities, flowers to grow) with a video to guide the children through some activities. The packs could be collected from the Hubs, allowing a friendly (socially distanced) chat with staff and volunteers. One of the communities was too far from a Hub so the packs were delivered by post.

Even if we couldn't open the Hubs during periods when the regulations were relaxed, play sessions were organised outside.

Before the pandemic, three international volunteers had been with us for a number of months. When lockdown came, two were unable to get home and they played a key role in making the videos for the Play Packs. The third volunteer was so committed that she continued to be involved via Zoom.

The demand
has been
overwhelming
and humbling.



WHAT PEOPLE SAID

‘THE SERVICE YOU OFFER IS A LIFELINE TO MOST OF THE CHILDREN IN THE PENYWAUN AND HIRWAUN AREA. I APPRECIATE THE TIME AND EFFORT YOU HAVE TAKEN TO SEND THEM OUT ACTIVITY PACKS EVERY WEEK. IT HAS BECOME SOMETHING THEY LOOK FORWARD TO RECEIVING EVERY WEEK AND HAS ENCOURAGED THEM GREATLY TO CONTINUE WITH ARTS AND CRAFTS IN THE HOME AND HAS BROUGHT THEM CLOSER TOGETHER AS A FAMILY. THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT AND KINDNESS.’

‘IT WILL GIVE MY LITTLE ONE SOMETHING NEW TO FOCUS ON, AND CONNECT HIM A LITTLE MORE TO OTHER PEOPLE AS HE’S BEGINNING TO STRUGGLE WITH THE ISOLATION. HE'S TOO YOUNG TO UNDERSTAND WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON BUT IS ALWAYS TALKING ABOUT "THE VIRUS" AND SEEMS TO THINK WE'LL NEVER SEE ANYONE ELSE AGAIN BECAUSE OF IT.’

'I REALLY CANNOT PUT INTO WORDS THE DIFFERENCE YOU HAVE MADE TO OUR TIME IN LOCKDOWN. EVERY DAY, THE KIDS GET SO EXCITED FOR LUNCHTIME AND THE SUPRISES IT SOMETIMES BRINGS TOO. IT BRINGS ROUTINE TO OUR DAY, WHICH IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT FOR MY ASD CHILDREN. THEIR DAYS HAVE BEEN ENHANCED WITH SCAVENGER HUNTS AND GROWING SUNFLOWERS, BRACELET MAKING AND COLOURING. OUR DELIVERY MAN IS THE ONE SMILING FACE WE GET TO SEE EVERY DAY AND CHEERS EVERYONE UP. I CANNOT IMAGINE OUR TIME WITHOUT YOUR WONDERFUL CONTRIBUTION THAT MAKES OUR LIFE FEEL SLIGHTLY 'NORMAL' AGAIN. YOU TRULY ARE AN AMAZING GROUP OF PEOPLE.'

YOUNG PEOPLE

'I THINK THESE VIDEO CALLS GIVE US AN OPPORTUNITY TO TALK TO EACH OTHER SO WE DON'T FEEL WE ARE ON OUR OWN IN THIS PANDEMIC.'

2,481

Zoom sessions for teenagers

597

Activity Packs for young people distributed

421

Young people supported

37,469

Individual attendances by young people

THE NEED

- Young people could not meet with friends
- Relationships with peers and family were affected adversely
- Young people felt isolated
- Young people became less confident
- Young people grew anxious and fearful

Young people were suddenly obliged to stay at home. They lost the ability to socialise with their friends and peers, an important part of their life and one of the keys to wellbeing. They felt isolated and troubled about missing out on opportunities that are part of growing up. The youth workers soon became concerned about some young people's mental health.

OUR RESPONSE

- Zoom sessions
- Telephone calls
- Used Facebook to communicate
- Individual support
- Outdoor sessions

Developing the work with young people demonstrated the need for even greater vigilance in respect of safeguarding. We developed a protocol for staff and participants.

The youth work staff kept in touch with young people using social media, particularly Facebook, and found out what young people wanted. Most often, it was opportunities to keep in contact and to have

conversations. Whenever possible, socially distanced groups were arranged outdoors. Importantly, the youth worker is often the 'trusted adult for young people looking for guidance and support'. With youth clubs closed, we had to ensure that young people could still get individual help when it was needed. This depended on phone calls and, when permitted by Covid-19 restrictions, individual face-to-face meetings.

Zoom sessions brought groups of young people together where they could chat. Youth workers organised discussion, quizzes, even cooking sessions. Via Zoom, Youth Arts workers kept the regular drama groups running.

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE SAID

'I THINK THESE VIDEO CALLS GIVE US AN OPPORTUNITY TO TALK TO EACH OTHER SO WE DON'T FEEL WE ARE ON OUR OWN IN THIS PANDEMIC.'

'THIS SPACE IS VERY IMPORTANT, NOT JUST TO ME, BUT FOR EVERYONE. IT GIVES US OPPORTUNITIES TO BE ABLE TO TALK TO PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY FOR PEOPLE WHO SUFFER WITH ANXIETY, DEPRESSION OR DISABILITIES. IT KEEPS US SANE AND OUR FEELING WHOLE AND WARM.'

'ZOOM YOUTH IS A BIT WEIRD AND I MISS ACTUALLY GOING TO YOUTH, BUT I'M GLAD THERE'S EVERYONE WHO WORKS IN YOUTH STILL AVAILABLE TO TALK TO.'

'THE ACTIVITY PACKS ARE GOOD - THEY'VE GIVEN ME SOMETHING DIFFERENT TO DO OTHER THAN STARE AT MY PHONE FOR HOURS ON END.'

**'IT STOPS US FROM DRIFTING AND
KEEPS OUR MINDS AT EASE. IT
ALLOWS US TO INTERACT WITH EACH
OTHER AND THE TIME TO NOT WORRY
ABOUT THE OUTSIDE AND FOCUS ON
THE GROUP AND OURSELVES.'**

**'IT'S MAKING ME FEEL A LOT BETTER IN
MYSELF. IT'S SOMETHING TO LOOK
FORWARD TO. AFTER THE PANDEMIC,
WE CAN ALL GET BACK TOGETHER.'**

**'MY ANXIETY DURING THIS TIME WAS
GETTING WORSE; I MISS MEETING
OTHER PEOPLE. I STARTED TO GO
WITH MY MUM TO HELP DELIVER
LUNCHES AND PACKS. THAT GAVE ME
A REASON FOR GETTING OUT OF BED
AND DRESSED. IT MADE ME FEEL
BETTER.'**

FAMILIES

'THIS IS SO INCREDIBLY KIND OF YOU. THANK YOU SO MUCH; IT WILL MAKE SUCH A DIFFERENCE.'

2,456

Food hampers provided

14,724

Telephone calls

6,938

Play Packs for younger children

98%

Improved family relationships

THE NEED

- Parents felt cut off from their informal support networks
- Groups were not meeting and there was no place for peer discussion about issues of real concern
- At a time when children were looking for reassurance, families themselves were feeling anxious and adrift
- Families were faced, often for the first time, with serious challenges to their ability to provide for their children
- With schools closed, parents on furlough and everybody confined to home, family tensions increased

OUR RESPONSE

- Weekly telephone calls
- Zoom meetings
- Food parcels
- Storytelling webinars
- Family Activity Packs
- Assistance with shopping

With families referred by statutory agencies, the Family Team telephoned each family every week to keep in touch. Staff then arranged Zoom meetings for groups. The Family Team and Sparc (Youth Arts Team) worked together on a storytelling project. Stories were narrated by various artists, resulting in a Story Webinar. When it became possible, three families at a time (all in different rooms) came in for storytelling sessions.

There were a number of special events to support families – a book trail, holidays at Little Bryn Gwyn, seasonal events such as Christmas lunches and Santa riding on his sleigh through the community while distributing 1,000 presents.

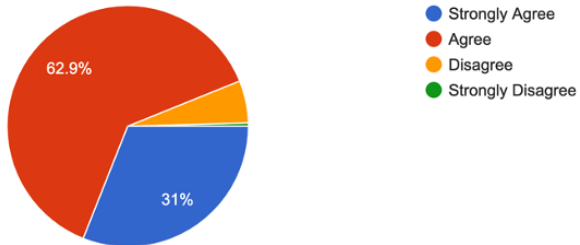
ONE STORY

A single parent has to relocate to the area because of violence and domestic abuse. The family has very little support. There are two young children. One of them has an ASD diagnosis and significant difficulty in communicating. The other child is undergoing an assessment for possible ADHD. The parent struggles with mental health issues, including depression and anxiety.

We ring the mother regularly at least once a week and perform wellbeing checks. As she finds going out with the children extremely difficult, we do the shopping and deliver food hampers.

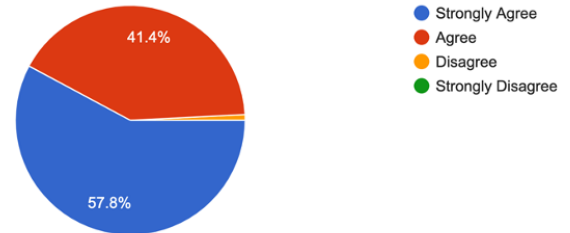
FAMILY EVALUATION

The support has improved our family relationships -
93% agreed



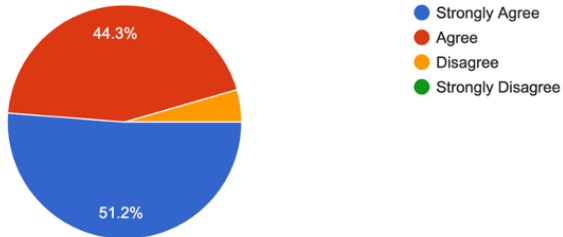
93%

The support has improved our wellbeing -
99% agreed

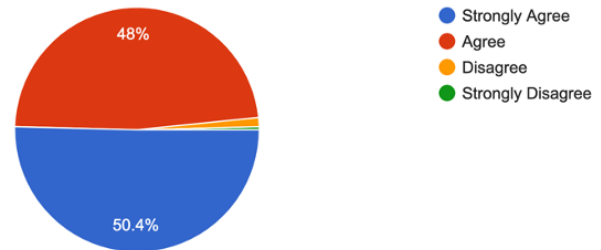


99%

I feel more connected to my community -
95% agreed



I have been able to access the support I needed -
98% agreed



95%

98%

WHAT FAMILIES SAID

'THE SUPPORT FROM YOU ALL AT VALLEYS KIDS HAS BEEN A MASSIVE HELP, JUST KNOWING THAT SOMEONE IS THERE TO HELP. YOUR HAMPER HAS SAVED THE DAY A FEW TIMES AS IT'S HARD TO GET OUT TO THE SHOPS WITH BOTH THE KIDS. THANK YOU SO MUCH.'

'IT IS AMAZING THAT YOU ARE ARRANGING A WEEKLY SHOPPING. THANK YOU SO MUCH. ARE YOU SURE YOU CAN DO THIS FOR ME? I JUST NEED TO MAKE SURE MY BABY HAS EVERYTHING HE NEEDS. DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME. THIS IS SO INCREDIBLY KIND OF YOU. THANK YOU SO MUCH; IT WILL MAKE SUCH A DIFFERENCE.'

**'PHONE CALLS HELP KEEP UP
MOTIVATION AND ROUTINE FOR
MYSELF AND BOYS AND I LOOK
FORWARD TO SEEING THE GROUP ON A
WEEKLY BASIS.'**

**'I LIKE TO KNOW THAT THERE IS
SOMEONE ON THE END OF THE PHONE
IF I NEED THEM. THANK YOU FOR THE
SUPPORT.'**

**'THE SUPPORT WE HAVE RECEIVED
FROM VALLEYS KIDS WITH THE FOOD
PARCELS HAS BEEN BRILLIANT. WE
REALLY NEEDED IT AT THIS TIME.'**

ADULTS

'YOU ARE ANGELS AND LIFESAVERS. YOU ARE DOING AMAZING THINGS.'

1,176

Adult care packs

14,724

Telephone calls

402

Shopping trips for isolating people

288

Virtual Art groups provided

THE NEED

- People confined to their homes; many of them isolated, lonely and frightened
- People shielding, unable to go out and do everyday tasks such as shopping or getting medication
- Considerable doubt and confusion about what to do for the best
- People were anxious and stressed, cut off from their communities and without access to transport
- Many facilities were closed and sources of support were disrupted

OUR RESPONSE

- Regular phone calls
- Zoom groups
- Shopping
- Feeling good packs
- Collecting and delivering medication
- iPad loans and tuition
- Virtual Art classes

People faced numerous challenges, especially the frail, disabled, or those with underlying problems in areas such as mental health. Many of them fell into the most-at-risk and vulnerable category in relation to Covid-19. The loss of links to support compounded their problems in managing everyday needs, creating fear and anxiety. Much of Valleys Kids' response is detailed under different headings, like Wellbeing and

Food, all of which played a part in counteracting feelings of loneliness and isolation.

People looked forward to their weekly phone call. Getting their shopping delivered meant they got to chat as well and sometimes the person delivering got some home-made Welsh cakes – people wanted to say more than thank you!

Our Artist in Residence continued to deliver her classes virtually. Firstly, she prepared and delivered art packs to ensure the members had the required equipment. Each week, she set a task and, on the day of their regular meeting, she maintained contact via social media and discussed what they had been doing in response to the weekly topic.

WHAT OLDER PEOPLE SAID

'TAKING PART IN THE WEEKLY VIDEO CHATS AND THE 1-2-1 PHONE CALLS REALLY HELPS ME WITH MY MENTAL HEALTH. HAVING CONTACT WITH THE GROUP HELPS ME TO COPE AT THIS DIFFICULT TIME AND I DO NOT FEEL SO ISOLATED.'

'I WAS SO DESPERATE AS I WOULD NORMALLY DO ALL OF THE CARE FOR MY WIFE. HOWEVER, I NOW HAVE TO SELF-ISOLATE DUE TO AGE AND HEALTH CONDITIONS. NOBODY ELSE TO HELP US. YOU ARE ANGELS AND LIFESAVERS. YOU ARE DOING AMAZING THINGS.'

'THE HIGHLIGHT OF MY WEEKS ARE THE ART GROUPS. THEY ARE SOMETHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO EVERY WEEK.'

'REALLY THANKFUL FOR THE CALL AND TO KNOW I CAN GET SUPPORT FROM VALLEYS KIDS.'

'I FELT CUT OFF. THEN ANNE ORGANISED A WHATSAPP GROUP WHERE ALL THE PEOPLE IN THE ART GROUP COULD MEET UP. IT GAVE STRUCTURE TO THE WEEK AND YOU FELT CONNECTED.'

FOOD POVERTY

'FOOD PARCELS HAVE BEEN A GODSEND.'

92,028

Meals distributed

101 TONNES

of food distributed to vulnerable families

£159,000

Estimated retail value over 2 years

105

Members of the local community volunteered

THE NEED

- Access to school meals was disrupted
- Families fell into the poverty trap for the first time
- People on low budgets had to struggle with serious concerns about being able to feed all the family every day
- People were afraid to go out
- Shops could not guarantee staple foods

Key issues above affected people's ability to guarantee enough food.

Trying to make an inadequate budget cover the cost of providing daily meals became the major issue.

Single parents were frightened to go shopping. They couldn't leave their children and they couldn't take them in case they caught Covid-19. This affected

families who had children with severe illnesses, or members of other groups who were shielding. Parents did not want to go out themselves as they might bring Covid-19 into the house. Older people and vulnerable adults were unable to leave their homes for long periods.



Free lunch for children (Click photo for video)

OUR RESPONSE

- Free lunches
- Delivering food hampers
- Shopping
- Providing food vouchers

The overriding mission became providing food. We received additional funding from Trusts. Other funders allowed us to repurpose their grants. There was an amazing level of support from local businesses.

During complete lockdown, packed lunches were provided five days a week for children. They could be collected but many were delivered to areas throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf when it was too far to come. Every week, food hampers were prepared, to be collected or delivered, and food vouchers were issued for food banks.

WHAT PEOPLE SAID

'THE SUPPORT WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM VALLEYS KIDS WITH THE FOOD PARCELS HAS BEEN BRILLIANT. WE REALLY NEEDED IT AT THIS TIME.'

'THE "PICK UP A PACKED LUNCH" SCHEME IS AMAZING! AS I AM SHIELDING AND UNABLE TO GO TO THE SHOPS MYSELF AND GO TO WORK, IT HAS HELPED TO EASE MY MIND, AND TAKE WEIGHT OFF MY SHOULDERS. AS I CAN'T TAKE MY CHILDREN OUT, THIS IS THE HIGHLIGHT OF THEIR DAY! THEY GET REALLY EXCITED FOR THEIR PACKED LUNCHESES AND TO ANSWER THE DOOR TO WHOEVER IS DELIVERING THEM. THEY ALWAYS RECEIVE A WELCOMING HELLO. THANK YOU VERY MUCH.'

'THE "PICK UP A LUNCH" SCHEME HAS TRULY HELPED ME AS A SINGLE MUM WITH FOUR CHILDREN. IT HAS GIVEN THE CHILDREN A SENSE OF ROUTINE AND MADE US ALL FEEL SUPPORTED. TRULY WONDERFUL PEOPLE.'

'MY PARTNER HAS BEEN LAID OFF DUE TO COVID-19 AND I'M ONLY PART TIME, SO ONCE EVERYTHING IS PAID WE STRUGGLE TO HAVE MUCH LEFT TO DO A FOOD SHOP. IT HAS REALLY HELPED OUT AS WE KNOW HE'S GETTING A LUNCH THAT HE ENJOYS. IT TAKES A LOAD OFF US.'

WELLBEING

'I AM DISABLED AND IN REMISSION FROM CANCER. I HAVE TO SELF-ISOLATE. I CANNOT SEE MY FAMILY AND THEY CANNOT COME TO SEE ME. I KNOW THAT IF I CATCH THE VIRUS, I WON'T SURVIVE. I NEED SOMEONE TO DO MY SHOPPING FOR ME AND THEN I HAVE TO GET IN THROUGH MY DOOR.'

14,724

Wellbeing telephone calls

98%

Improved wellbeing

8,711

Wellbeing Packs provided

2,769

Virtual support groups

THE NEED

- Many older people were lonely and anxious
- Teenagers did not get out of bed
- There was no face-to-face peer contact and support
- Everyday events were missing
- People could not meet together in groups
- With everybody in the home together, often in very small premises, there were increased tensions in families
- Levels of self-esteem and confidence fell
- People felt isolated, lonely and frightened
- People had difficulty understanding what was happening and felt abandoned

OUR RESPONSE

- Weekly telephone calls
- Special events
- Shopping
- Food
- Activity Packs
- Zoom meetings
- Cream teas
- Virtual Art classes
- Book trail

The pandemic affected everyone's wellbeing, from babies being born in lockdown with no support for new parents, to older and vulnerable adults afraid to leave the house, to teenagers who did not get out of bed. There were immediate effects like loneliness and anxiety. But people were worried about longer-term consequences. They talked about missing out on

opportunities associated with growing up, such as school events. They worried about longer-term effects and ongoing disruption to their lives. Would the lack of socialisation at crucial stages continue to affect new babies, children, young people, and older and vulnerable adults?

Lockdown meant people felt the loss of everyday things: meeting a friend in the street, going shopping, going out in the evenings. They felt isolated and anxious. Though they could still virtually connect, teenagers really wanted to be with their friends, to joke, laugh and do all the normal teenage things. Everyone's wellbeing was affected to some extent by not being able to carry out the normal tasks of life.

Having Valleys Kids' staff and volunteers available in their communities helped to reintroduce opportunities for contact, support, and fun.

WHAT PEOPLE SAID

'I CANNOT TELL YOU AS A FAMILY, WHO ARE SHIELDING, HOW MUCH YOU HELPED DURING THE TOUGHEST WEEKS OF LOCKDOWN. I WILL BE FOREVER GRATEFUL FOR THE COMMITMENT YOU HAVE MADE TO THE COMMUNITY AND FOR HELPING TO LIFT THE SPIRITS OF SO MANY.'

'I HAVE ENJOYED LOOKING AT THE BOOKS BEING HIDDEN IN PENYGRAIG. THE BOOK TRAIL IS A GREAT WAY OF BRINGING THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER.'

'I LOOK FORWARD TO THAT WEEKLY PHONE CALL. IT DOESN'T MATTER IF I'M CRYING DOWN THE PHONE OR SCREAMING DOWN THE PHONE, SHE IS ALWAYS THERE TO LISTEN. THAT HAS BEEN SO IMPORTANT, SOMEONE WHO WILL LISTEN TO ME.'

'MY SONS "NORMAL WORLD" WAS TURNED UPSIDE DOWN WITH THE LOCKDOWN. WE'VE STRUGGLED THROUGH 10 WEEKS AND NOW HE'S GETTING FED UP AND MISSING HIS FRIENDS AND GRANDPARENTS.'

'MY HUSBAND PASSED AWAY A FEW YEARS AGO AND I FEEL SO ISOLATED. THE WEDNESDAY ART GROUP (VIA WHATSAPP) MADE ME FEEL CONNECTED. I MADE FRIENDS WHO I COULD TALK TO ABOUT HOW I FELT. IT HAS REALLY HELPED ME.'

'I CAN ALWAYS HEAR A SMILE ON THE END OF THE PHONE WHEN YOU RING. IT MAKES MY DAY. YOU'VE BROUGHT ME AND MY DAUGHTER CLOSER TOGETHER TOO; YOU'VE BEEN AMAZING.'

DIGITAL INCLUSION

'THE USE OF THE IPAD DURING THE PANDEMIC WAS AN ABSOLUTE GAME CHANGER.'

60 iPads

Provided for families and individual

2,769

Virtual support groups

31

Videos made

THE NEED

- Education moved online
- Families lacked the equipment needed
- Without access to smart phones and computers, those who were shielding felt excluded
- Children missed having activities and opportunities for play
- Young people were struggling to maintain contact with their friends

In the modern era, having a good quality of life depends upon having access to computers, smart phones and tablets. Unfortunately, in the communities where Valleys Kids works, some people do not have this equipment. This meant that families without the equipment felt their children were being dismissed. Young people need access to technology so they can communicate and reduce feelings of isolation.

Not all the older people have smart phones or tablets. They were often isolated and lonely. While they could phone their families, it was not the same as a visit. They couldn't see their grandchildren. It also meant that they could not join in some of the activities Valleys Kids was able to offer.



The use of the data-enabled iPad was a game changer (click photo for video)

OUR RESPONSE

- Sourced funding
- Loaned iPads to families
- Taught people how to use iPads
- Zoom activity groups

We secured funding to purchase iPads. We loaned them to families, enabling children to do their homework and get involved in school Zoom meetings. They could also communicate with family and friends.

Older and vulnerable adults were able to borrow an iPad and received tuition in how to use them. This created some challenges but, with lots of laughter, they were soon technologically literate. They were able to join in activities, make new friends and could communicate with their grandchildren and other family members.

WHAT PEOPLE SAID

'THE USE OF THE IPAD DURING THE PANDEMIC WAS AN ABSOLUTE GAME CHANGER. I WAS ABLE TO ACCESS ALL THE KIDS' EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND TASKS WHICH, WITH TWO BOYS IN TWO DIFFERENT SCHOOLS AND YEARS, WAS REALLY DIFFICULT TO KEEP ORGANISED. I WAS ABLE TO KEEP IN CONTACT WITH THE TEACHERS AND ANY SUPPORT THAT I NEEDED WITH EASE.'

'I WAS REALLY HAPPY AS I COULD USE THE IPAD BECAUSE IT MADE MY HOME SCHOOLWORK FUN AND EASY.'

'THE USE OF THE IPAD GAVE US A CHANCE OF GETTING THROUGH HARD TIMES FOR THE KIDS, AND GAVE THEM A SHOT AT MAINTAINING SOME KIND OF NORMAL EDUCATION AT A VERY UNSETTLING TIME. I AM EXTREMELY GRATEFUL FOR HAVING BEEN GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE ABLE TO ACCESS THE SCHEME.'

'THE LOAN OF THE IPAD HAS BEEN A SAVIOUR TO US; AS A SINGLE PARENT, THIS WOULD BE FAR OUT OF MY BUDGET. THE IPAD HAS ENABLED MY SON TO WORK ON HIS READING EGGS AND HAS TAUGHT HIM TO NAVIGATE AND SEARCH FOR THINGS. WITHOUT IT I DON'T THINK HE WOULD HAVE ACHIEVED HIS GOALS. WE CAN'T IMAGINE BEING WITHOUT IT.'

'I LOOKED FORWARD TO AND ENJOYED EVERY MINUTE OF MY ZOOM ART DAY. IT WAS GREAT CATCHING UP WITH A CUPPA WITH MY BESTIES TALKING ABOUT HOW WE WERE COPING DURING THE LOCKDOWN AND SUPPORTING THE ONES WHO WERE STRUGGLING. WE WERE ALL THERE FOR EACH OTHER. THANK YOU TO ALL MY BESTIES.'

'I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WOULD'VE DONE WITHOUT MY IPAD. IT KEPT ME CONNECTED WITH EVERYONE IN THE ZOOM GROUP. I HAD NEVER USED AN IPAD BEFORE AND CAUSED SOME LAUGHS WITH MY MISTAKES, BUT I COULD ALSO SPEAK WITH MY GRANDCHILDREN EVERY DAY RATHER THAN LOOKING AT THEM THROUGH THE WINDOW.'

LEARNING FROM THE PAST

‘WE NEED CONTINUING SUPPORT IN OUR COMMUNITY. WE NEED TO LOOK TO THE FUTURE. IT’S NO GOOD WAITING FOR THE NEXT CRISIS; PREVENTATIVE WORK IS WHAT IS NEEDED NOW.’



Community support is vital (Click photo for video)

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

People in our communities were already struggling with floods, struggling with cuts, struggling with unemployment, struggling with low income. Then the pandemic struck - a disaster for many.

As a place-based community organisation, Valleys Kids was able to quickly adapt our provision and work in new ways – telephone support, Zoom sessions, activity packs, shopping for people, food hampers and free lunches.

Valleys Kids was not able to do what we did without help from people in these communities who rose to the occasion and volunteered. There is amazing strength in the Valleys communities, and we need to

ensure that it is used to the best effect, especially when challenges like the Covid-19 pandemic arise. They need and demand proper support.

With our long history of community development across the Valleys, we have worked hard to gain the trust of local people and to provide opportunities. We can help to mobilise local support and networks, co-ordinating efforts and helping people to respond when challenges such as the pandemic present themselves.

Many people said how much they appreciated the support we were able to provide at this time. It was hard, humbling, sometimes distressing work that was undertaken by staff and volunteers while they, too, shared many of the same challenges within their own

families. We are really pleased to have this opportunity for commending their commitment and the impact of their work.

And for the future? As one person said -

‘WE NEED CONTINUING SUPPORT IN OUR COMMUNITY. WE NEED TO LOOK TO THE FUTURE. IT’S NO GOOD WAITING FOR THE NEXT CRISIS; PREVENTATIVE WORK IS WHAT IS NEEDED NOW’.

VALLEYS KIDS

Since 1978, Valleys Kids has been a 'Place Based' Community Development organisation. We have grown from working in a whitewashed basement to having four Community and Family Hubs, three Social Enterprises, and our Residential and Activity Centre on Gower. We also have our Youth Arts Team and our Family Team who work at all of our Hubs and throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Valleys Kids' key aim is to engage with communities. Together, we can then provide opportunities which: enable children to grow and develop, support families to work through their challenges, find solutions and help local people to develop their skills and knowledge, and to become active citizens.

Our key role has always been prevention, providing play for children, youth work for young people and activities for adults. Play is one of the key areas where children learn and develop. Youth work provides an arena where young people can discuss the issues in

their lives. Adults and families need opportunities and support so they can manage the consequences of living in communities with many strengths but limited resources, have opportunities to lead richer lives and play a full role in society. These activities are open to everyone in the community.

Within settings that are non-judgemental, we provide more targeted services such as parenting support groups, and individual and group support for young people. Where required, we engage with other professionals and people with skills to offer, such as counsellors and therapists.

We hope you find the information in this report interesting and informative. It explains how Valleys Kids, with huge assistance from Trusts, Commercial Enterprises, Government (local and national) and, importantly, the local volunteers who were able to support our local communities across the Valleys during unprecedented and challenging times.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Valleys Kids is more than just a local charity. We have been supporting vulnerable children, young people, adults and families for over 40 years. We engage with over 3,000 people each year, working alongside communities to help people to help themselves.

We are dependent on the funds we raise every year, not just during Covid-19. Individual responses are crucial to us, so we can continue to make a difference in our communities. There are many ways you can help us raise the funds we need:

- **Donate online at www.valleyskids.org**
- **Go to Local Giving and search Valleys Kids**
- **Give us a call on 01443 420870**
- **Pop into one of our Hubs to donate**

www.ValleysKids.org

