



Moondance Foundation
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Information for the Welsh Parliament Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee

Re: Scrutiny of COVID-19 and its impacts on the voluntary sector – Monday, 2 November



- Introduction

The Moondance Foundation is a family charitable foundation, set up by Diane and Henry Engelhardt to further their family's philanthropy and giving in 2010.

The Moondance Foundation is a registered charity (Registered Charity No: 1139224) and a registered company limited by guarantee (Company no: 07448773).

Moondance's Mission: To prevent or relieve poverty, support the welfare and wellbeing of women, children, the elderly and the vulnerable in our society, improve health outcomes, raise educational standards and preserve our environment for future generations.

On 25 March 2020 Moondance launched its Covid-19 Relief Fund to support charitable organisations and activities in Wales. To date, Moondance has awarded 764 grants totalling over £6.9 million.

These grants have supported grassroots organisations, community groups, national charities working in Wales, playgroups, primary and secondary schools, and organisation working in the areas of homelessness, domestic violence, sexual abuse, and mental health & wellbeing, plus many more. Items provided range from essential food parcels to help support vulnerable people suffering from food poverty, to computers and tablets to redress digital deprivation and isolation.

- Funding and Service delivery

Funders have come together in response to Covid-19. For example, the Wales Funders' Forum (members include: WCVA, National Lottery Community Fund, Community Foundation Wales, The Waterloo Foundation, Pen y Cymoedd Wind Farm Community Fund, Lloyds Bank Foundation, Coalfields Regeneration Trust, BBC Children in Need, Architectural Heritage Fund & others) who met four times a year, started weekly virtual meetings. These meetings have provided the opportunity to discuss what funds were available, explore the areas where the need was the greatest and to share details of funding awarded.

Funders responded immediately to the crisis and were able to make quick decisions. Moondance could process applications and have the money in the applicant's bank account within 48 hours.

Also, there has been increased discussion with the Welsh Government's Communities and Third Sector team.

With lockdown the third sector organisations saw demand increase immediately for their services and activities.

Community Groups responded and adapted quickly to the greater demand, despite an uncertain about where funds would come from and for how long they would have to deliver.

The lockdown severely impacted charities who had diversified their sources of income with other income generating activities, such as cafés or training, to reduce their overall reliance on statutory funding. They saw their income cease instantly, and their diversification, and in many cases innovation, was in this circumstance detrimental to their finances.

- Effectiveness of support from the UK and Welsh Government and local authorities:

Messaging from the UK and Welsh Government about what is available has often been confusing, and it then took time to implement and reach the people in need. At the onset of the lockdown, the focus was very much on businesses with the third sector naturally feeling abandoned. It took some time to realise the impact of the lockdown on the third sector, but when established the WCVA programmes to distribute Welsh Government money were effective.

Examples where messaging and delay have not been helpful:

1. Education announcement about funding to overcome digital deprivation, through our work, we have not heard of anyone who has benefitted or been able to access this funding.

2. Support for playgroups was slow coming from the Welsh Government and provide support for income lost early in lockdown not to help recovery going forward. I have been told that as a result uptake has been limited.

- Volunteering and community resilience

Communities and volunteers have risen to the challenges of Covid-19, reaching out to support the young, elderly, disabled, sick and isolated. However, it is not known how long support can continue at this level before sustained commitment will begin to wane and fall away.

New community groups and regional collaborations have been formed in the crisis to support their local areas effectively. The need for these groups in the future should be considered, and appropriate governance put in place to ensure their survival.

During this crisis, funders have overlooked some of the poor governance practices to respond to the need. This cannot continue as it would be to the detriment to the third sector in Wales. For example, the late filing of documentation with the Charity Commission was overlooked.

- Good practice and future opportunities and challenges

Greater collaboration and transparency between funders, including the Welsh Government, can only help support the third sector in the future. Funders continue to explore how we can work together to raise standards and ensure the future resilience of the third sector in Wales.

An acknowledgement that new community groups need support to put in place essential governance. Recognition that community groups must work with their communities, vulnerable people, to help them back on their feet and reduce their reliance on support and handouts.

Covid-19 and the national lockdown has highlighted throughout Wales the levels of deprivation including food poverty, lack of essential items and digital resources. We must continue to recognise this and take steps to ensure that vulnerable individuals and families receive the help they need to improve their lives.

This crisis has seen national charities working in Wales cut their workforce, and we need to ensure that the people of Wales do not suffer because of their withdrawal. For example, Breast Cancer Now, Prostate Cancer and Bowel Cancer UK have all made the position of the head for Wales redundant.

Finally, Covid-19 has had an immediate impact on the third sector in Wales, seeing increased demand for services and a loss of income. While the various Covid-19 emergency relief funds have mitigated some loss of income, the effect of Covid-19 will be felt for many months, possibly years, to come. As the furlough scheme ends, there is the risk greater unemployment leading to even greater deprivation which could be exacerbated by less funding being available.