

Summary Report

Sligo Community Re-Opening

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1) Background

As the country begins to progress along the phases of reopening following the Covid-19 lockdown, many organisations in the community sector understandably have concerns with regard to how they will be able to balance re-opening the doors and resuming essential community supports with protecting the health and wellbeing of their staff and services users .

Feedback to local organisations through the Sligo Community Response forum identified that, to date, there has been no official guidance for the sector and so naturally groups have a lot of questions and concerns that need to be addressed, before they have to confidence to resume service delivery.

A working group of the Sligo Community Response Forum formed to look a collaborative approach to addressing these issues and putting in place a suite of responses that would support community sector groups to prepare for re-opening. The working group comprises Sligo County Council, Sligo Leader Partnership, Sligo PPN and Sligo Volunteer Centre.

The first step in this initiative was to find out exactly what the concerns of the sector were. A Survey was put together which was promoted via the PPN network and social media.

Research Undertaken May 2020 via Survey Monkey

- Data Collectors & reporters: Sligo PPN on behalf of working group of Sligo Community Response Forum.
- The purpose of this report is to inform the development and delivery of a suite of responses that will support community groups to safely re-open and maintain service delivery.
- Questions 1 & 2 which identify groups and contacts have been removed for the purpose of this summary report.

2) Executive Summary of Findings

- There was a broad spread in terms of the nature of groups applying with 21 different category of group highlighted
- By far the biggest emerging issue across the survey was the ability to put in place and maintain physical distancing. Groups talked about current buildings not been fit for this purpose and a lack of alternative outdoor options, ongoing enforcement of rules and operating in a system where national guidelines themselves are constantly changing and open to individual interpretation.
- Issues around insurance and legal implications for the sector were also a key priority, especially as many of the organisations would traditionally have offered support services to users who might be deemed as medically vulnerable
- Funding was, as expected, a big worry for groups, especially those who would traditionally have relied on fundraising initiatives. Groups identified that they hope local funding streams will reflect their changing needs, as well as realising that in the future they will probably have to look towards new ways of trying to ensure financial security.
- The fourth key issue was around sourcing and the correct use of PPE in the long term as well as incorporating and budgeting for appropriate cleaning activity.
- Full survey results in Section 4

3) The Response Plan

It is intended that a response plan for these issues will be put together on a phased basis.

Phase 1 will focus on;

1. Training and supports to groups: SLPCo have developed a three fold package of supports for community groups who deliver community development services (details below). The findings from this phase will inform phase 2 of the response
2. Insurance Issues – As a member of the Alliance for Insurance Reform, Sligo PPN are currently working with the network to try and get clarification on insurance in the community sector, key changes and to develop a simple guide for groups.
3. Funding – Existing locally administered funding streams will be looked at to identify opportunities to respond to the findings of the phase 1 Risk Assessments and recommendations for community groups.
4. Exploring the best way to ensure that all information is kept up to date with national guidelines and is easily accessible to the community sector

Planned Response Plan Phase 1

Issue	Response	Lead	Support	Delivery Timeline	Notes
<p>Managing physical distances – what are the correct guidelines and tools for enforcing as effectively as possible</p> <p>Putting in place a safe and effective strategic plan for centres</p> <p>Conducting a risk assessment and sourcing funding to meet costs of recommendations</p>	<p>three fold package of supports for the community groups who deliver community development services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 x Zoom training sessions on risk assessment and Covid19 protocols for returning to operations • One to one mentoring for SICAP groups in supports for planning for future delivery of services • Limited number of grants for infrastructure /equipment supports to enable safe re-opening 	SLPCo	<p>Promotion of initial phase SVC, PPN, SCC</p> <p>Potential duplication of programme</p>	First zoom sessions scheduled for week 8 th June	<p>Priority given to SICAP groups but advert to go across other networks.</p> <p>If demand exceeds places available SVC, SCC & PPN to collectively look at funding additional sessions open to all groups</p>
Securing PPE equipment in the immediate term	<p>Purchase of PPE equipment on behalf of groups</p> <p>Reuseable shields made by ITSligo are currently being distributed across community response groups. We will see if there is the potential to expand this to other groups as they open</p>		<p>SVC/PPN/SCC</p> <p>SCC/PPN</p>	<p>Process started</p> <p>Process started</p>	<p>SVC is in the process of purchase a bulk for voluntary groups</p> <p>PPN may be in a position to do same</p> <p>SCC have a bulk order to go to the community sector</p>
Insurance Issues	PPN to work with Alliance for Insurance Reform to try and come up with clear guidelines for the sector	PPN	All orgs	Starting immediately	PPNs sit on dedicated Covid-19 national working group and will use platform to raise issues
Funding	Review of existing and upcoming funding streams administered at local level to explore scope for them to respond to emerging needs for community re-opening	SLPCo & SCC			

As highlighted, much of **Phase 2** will be based on the findings from the Phase 1 risk assessments and reports. However, other identified issues that we will begin to also consider, if not already covered in these assessments, include:

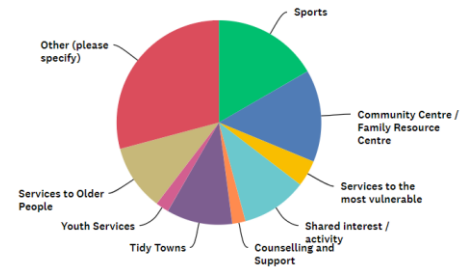
- Need for ongoing support and advice – somebody to turn to with specific questions
- Accessing PPE and hygiene equipment and factoring this into long term budgeting
- Cleaning regimes and protocols – how to fund professional cleaning staff and purchase cleaning products. How to ensure companies selected comply with Covid-19 protocols
- What is the specific guidance and considerations for working with vulnerable people – what extra measures are needed and is this likely to exclude them from opportunities to engage
- Support and mentoring to devise new and innovative ways to deliver services in a totally new way of working
- Options for taking more activities outdoor or sourcing larger premises that are conducive to large groups
- Sourcing funding for hardware, connectivity and software to allow for better online working
- Train the trainer courses specifically for best practice in delivering online training.
- Specific protocols for hosting community events
- Legal implications of activity under Covid-19
- Better broadband and connectivity across the county to allow us to effectively work online
- Training and mentoring on accessing new and more innovative ways of sourcing funds and resources

4) Full Survey Results and Key Findings

Q3) Main Nature of Group

In terms of the nature of groups responding, there was a wide diversity with 21 different categories identified.

What is the main nature of your group?



Q4) If your group offers services to vulnerable people, what steps have you taken to maintain a relationship over the lockdown period?

This question was identified as being non applicable to 10 respondents.

While there were a range of answers given they could broadly be categorized and ranked as the following;

- Phone Calls and texts – 27%
- Moved services online – 17%
- Have let contact slip – 11%
- Maintain usual contact safely – 8%

Q5) How do you plan to re-energise these activities as you begin to restart your group?

Answers to this question were broadly categorized under 5 themes

- Continue work as before, albeit following all safety guidelines – 28%
- Discuss, consult and plan carefully – 25%
- Take more activities online and use communication apps like zoom – 17%
- Huge Challenge, not sure what to do – 13%
- Make physical changes to try and accommodate – 7%

The remaining 10% were unanswered

Of those who identified they were unsure what to do, comments often referred to the size of groups, available space and how to physically practice social distancing.

Q6) What are your main concerns for the safety of your community group members or staff when you think about restarting your group or activity?

Note that many respondents identified a number of concerns

At **58%**, by far the biggest concern for people was trying to **manage physical distancing**, people were concerned about how they would monitor and enforce distancing among those who may not be taking the issue as seriously as others.

Other main concerns in order were;

- How to engage vulnerable members safely, what extra precautions need to be taken and a real fear of these more vulnerable people getting sick – 48%
- Adopting/paying for new cleaning regimes, following new cleaning protocols and keeping facilities up to standard – 40%
- Accessing PPE and hygiene equipment – 32%

Additional comments from respondents mentioned issues such as instilling enough confidence in people to actually come back out in public, insurance implications, lack of funding and an inability to deliver some aspects online due to lack of infrastructure.

Q7) What are your main concerns for the safety of the people who use your service when you think about restarting?

51% of respondents identified the main concern as being maintaining and **enforcing social distancing**. This was in relation to both the physical spaces available to them, lack of appropriate outdoor facilities and the fact that some people are more relaxed about the rules than others.

“making the change and getting the public to abide by the necessary protocols is going to be a challenge”
“people not following the rules – how can you make sure”
“maintaining 2m distancing will be next to impossible”

The next main issue at 20% was around the fact that many of these service users would fall into what would be classified as the vulnerable category. People were concerned about being able to keep them safe.

“The risk of exposing someone who has safely cocooned themselves for the past 2 months”

Other identified safety concerns include;

- Maintaining the cleanliness of facilities and ensuring all hygiene protocols are followed – 13%
- Generally ensuring that they are not the cause of the infection spreading – 13%
- How to stop people travelling to the area
- Legal / insurance implications
- Financing services adequately
- Managing working with children

Q8) In general, how do you see the way you deliver your service/programme having to change upon re-opening?

A number of respondents identified that they have not really thought this far as yet and were currently **“focused on the job in hand”**. They are waiting to see how the virus and the advice around it develops.

For those who had begun thinking ahead, by far the biggest change that people identified would have to happen was either a reduction/change in service provision or a reduction in the size of groups they can work with. 34% of respondents identified that this would be the most likely outcome as they return to some form of service delivery.

“total rethink of how face to face programmes and initiatives can operate.”
“concerned if we can still deliver services to vulnerable groups.”
“some activities and groups will not be able to continue due to space – our centre will not allow sufficient social distancing”

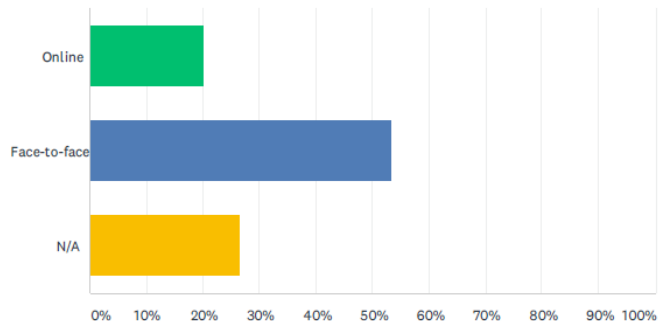
The next most frequent comments were;

- Having to make physical changes to the premises they use – 24%
- Increasing cleaning and hygiene protocols – 12%

“The increased standard and regularity of cleaning services that will be necessary. XX do not have paid staff to clean so this will be an added pressure and huge concern.....ongoing costs associated with PPE and hygiene products which we currently have no budget for...”

8% of respondents mentioned a need to move online or that there would be no change to operations

Q9) If you deliver a service to the community, will you be required to physically meet with your service users or are you planning to continue a large amount of your contact on-line?



Q10) If online, what support will you need to be able to do this effectively?

This was N/A to many respondents. Of the 20% who did answer;

The biggest ask at 43% was for funding and support to be able to purchase essential hardware and software to be able to carry out remote services.

The second highest issue (25%) was for the delivery of training to tutors with regard to how to deliver courses effectively on a remote basis

Other comments in this category include; online programmes simply won't work for us, we need money to invest in web and video development, people's internet access will be a big issue, funding to help entirely change the way we work.

Q11) If face to face, which of the following concerns will apply to you?

	ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
2	Insurance implications for activity under Covid-19	60.47%
4	PPE Equipment and correct usage	48.84%
5	Specific restrictions and protocols for dealing with the medically vulnerable	39.53%
3	Sourcing funding for equipment to keep your activity going	53.49%
1	Implementing social distancing within your building/centre - including physical adaptations	81.40%
4	Sourcing / conducting appropriate cleaning activity	48.84%
6	Handling Money	37.21%
7	How to conduct meetings and ensure good governance online	30.23%
	Other (please specify)	11.63%

Q12) If you would like to expand on any of the above selections please detail here

Comments included;

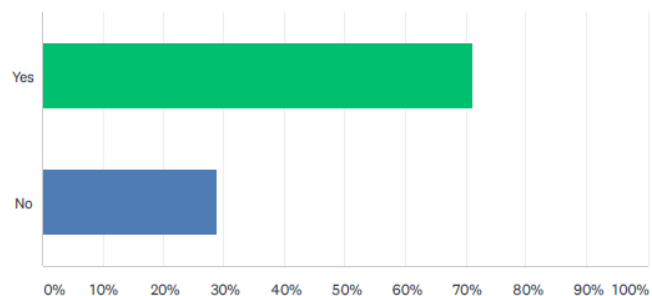
- Legal liabilities
- Who has to provide PPE – do we have to provide for staff and users?
- Will there be standard training for all committees and volunteers
- Be good to have a full list of protocols for hosting events

“many of our target groups are vulnerable adults and adults/young people with disabilities. Major concerns in relation to the application of health and safety measures – especially as these groups are also high risk.”

- Our activities simply don't lend themselves to separation

“we are a community group with 250 plus children under the age of 12 – we simply don't have the facilities to cater for these indoors”

Q13) Does your group operate a physical building that is used by community groups/members/service users



Q14) Without the ability to conduct traditional public fundraising campaigns, how will your group be affected? Do you have any other plans in place for financial support?

The overwhelming response here was that groups either felt lost in this regard and didn't know where to turn or they had not even begun to think about this – there were just coping with the current situation. Over **64%** of respondents referred to either of these points.

The next most popular responses (**31%**) referred to the hope that local and national funding streams would become available to support groups to take the necessary steps they need to both safely reopen and deliver essential services.

Other comments included;

- The need to start looking online for funding opportunities
- That groups really need to start looking at this but that there is just no time
- Worried that we fall through the gaps – we do not qualify for SICAP but also struggle to get mainstream funds

“we will need to try and set up a fundraising campaign, but this is difficult when volunteers are already busy delivering and maintaining the current programme”

“we really hope you can advise on funding”

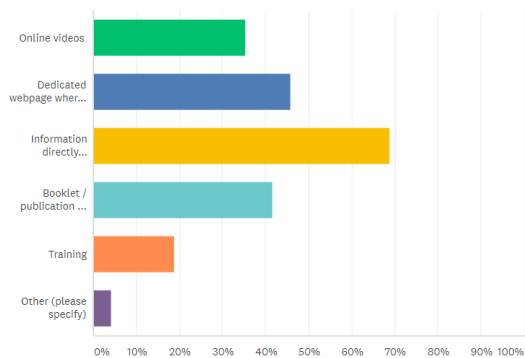
“we have lost thousands.....our main event did not go ahead and this was our main fundraiser for the year that allows us to develop our club”

“extremely difficult and a massive worry at present. We have no income bar sponsors and even that is in jeopardy”

Q15) Do you know where to look for funding to support your group? Are you aware of the following sources of information / supports?

Sligo Volunteer Centre - volunteer support for funding applications	56.41%
Sligo Leader Partnership - a range of training, information and support for community groups. Administer dedicated grants.	74.36%
Sligo PPN - dedicated funding information pages and advice	74.36%
Sligo County Council - administer a range of community grants through the year	84.62%

Q16) How would you prefer to receive any information or guidance we develop to support you to restart



ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES
Online videos		35.56%
Dedicated webpage where you can access information as needed		48.89%
Information directly emailed out		68.89%
Booklet / publication you can have to hand		37.78%
Training		17.78%
Other (please specify)		4.44%
1	Direct contact	
2	class room based or group based people dont read the booklets and our volunteers dont know how to use the online resourses	