

From Community Garden to Community Action: Volunteering with Belville Community Garden to address the COVID-19 Crisis

McKendrick, John; Graham, Jed

Publication date:
2020

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in ResearchOnline](#)

Citation for published version (Harvard):
McKendrick, J & Graham, J 2020, *From Community Garden to Community Action: Volunteering with Belville Community Garden to address the COVID-19 Crisis*. Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit, Glasgow.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please view our takedown policy at <https://edshare.gcu.ac.uk/id/eprint/5179> for details of how to contact us.

From community garden to community action

Volunteering with Belville Community Garden to address the COVID-19 crisis

August 2020



About this report

This report presents the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit's (SPIRU)¹ review of the volunteer work undertaken with Belville Community Garden Trust² during the coronavirus pandemic of 2020 (mid-March to mid-July). SPIRU has no vested interest in the work of Belville CGT; this is an independent appraisal. SPIRU is well positioned to undertake this evaluation, have acquired an understanding of the issues surrounding food security in Inverclyde and beyond: SPIRU has recently completed a nationwide review of local action to tackle food insecurity during the coronavirus crisis,³ evaluated the work of the Inverclyde Community Action Response Group,⁴ and is involved in independent postgraduate research on food citizenship in Inverclyde.⁵

For more information about the report: Contact Professor John McKendrick at jmke@gcu.ac.uk

Acknowledgements

SPIRU is grateful to the many people for their assistance with this report. First and foremost, we are grateful to the 44 volunteers who completed the survey and the 10 volunteers who were interviewed. Geri Sinclair, formerly Volunteer Development Worker at Belville Community Garden Trust provided guidance and background information that ensured that we were able to conduct research in an appropriate manner. We are particularly grateful to Laura Reilly for support and encouragement throughout the evaluation.

Table of contents

About this report	2
Acknowledgements	2
Table of contents	2
Executive Summary with Key Recommendations	3
Introduction: Belville Community Gardens and Inverclyde Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.....	5
Belville volunteering in the COVID-19 pandemic.....	7
Impact on volunteers.....	13
Impact on the Belville community and the wider Inverclyde area	16
On Belville Community Garden Trust	19
Conclusions.....	21
Annex 1: About the Evaluation	23
Endnotes.....	27

Executive Summary with Key Recommendations

About This Evaluation

This is an independent appraisal by the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit (SPIRU) of the work of the volunteers with Belville Community Gardens Trust during the coronavirus pandemic, focused specifically up to the end of June 2020. SPIRU was invited to undertake this evaluation at the start of May 2020. Data collection was undertaken in May and June 2020, with the final report delivered in August 2020. Professor McKendrick managed the evaluation, in conjunction with Jed Graham, a postgraduate research student within the Unit. The evaluation is based on an analysis of a survey of volunteers (44 responses), ten telephone interviews with and an analysis of work patterns. The conclusions reached are independent.

What We Knew In Advance

- **Volunteers and social action.** The importance of volunteers in contributing to social action in communities is widely acknowledged in Scotland, with a growing evidence base and an established infrastructure to support community actions and groups.
- **The Belville community's existing vulnerability.** The Belville neighbourhood comprises small areas that are considered to be among the very most deprived in the whole of Scotland. Belville sits within Inverclyde district, itself one that faces many challenges in the 21st century.
- **The vulnerability of the most disadvantaged is heightened in crisis.** From all manner of crises situations, it is well established that the most disadvantaged are less resilient and less well placed to thrive and survive. The scale of the challenge that the coronavirus presents to the Belville community, heightens the importance of Belville's social action at this time.

What did we find – what worked?

SPIRU concludes that:

- **Belville responded, coped and delivered.** Although the purpose of this report is to reflect on the volunteering with Belville during the coronavirus pandemic, it is both relevant and important to acknowledge that the work of the volunteers, enable Belville CGT to contribute to the meeting of its community's needs during the coronavirus pandemic – despite the significant challenges it faced.
- **Community minded volunteers.** Volunteers, on the whole, seemed to be well matched with Belville, with the driving reason given for their work being the aspiration to “make a positive difference” during these times of crisis.
- **Incidental personal gain for volunteers.** Although of secondary importance, many volunteers reported how their involvement bolstered their mental health, and positive sense of self during the pandemic. Similarly, those who had to withdraw from volunteering during the pandemic lamented having to withdraw from this work.
- **Supportive environment.** It is clear that Belville provided a supportive environment for volunteers. Individual staff members and the wider culture were praised.

What did we find – what worked less well?

SPIRU concludes that:

- **Metric Uncertainty.** Collecting data to evidence impact should not be the priority of an organisation in a crisis situation. On the other hand, having access to robust data is of value when evidencing scale of activity, effectiveness of activity and impact. The available data on Belville volunteering is helpful, but could be more robust.

- **Harnessing Local Support in Crisis.** It was apparent that the majority of those volunteering with Belville are not local to the area. In itself, this is not problematic. However, the ethos of Belville is to enable the community. While, for very good reason, many within the community were unable to assist the work of Belville CGT during the crisis, it is notable that how Belville function was not entirely consistent with what Belville wants to achieve.
- **Community Impact.** Volunteers – when asked through this research – were able to share anecdotes and opinion of the positive impact of the work of Belville, and to share their thoughts on how volunteering impacted positively on them. What has not been captured is how the volunteers themselves (rather than the service they provided) were received by others with whom they came into contact.
- **Better informed ... to a degree.** Although many volunteers reported positive impact, there was also much uncertainty over the wider impact of their work. It might have been useful to provide volunteers with the information that enabled them to appreciate the positive impact of the work that they were doing.

What needs to happen now?

- **Telling the Story.** Many, but not all, of those new to volunteering were aware of the work of Belville. There is a continued need to maintain wider public awareness of Belville and its work. In addition to evidencing the positive impact on the community and ‘common good’ of the work of the volunteers, there may also be merit in focusing on the volunteers – sharing their stories and experiences.
- **Exit Strategy for New Volunteers.** The winding down of the delivery phase at the end of June 2020 presents an opportunity to engage ‘new’ volunteers to explore whether they might be willing and able to contribute to the future work on Belville. This might involve considering how the skills offered and contributions made by volunteers during the crisis, might be used to a greater extent in the work of Belville in the future.
- **Re-engaging Old Volunteers.** An immediate priority – given the importance of volunteering for the wellbeing of those involved – is to facilitate the active re-engagement of those who have been unable to continue with volunteering activity during the pandemic.
- **Recapturing the Enabling Organisation.** The ethos of Belville was to enable the community to collectively generate a thriving community. The focus in the crisis has been on providing support to the vulnerable. There is a need to plan for the transition back to an enabling organisation – thinking carefully about the role volunteers must play in this transition.
- **Volunteer Plan for Future Times of Crisis.** Although Belville coped and delivered, it would be useful to have a plan to enable Belville to manage volunteer input, during future times of crisis. Such a plan should prioritise ways of enabling and engaging local people to contribute as volunteers.
- **Old Belvonians as a Resource.** It was apparent that some new volunteers had connections with the Belville area, and that they tended to have a more positive outlook toward Belville than those who did not. Consideration might be given to how this wider community on ‘old Belvonians’ might contribute to the work of Belville in the future.
- **Low volume volunteering.** It would be useful to learn more about the experiences of those who contribute only a little to the overall volunteer effort. More than one half of the volunteers by number were recorded as contributing either one or ‘two or three’ shifts. From an organisational view, it would be helpful to appraise to what extent this was benefit or burden, and whether there are ways in which any problems caused could be minimised.
- **Reflect on issues that matter to volunteers.** The majority of volunteers expressed an interest in all of the aspects of Belville’s work – poverty, food security, community development and environment, with most interest expressed in tackling poverty and community development.

Introduction: Belville Community Gardens and Inverclyde Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Introduction: Aim of this Report

The aim of this report is to better understand the experiences of volunteers who worked with Belville Community Gardens Trust (Belville CGT) during the coronavirus crisis of 2020, and to reflect on the implications of this for the future of Belville CGT.

Belville Community Garden

Belville Community Garden sits above the town of Greenock and the River Clyde, in the district of Inverclyde, west central Scotland. It is situated in the neighbourhood from which it takes its name.

The Belville neighbourhood has, like the town of which it is part, been transformed in recent decades. Once dominated by three high-rise buildings (housing 250 flats) built in the 1960s, the landscape and population base was transformed with their demolition in 2013.

Local people formed Belville Community Garden in 2014, aiming to bring together people living in the neighbourhood and the wider east end of Greenock. The Garden is situated on the land on which the high-rise flats were located. A registered Scottish charity, it functions with a small staff and a wider pool of volunteers. The Belville CGT website reports that “last year we benefited from over 3889 hours of volunteers time and energy”.⁶ A range of volunteer opportunities are offered, including:

- General garden maintenance volunteer
- Construction/building volunteer
- Drop in gardening volunteer
- One off volunteering days
- One off volunteering days for schools, community groups and workplaces

- Kitchen volunteer

Belville CGT is involved in a wide range of activities, including

- Community café
- Growing fruit and vegetables
- Cookery classes
- Construction classes
- Classes in food growing
- Distributing free food to the wider community
- Maintaining a butterfly garden
- Maintaining a biodiversity garden
- Maintaining a children’s garden and play area
- Maintaining a bug hotel
- Maintaining a quiet spot and viewing area in the garden
- Maintaining a sensory garden
- Hosting a gardening club
- Photography competition
- Children’s after school club
- Children’s school holiday club
- Bicycle maintenance and repair
- Arts and crafts sessions
- People’s planter scheme
- Climate change education
- Community Inclusion
- Pupil placements
- Autism group work

Belville Community Garden Trust and COVID-19

As with much of Scotland, the public response to the coronavirus pandemic impacted on the work of Belville CGT. The “lockdown” led to the curtailment of its activities. Many of its long-standing volunteers were unable to support the work of Belville CGT during the coronavirus pandemic as they themselves had to self-isolate. Many of the pre-COVID

volunteer group had underlying health conditions, serious mental health conditions such as anxiety, or indeed were in the age bracket that were most at risk of fatality.

On the other hand, Belville CGT has played a key role in supporting people in the Belville neighbourhood and the wider Inverclyde area during the crisis. Belville CGT has been responsible for the delivery of isolation food boxes and has been a key member of the wider Inverclyde Community Action Response Group during this period.

As a diverse response driven by community need, the Garden launched the “Tech for schools” initiative and raised money for 387 computers for children from P7-S6. They distributed clothing and items for babies and children. They maintained and repaired bicycles for key workers. All this including the widening of the self-isolation boxes concept as we realised community needs, to include cookery equipment, white goods especially fridge freezers, crockery, 24-hour emergency larders and recipe boxes.

What We Did

SPIRU was invited to undertake this evaluation at the start of May 2020. Data collection was undertaken in May and June 2020, and focuses on the three months of April, May and June 2020. The evaluation drew on three types of evidence: (i) a review of volunteer labour, drawing on Belville work records; (ii) a SPIRU survey of 44 volunteers; and (iii) SPIRU-led in-depth interviews with 10 volunteers.

Structure of this Report

This report integrates the evidence base, and presents a thematic report that describes and discusses four issues:

- Volunteer profile
- Impact of work on volunteers
- Impact of work on wider Belville community
- Reflections on Belville CGT

We conclude by reflecting of lessons for Belville CGT in terms of the future work with volunteers.

Belville volunteering in the COVID-19 pandemic

Introduction

In this section of the report, we draw largely on the survey findings and organisation work records to profile the volunteers and volunteer work with Belville CGT during the months of March, April and May 2020.

Four main themes are explored: the timeline to volunteering; the work undertaken; the volume of work completed; and the profile of volunteers.

Belville Volunteer Timeline

2020 started with 'business as usual' for Belville CGT, as with the rest of Scotland. This continued as the reach of the coronavirus began to extend across the UK. The following describes the way in which it impacted on Belville

- 10th March – Start of advertisement of the new self-isolation box programme.
- 13th March – first delivery of self-isolation box, delivered by staff and made up from existing food stocks.
- 16th March - All activities cancelled and Garden closed. Start of self-isolation box service by volunteers. First meeting of the new 'Inverclyde Community Action Response Group'.
- 17th March – First large-scale donation of food supplies by local businesses.
- 20th March - Signs up to "When I work" App. 100 new volunteers register. Community larder established outside Belville. Your Voice take over Belville phone lines and social media management.
- 22nd March – Offering bicycles for key workers programme starts.
- 24th March - The first Belville volunteer reports being unable to continue.

- 30th March - Belville opens its distribution centre for ambient food at Crawfurdsburn.
- 15th April – Kitchen supplies such as pot and pans are distributed.
- 17th April - Lifeline Grocery purchase scheme starts, which Belville funds and administrates.
- 22nd April – An appeal goes out for fridge freezers.
- 8th May – VE Celebrations in Hall with a Facebook Live broadcast.
- 11th May – Baby box scheme begins after warehouse donations of children's clothing items.
- 17th June – Facebook Live cookery lessons are broadcast.
- 19th June – 15 minute-long 'mindfulness walks' are supervised through the Garden.
- 10th July - Belville's responsibility for delivering Isolation Food Boxes ends and new volunteers cease to present for work at Belville.

Belville Volunteering Work

Understandably, by necessity, the nature of volunteering work with Belville CGT changed markedly when Scotland responded with a 'lockdown' in response to the pandemic.

Throughout the months of April through June 2020, the majority of volunteers reported being involved in transporting food (58%) or packing food (23%). Also reported, but to a much lesser extent, was volunteering to make food, grow food, maintenance work, indoor craft, educating other, providing advice and support and office or administrative tasks.

Those who had started volunteering with Belville before the start of the coronavirus crisis were more likely to report being involved in a greater range of volunteering

activity with Belville (2.1, compared to 1.4 roles on average respectively).

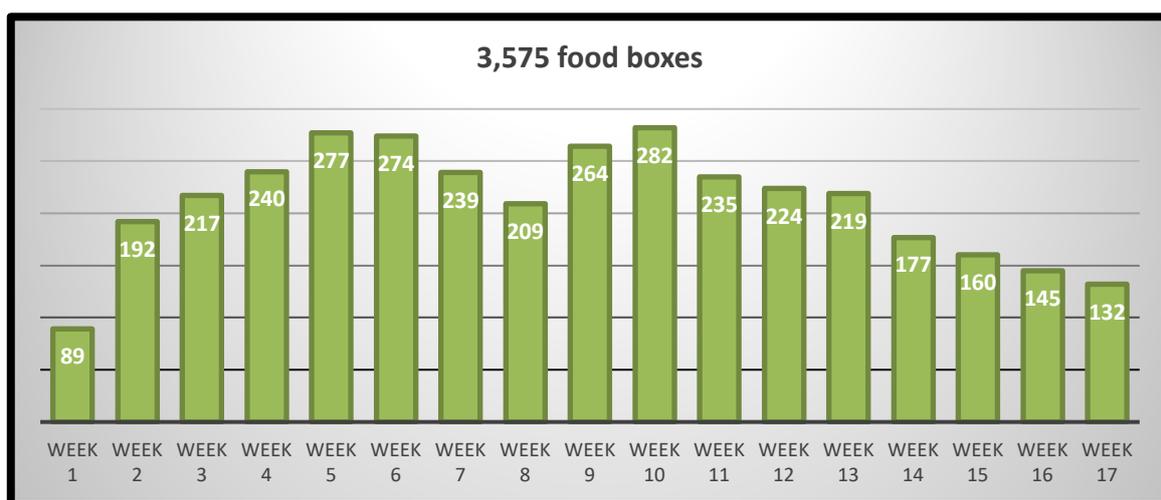
One volunteer reported how the organisation of this volunteer effort improved through time: **Initially things were a bit of a guddle but by week three it was a very slick well organised operation. I work as an XXX and organising and planning is key to all work. Considering the mix of people involved it was an amazing thing to see.**

Working in partnership was one of the defining features of Belville’s work in the pandemic. However, the scale of the specific contribution of Belville volunteering can be

detailed. Here, we summarise the core (Figure 1) and the supplementary work (Figures 2 and 3) undertaken by Belville volunteers during the pandemic.

The core contribution of Belville CGT was delivering food boxes to citizens across Inverclyde. As Figure 1 demonstrates, Belville volunteers delivered over 3,500 food boxes during the pandemic (almost 90% of the total delivered across Inverclyde). The workload increased rapidly over the first few weeks of the pandemic, then remained high throughout, only tailing off slightly toward the end of June and into July.

Figure 1: Food Boxes Delivered by Belville CGT Volunteers During the Pandemic, mid March-mid July 2020



Source: Stephen Henry, ICARG

In addition to the distribution of food boxes, Belville also distributed £35 food vouchers (194 in total: 89 in May, 56 in June and 49 in July), £25 food vouchers (185 in total; 149 in June and 36 in July) and 38 food parcels worth £35 (7 in May and 31 in June). These food vouchers and parcels were distributed to families with children under 16 who self-declared that they were suffering food insecurity. The funds were secured by River Clyde Homes from Cash for Kids with Belville providing the local intelligence on need and

organising distribution.

Belville volunteering extended well beyond the core work of delivering food boxes. As Figures 2 and 3 demonstrate, Belville was responsive to need, leading its volunteers to assist in the distribution and delivery of computing equipment to schoolchildren in primary schools (Figure 2a) and secondary schools (Figure 2b) and a wide list of provisions that were needed by the people of Inverclyde during the pandemic (Figure 3).

Figure 2a: Computers to Primary Pupils by Belville CGT Volunteers During the Pandemic, May-June

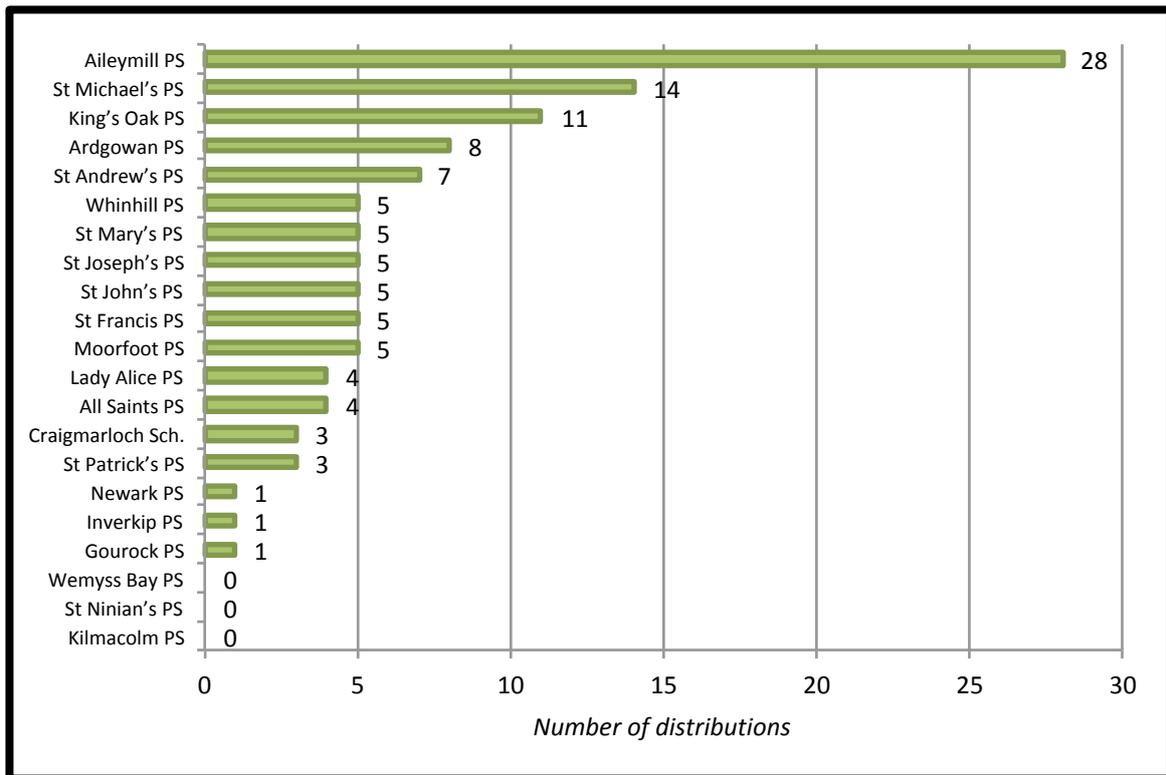
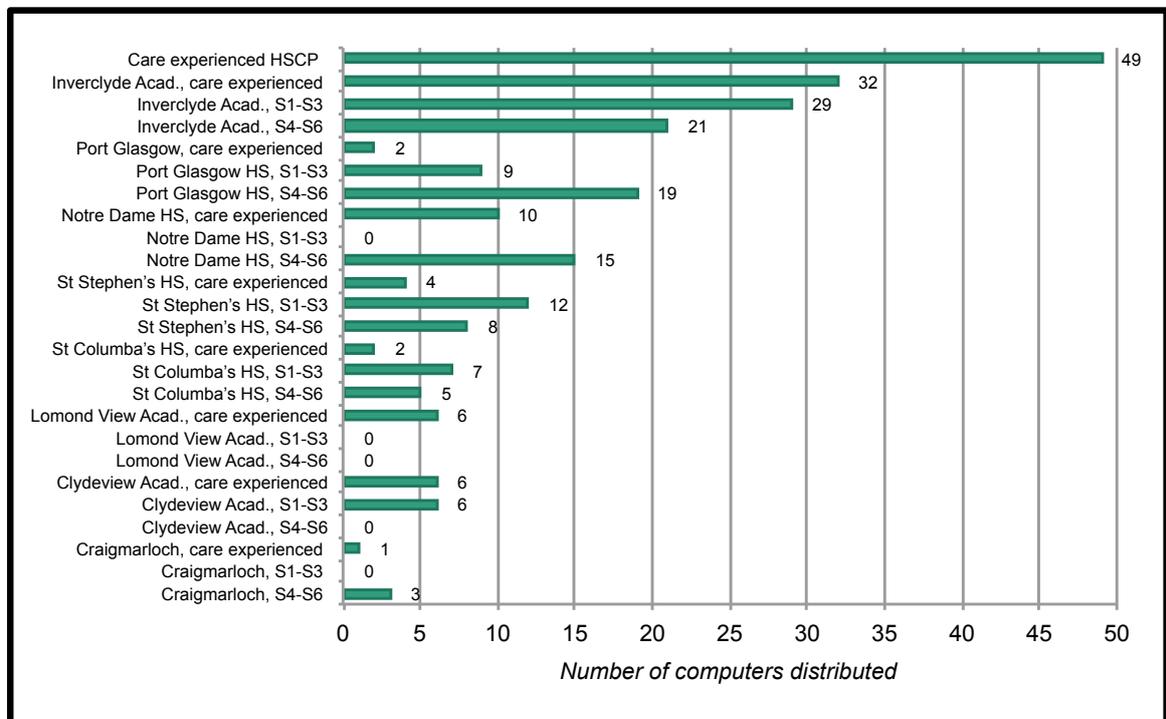
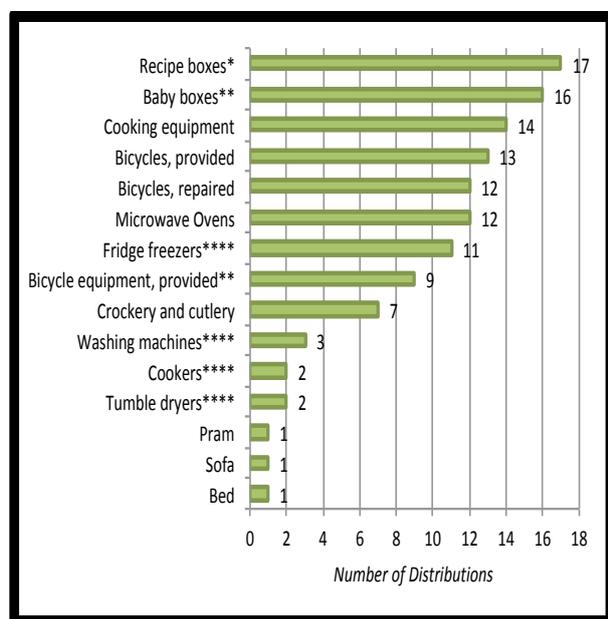


Figure 2b: Computers to Secondary Pupils by Belville Volunteers During the Pandemic, May-June



Sources: ICARG Monitoring Data

Figure 3: Ad-Hoc Emergency Distributions by Belville CGT During the Pandemic



Source: Personal communication with Laura Reilly
Notes

* - Recipe boxes were delivered to seventeen families over a ten-week period. Families targeted- were in receipt of self isolation food boxes and considered vulnerable. The box comprises Ingredients measured out and step by step recipe card. Recipients receive a weekly call to see how they are going and to check they have equipment for that week's recipe. If not, Belville provide. Recipients also take part in a weekly Facebook live cook-a-long session.

** - Baby boxes comprise clothes, nappies, toiletries for mum and flowers. Clothes were donated from a warehouse bankruptcy.

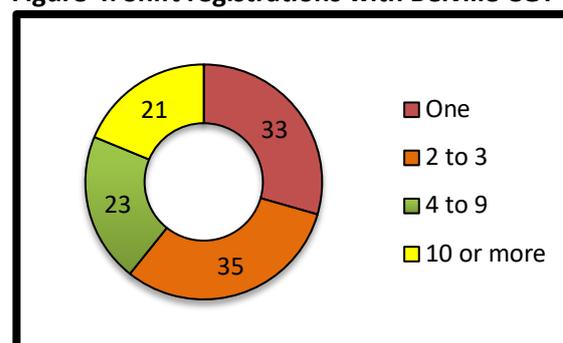
*** - Bicycle services were provided to key workers. Equipment included helmets, etc.

**** - White goods were donated by Beko and public, and all were PAT tested before distribution.

Belville Volunteers in Numbers

From the data provided, 112 volunteers worked with Belville during the months of March-June 2020. A wide range of engagement was recorded, ranging from the 33 volunteers completing one shift to 21 who completed at least one shift (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Shift registrations with Belville CGT



Cases: 112

There is some uncertainty in the data and it is sensible to present these as best estimates, rather than precise facts. While it might be argued that information systems could be improved, some of this uncertainty arose due to the desire to accommodate volunteers who offered their services, but who were uncomfortable or unable to use the *When I Work App*. to register work.

From the data recorded in *When I Work*, 2583 hours of volunteering were recorded, although this is known to be an underestimate. Not all of the additional work was recorded on manual sign-in sheets, and not all of the hours were recorded for those who did register on manual sign-in sheets.

Some individuals made a substantial contribution, one registering work for 14 weeks, totalling 82 shifts over 67 days, amassing 267 hours of work. It is notable that this single individual alone contributed 10% of the total volunteer work (albeit that this is an underestimate).

Profiling Belville’s Volunteers (1): Socio-economic profile

Two thirds of volunteers during the coronavirus crisis reported that they were currently in employment or furloughed. The proportion of volunteers who were not currently in work, increased from those in their 50s (through 60s and into retirement); similarly, new volunteers since the start of the crisis were more likely to be employed or furloughed, relative to existing volunteers (74% of new volunteers).

The majority of volunteers who completed the survey were women (60%). Volunteers came from across the whole age spectrum, although the majority were either in the 50s (37%) or 20s (24%). Notably fewer volunteers were in their 40s (7%). The majority of volunteers were living with others (73%).

Profiling Belville’s Volunteers (2): Health background

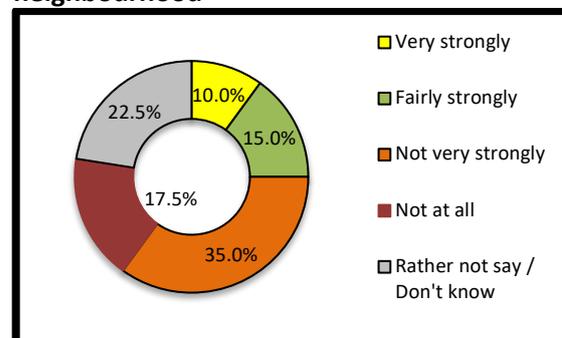
No volunteers working with Belville during the coronavirus pandemic reported that they were in ‘bad’ health; rather, the majority reported that they were in good health (48% rating their health ‘very good’ and 43% rating this ‘good’. Similarly, fewer than one-quarter reported that they had a physical health condition, mental health condition, or an illness that they expected to last twelve months or more (23%), and among those, the majority reported that this condition ‘only’ restricted their ability to carry out day-to-day activities “a little”.

Profiling Belville’s Volunteers (3): Locating volunteers

The vast majority of volunteers – both pre- and during coronavirus crisis came from areas beyond Belville (68%). Furthermore, the majority of volunteers who had a Belville connection were previous, rather than current residents (25%, compared to 5%, respectively).

Only one in four volunteers reported having a ‘strong’ attachment to Belville (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Strength of attachment to Belville neighbourhood



Cases: 40

As might be expected, those who had lived in Belville were more likely to report stronger attachment to the neighbourhood (50%, compared to 15% of those who had never lived in Belville).

Inverclyde - and Greenock in particular – has more than its fair share of Scotland’s most deprived areas. The *Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020* ranks Scotland’s 6976 small areas – or datazones - in terms of deprivation, taking into account the area’s profile in terms of income, employment, education, health, access to services, crime, and housing. Approaching one half of Inverclyde’s small areas are considered to be among the 20% Most Deprived in Scotland (44.7%), with one small part of Greenock Town Centre being ranked the very most deprived area in Scotland in 2020.^{vii}

Against this context, the distribution of respondents across areas of deprivation takes on a different complexion. While one third of volunteers came from one of Scotland's 20% Most Deprived Areas in Scotland. The small area in which Belville is situated – and all of the areas that surround it – is considered to be among the 20% Most Deprived Areas in Scotland. Almost one half of Belville's volunteers came from areas that might be considered to be from non-deprived areas (46% were not living in one of Scotland's 40% Most Deprived Areas). More recent volunteers were also drawn from a wider spread of area types, with notably fewer coming from areas of multiple deprivation.

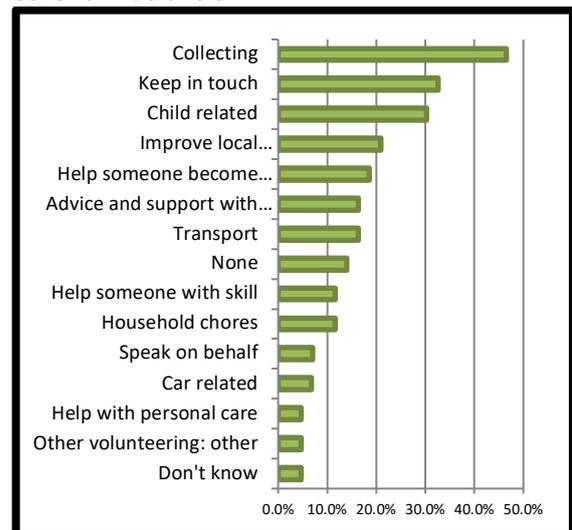
Profiling Belville's Volunteers (4): Volunteering background

The vast majority of volunteers with Belville CGT during the coronavirus crisis, became involved in response to it (82%). Only a small minority (16%) of those volunteering with Belville during the coronavirus crisis had been volunteering with Belville CGT for two or more years.

Some of those who volunteered already had a strong volunteering background, as one survey respondent explained, **"I got involved with Belville due to Men's Shed a local group that was starting up, and as a Walk Leader with an other local group."** However, the new volunteers were equally split between those who had and had not volunteered over the last twelve months to help groups, clubs or organisations and those. Similarly, those who had been volunteering with Belville for a longer time were equally split between those who exclusively volunteered with Belville and those who also volunteered elsewhere.

Figure 6 reports the types of volunteering that were undertaken over the last 12 months, by those who volunteered with Belville during the coronavirus crisis. Notably, collecting was the most common activity.

Figure 6: Wider extra-familial volunteering activity over the last twelve months, volunteers with Belville during the coronavirus crisis



Cases: 39

Conclusion

These new data provide insight into the population supporting the work of Belville during the coronavirus crisis. There are issues for Belville to reflect on in relation to this. For example, volunteers do not necessarily have a strong prior attachment to the Belville area; volunteers are equally likely to be drawn from those with prior volunteering experience; many volunteers were using the same skills that they deployed in previous volunteering work; there appears to be particular age stages when volunteering is more likely; and the overwhelming majority of volunteers reported that they were in 'good health'.

Impact on volunteers

Introduction

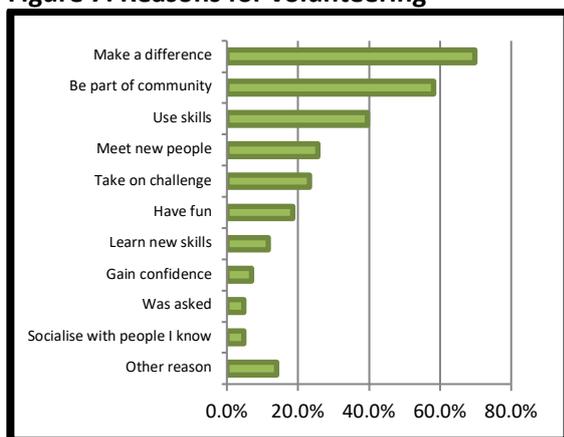
In this section of the report, we draw on the interviews and survey findings to explore the impact of volunteering on the volunteers who were working with Belville CGT during the months of March, April and May 2020.

Five main themes are explored: reasons for volunteering, mental health, understanding poverty, community cohesion, and future destinations.

Reasons for volunteering

Volunteers were asked to describe their reasons for volunteering. Reasons were multi-faceted, with, on average, close to three responses identified in response to a multiple response fixed-response questions in the volunteer survey (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Reasons for volunteering



Cases: 43 respondents

On the whole, it would appear that the drivers for volunteering are altruistic, rather than self-oriented. Most notably, two thirds of volunteers reported that they “want to make a difference” (70%), while the majority wanted to “feel part of a community” (58%). Self-development and personal well-being are not

insignificant (nor unimportant) reasons for getting involved, but they were much less widely reported. For example, only 5% reported that they were involved in order to “socialise with people they know” (Figure 4).

These findings were reinforced in discussions with volunteers. Many identified their work as altruistic in nature and often stressed how it was a way to “give something back” or from a sense of community need: “I thought I should be helping out. I should be helping somebody to do something”. One of the volunteers, who had previous experience at another third sector organisations, said that “for me personally, it didn’t make that much of a difference to how I felt. I mean I enjoy volunteering and I felt good doing it”.

Personal gain is presented as incidental to the core purpose.

The positive emotional connection to voluntary work was expressed by another volunteer, who observed that “it’s just been such a positive thing for me and for my daughter to be able to do for people”. This sense of catharsis underpinned a great deal of the motivations to volunteer throughout the interviews, even beyond this group, to others who may rely on Belville for services. It was a unifying thread amongst the responses.

On mental health

The effect of the COVID-19 crisis and its impact on mental health was a focus for many of the volunteers in their discussion, with some seeing their own voluntary work as more than just an emotional uplift. Some volunteers rationalised their activities a social prescription, to “keep me busy and to totally keep me focused”. This was prominent among volunteers who have been furloughed during the crisis, with one volunteer saying “I’m not working so I’ve been volunteering at

Belville since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, which I've absolutely loved".

The range of this liberating pretext extends from joking comments to severe admissions. One volunteer reminisced, **"I've honestly enjoyed every single day down there. And for my mental health also, it's been amazing through COVID. We've had so many laughs and so many genuinely nice people who I'd have never met in my whole life because of what I do; because of my age"**. The individual in this case was an isolating retiree, who lived alone. They later discussed how voluntary work allowed them to meet people of different age ranges and people from different cultures.

Most of the responses in which people discussed their own mental health held a similar view of the experience. One interviewee joked that her motivation to volunteer at Belville came as **"Three weeks into lockdown I thought I'm gonna' go off my trolley in here"**. However, in a contrast of tone, one existing volunteer who was unable to continue in lockdown, reported that in isolation, **"I was absolutely, really, really down"** because of shielding protocols that applied to them.

Another volunteer said that **"I found myself getting quite low in my mood. My spirit was low"**. Later in that interview, the respondent acknowledged that they were having suicidal thoughts previous to their voluntary engagement, saying that **"If I had not been pointed in that direction, I might have been talking to you right now. That's how bad I was getting to feel"**. Subsequently, this individual said that the voluntary work achieved during the crisis with Belville has helped these feelings, later adding that **"I've not had any negative thoughts at all since I've been volunteering"**.

There was a consistency in mental health awareness throughout the interviews; often discussed was the respondent's own mental health but there was also an awareness of other people's mental well being during the

crisis, or thoughts of it after the COVID-19 crisis had passed. **"I definitely think even post-COVID mental health is going to be massively impacted so I think that as long as we keep base with people, you know... keep in contact with all these folk we've been helped and make sure there coping mentally"**. Another interviewee commented that **"you fear for them all"** when discussing the need of users of third sector organisations.

Understanding poverty

As noted in the previous section, many of the volunteers had no prior experience of Belville and felt no strong attachment to the neighbourhood. Many of these began to re-appraise their understanding of the Belville community (and other areas served by Belville CGT).

As one interviewee noted that **"I had read about the poverty and deprivation in Inverclyde. But I didn't realise until I went to Belville how bad it was. Maybe I lived in a bubble. I thought everybody was the same as me"**. Similar sentiments were expressed by one survey respondent: **I have had an eye opener with how much poverty there is and people who have always worked suddenly have nothing to buy food and necessities. Very strange times for everyone. I have made new friends and lots of my friends have supported me as I work in community as well as a home support worker. My experience has made me stronger and given me a strange sense of generosity to others.**

These sentiments were not uncommon from volunteers who identified that they did not require the services provided by Belville. There was a much acknowledgement from this group that the experience of volunteering had been an **"eye opener"**, a **"reality check"**, and that they **"didn't realise how bad things were here"**.

Coming together ... or reinforcing difference

For some, volunteering had the effect of unifying people, disregarding the social, geographical and economic barriers that may have existed previously. One interviewee stated that, **“I would have never of mixed with people from different backgrounds... and all different walks of life and ages”**.

On the other hand, while others reported that their work benefitted others, they described this work in a way that distanced them from those provided by services, **“I am not poverty stricken in any way. Not the way some people are up there”**.

Positive and future destinations

Although selfish self-interest and personal gain were not drivers for participation, it is important to acknowledge that positive outcomes were reported to follow from volunteering work: **Volunteering and then working for Belville has really help me gain confidence in myself and helped me return to work albeit in a reduced capacity from before my illness. Working with the staff and volunteers is a joy and I couldn't see myself going back into a large corporate environment now.**

A sense of resilience and pragmatism pervaded when the interviewees discussed their personal futures. Most referred to future activities that needed to be done, or the future being something which filled them with excitement. One interviewee's primary focus, **“purely for financial reasons is I have to think**

about my business right now. Getting up and running. But I definitely want to make more time for volunteering and for doing something other than going to my work”, and despite the focus on finances, this response was not gloomy or pessimistic. In a similar vein, another individual said **“My hopes are getting to my own work and building my shop back up again”**.

There was a hope to return to normality. One retiree said that **“The future holds for me to get my kit back on my back and start walking”**. This was a hobby with her closest friends of hiking around major trails in the country. Another person noted that **“Well I'm starting through Belville a first aid mental health course tomorrow”**. This sense of a 'stiff upper lip' may be best encapsulated by another respondent that suggested in the midst of socio-economic confusion and chaos, the best they could do was remain in **“a positive neutral space”** so that they were able **“to accept whatever comes and to make the best of it”**. None of the responses were explicitly or overtly fatalistic, with only occasional notes of the uncertainty, which existed at this time.

Conclusion

Although not the primary motivation, volunteering was reported to have many positive outcomes - bolstering mental health, increasing awareness of the challenges faced by vulnerable people, highlighting commonalities across people and communities, and in some instances, leading to positive outcomes beyond volunteering.

Impact on the Belville community and the wider Inverclyde area

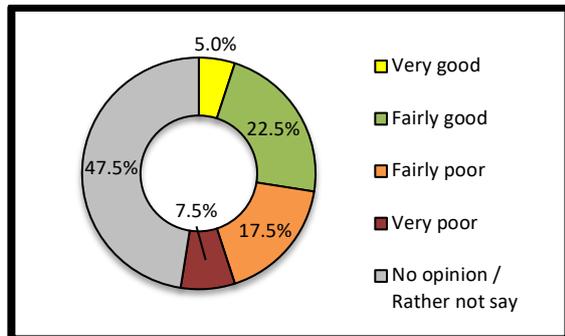
Introduction

In this section of the report, we draw on the interviews and survey findings to explore perceptions and evidence of the work of Belville’s volunteering on the wider community during the months of March, April and May 2020.

Perceptions of Belville

Volunteers were evenly split between those who perceived that the Belville neighbourhood was a good place to live and those who did not (Figure 8). Of equal importance, was that the most common response was that volunteers were unable to give an opinion.

Figure 8: Perception of Belville as a place to live

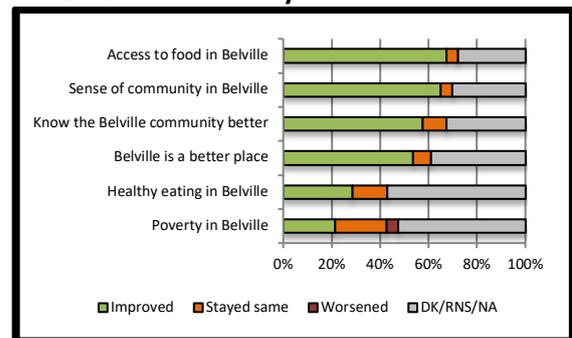


Cases: 40 respondents

Furthermore, although (due to the small sample) it can only be considered speculative rather than a definitive finding, it was found that volunteers from Belville were twice as likely than those from outside to rate Belville as a 'poor place' to live (16% of volunteers who had lived in Belville, compared to 32% of those who had not).

Volunteers were asked to describe their perceptions of how matters pertaining to the Belville community had changed since they started volunteering. For six separate themes (Figure 9), volunteers were asked to indicate whether things had improved, stayed the same, or got better. Respondents were also offered the opportunity of indicating that they 'did not know', would 'rather not say', or that the question was 'not applicable' to them.

Figure 9: Perceived impact of volunteering on the Belville community



Cases: 42 respondents

Once more, many volunteers felt unable to express an opinion on the wider situation in the Belville neighbourhood (for example, one in four – 28% - were unsure if there had been any change in the neighbourhood in terms of access to food, since they started volunteering).

Where opinions were expressed, volunteers were most likely to report positive change in Belville. Improvements were most likely to be perceived in terms of 'access to food', 'sense of community' and the volunteers' 'knowledge of the Belville community'. The outlier is poverty, with most volunteers being of the opinion that poverty had worsened, while it is also of note that only a minority were of the opinion that healthy eating had improved.

Interviewees were more expansive when commenting on the wider impact of Belville’s work. When asked about the impact of Belville’s activities, all of the respondents were positive in tone and complimentary of the work that had been going on. **“Massively”** was the reply from one volunteer, **“... the stuff they’ve been doing during COVID. They’ve been helping getting laptops out to underprivileged children who haven’t got laptops. They’ve been doing food delivery”** she continued. This was in reference to the 369 laptop and 4g dongles that were distributed to Primary and Secondary school children in Inverclyde, as an effort to ensure the crisis did not affect equal access to education for the underprivileged.

“Its just a wonderful thing” another volunteer said. **“There so many people who you wouldn’t think would require their service and are so grateful for it”**. There was a wider sense among the respondents that this service was also reaching out to those who had previously not been considered vulnerable, and that the crisis had began to endanger many of those whom wouldn’t normally need to services of a third sector organisation. **“It has provided food and the general necessities to people; not only people that don’t have the money but also elderly people that were self-isolating for health reasons and had no means of getting food”** one volunteer commented.

The strength of this feeling was palpable; one volunteer stated **“Oh my goodness it’s totally amazing”** and another volunteer said **“Oh my god, they are fabulous”**. The work that had been done by Belville during the crisis seemed to be so obviously beneficial to the volunteers. **“this community – especially Greenock, being so poor... having a place like Belville really empowers”** a further response was, with the individual adding **“it is absolutely a community-based charity, and it is wonderful to have a charity like that in Belville”**.

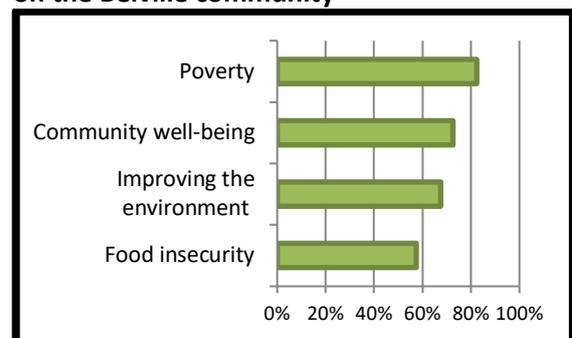
As the voluntary front line, many of Belville’s workers saw the effects the pandemic was

having. **“It just humbles you that these people are so appreciative”** one member said. Another interviewee emotionally contributed **“some of the people you get in haven’t literally eaten for a week. And you think that’s shocking. So really, all the letters we’ve got in. All the comments. And even the donations have been phenomenal. From Inverclyde businesses. From people; just your ‘regular joe’ families. Everything they have for you. I’ve never seen such kindness in my life - Never. They’ve been amazing for the community. And they help them just live and eat every day. Some of them haven’t even been out the house for nearly 4 months, so just to have a nice box and... we do cards and we give them flowers sometimes. It’s been amazing to give back to people”**.

Issues That Matter to Volunteers

If sustaining the interest or involvement of volunteers is an aspiration post-crisis, it is useful to reflect on the wider issues that are of interest to volunteers (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Perceived impact of volunteering on the Belville community



Cases: 40 respondents

Although the majority of volunteers expressed an interest in each of the four themes on which their opinions were canvassed, it is significant that the two themes which have been most closely associated with the work of Belville CGT – food security and improving the environment – were less likely to be viewed as important relative to the concerns of tackling poverty or supporting community well-being.

Conclusion

Although many volunteers were uncertain about the impact of their work on the wider community, where opinion was expressed it was positive. It may be significant to reflect on

this, and the drivers that motivate participants. Finally, the greater likelihood of residents to think positively about Belville speaks to wider misperception and misunderstanding about the community.

On Belville Community Garden Trust

Introduction

In this section of the report, we draw on the interviews and survey findings to reflect on evidence that made direct reference to Belville CGT during the crisis.

Three main themes are explored: partnership, people and how volunteers are received.

A worthwhile partner

Recommendations were an important factor in encouraging volunteers to get involved with Belville CGT, with work colleagues (5%), friends (16%) and family members (7%) all reported as encouraging participation.

Throughout the interviews, there was no consistent thread of how individuals discovered the Garden. One respondent said it was Twitter, another one said Facebook, and a further volunteer discovered the charity through the website 'Volunteer Scotland'; yet, these were the only instances of an initial online connection. One person heard of Belville through 'word of mouth'; "**My nephew - his dad works for them**". Another respondent was pointed by a statutory body, and one further individual knew of the garden by being a local resident who initially walked in the Belville Community Garden before discovering its connection with the Trust.

However, equally – if not more – important was that majority of volunteers reported that they had "heard about it [Belville] and wanted to get involved" (56%). Thus, both the nature of the work and the 'fit' between volunteer and Belville were both reasons for presenting for volunteering. One interviewee said that "**even before COVID, I've heard of so many good things they do**" but, again, prior knowledge of the group's existence before first connections was either rare or rarely

discussed.

To some degree Belville Community Garden exists in a niche space where only service users, volunteers, statutory bodies, and those seeking third sector organisations are fully aware of the garden's existence.

People that matter

Perhaps the strongest theme to emerge in discussion –and which was also reported in open-ended comment in the surveys – was the qualities of the Belville staff, as the following reflections indicate.

- **There is a great team at Belville who understand the various needs of different people and listen when you have input.**
- **They are a well organised group who look for ways of improving everything that they do. Great organisation.**
- **The staff at Belville are a really dedicated group all ways thinking and working for their community.**
- **Enthusiastic folk who really care about others.**
- **I am ashamed to say that I did not know that Belville Community Gardens existed before lockdown but I have now seen what they all do for the local community and I am very proud to say that I was a very small part of an amazing team**

What is apparent is not only that the staff are judged to be competent, but that they are sensitive to the needs of their community, (first bullet), care about this community (fourth bullet), and are always minded to work in its best interests (third bullet).

Making volunteers welcome and 'at home'

Not only were Belville staff praised for their community commitment and orientation, time and time again, staff were praised for how they engaged with volunteers:

First impressions of the group, and individuals within it, were overwhelmingly positive. **"I went over to Belville and it was a very, very welcoming place"** said one volunteer as they were discussing the choice between multiple third sector organisations within Inverclyde. Ultimately the decision to volunteer with Belville, was made on the basis of how staff presented: **"XXX was so lovely and very welcoming. So that's how I got involved... because of XXX"**.

The sense of homeliness is evident from the discussions. One volunteer said the Belville Community Garden **"was a charity that was actually like my family. They really looked after me"** and later added that it was **"like a relative's place"**. Another volunteer held similar views, saying that **"for somebody to make you feel welcome... to make you feel so comfortable and welcoming. That was something really, really nice about them"**. Others noted how the atmosphere was **"friendly"** and **"community minded"**. A sense of belonging is engendered. Another volunteer stated that she **"fits in there"**, with another observing that **"I just feel like I've slotted into it"**.

Volunteers reported being valued, as well as being welcomed **"I felt a very valued member**

of the team. You know, I felt needed and I was used appropriately. And I was happy to do anything so I did whatever they needed me to do and that was fine. So you were made to feel very welcomed and very valued". Another volunteer, who had come into contact with Belville during the Covid-19 crisis, said that **"I'm definitely going to continue doing it [volunteering]... probably with Belville community gardens. I just like their set up. I like their attitude. XXX's just got a nice way with people and if it's something that they still require volunteers after this then ill certainly still be doing it"**.

Although many compliments were directed at particular members of staff, the work of the wider Belville team was also acknowledged. Staff members were described in glowing terms: **"a fabulous person"** and another said that it was **"amazing what XXX does... I don't know how she does it"**. Others spoke of the wider group, with one respondent saying **"the people that work there are all very likeminded... its just a great bunch of people who work together"** and another interviewee summed it up as **"a hub and everybody is welcome"**.

Conclusion

There was no shortage of positive sentiment expressed when volunteers reflected on the way in which Belville operated. This was important both for attracting volunteers and for sustaining their input and involvement

Conclusions

What We Knew In Advance

- **Volunteers and social action.** The importance of volunteers in contributing to social action in communities is widely acknowledged in Scotland, with a growing evidence base and an established infrastructure to support community actions and groups.
- **The Belville community's existing vulnerability.** The Belville neighbourhood comprises small areas that are considered to be among the very most deprived in the whole of Scotland. Belville sits within Inverclyde district, itself one that faces many challenges in the 21st century.
- **The vulnerability of the most disadvantaged is heightened in crisis.** From all manner of crises situations, it is well established that the most disadvantaged are less resilient and less well placed to thrive and survive. The scale of the challenge that the coronavirus presents to the Belville community, heightens the importance of Belville's social action at this time.

What did we find – what worked?

SPIRU concludes that:

- **Belville responded, coped and delivered.** Although the purpose of this report is to reflect on the volunteering with Belville during the coronavirus pandemic, it is both relevant and important to acknowledge that the work of the volunteers, enable Belville CGT to contribute to the meeting of its community's needs during the coronavirus pandemic – despite the significant challenges it faced.
- **Community minded volunteers.** Volunteers, on the whole, seemed to be well matched with Belville, with the driving reason given for their work being the aspiration to “make a positive difference” during these times of crisis.
- **Incidental personal gain for volunteers.** Although of secondary importance, many volunteers reported how their involvement bolstered their mental health, and positive sense of self during the pandemic. Similarly, those who had to withdraw from volunteering during the pandemic lamented having to withdraw from this work.
- **Supportive environment.** It is clear that Belville provided a supportive environment for volunteers. Individual staff members and the wider culture were praised.

What did we find – what worked less well?

SPIRU concludes that:

- **Metric Uncertainty.** Collecting data to evidence impact should not be the priority of an organisation in a crisis situation. On the other hand, having access to robust data is of value when evidencing scale of activity, effectiveness of activity and impact. The available data on Belville volunteering is helpful, but could be more robust.
- **Harnessing Local Support in Crisis.** It was apparent that the majority of those volunteering with Belville are not local to the area. In itself, this is not problematic. However, the ethos of Belville is to enable the community. While, for very good reason, many within the community were unable to assist the work of Belville CGT during the crisis, it is notable that how Belville function was not entirely consistent with what Belville wants to achieve.
- **Community Impact.** Volunteers – when asked through this research – were able to share anecdotes and opinion of the positive impact of the work of Belville, and to share their thoughts on how volunteering impacted positively on them.

What has not been captured is how the volunteers themselves (rather than the service they provided) were received by others with whom they came into contact.

- **Better informed ... to a degree.** Although many volunteers reported positive impact, there was also much uncertainty over the wider impact of their work. It might have been useful to provide volunteers with the information that enabled them to appreciate the positive impact of the work that they were doing.

What needs to happen now?

- **Telling the Story.** Many, but not all, of those new to volunteering were aware of the work of Belville. There is a continued need to maintain wider public awareness of this work. In addition to evidencing impact on community and work for 'the common good', there may be merit in sharing more widely the volunteer experience.
- **Exit Strategy for New Volunteers.** The winding down of the delivery phase at the end of June 2020 presents an opportunity to engage 'new' volunteers to explore whether they might be willing and able to contribute to the future work on Belville. This might involve considering how the skills offered and contributions made by volunteers during the crisis, might be used to a greater extent in the work of Belville in the future.
- **Re-engaging Old Volunteers.** An immediate priority – given the importance of volunteering for the wellbeing of those involved – is to facilitate the active re-engagement of those who have been unable to continue with volunteering activity during the pandemic.
- **Recapturing the Enabling Organisation.** The ethos of Belville was to enable the community to collectively generate a thriving community. The focus in the

crisis has been on providing support to the vulnerable. There is a need to plan for the transition back to an enabling organisation – thinking carefully about the role volunteers must play in this transition.

- **Volunteer Plan for Future Times of Crisis.** Although Belville coped and delivered, it would be useful to have a plan to enable Belville to manage volunteer input, during future times of crisis. Such a plan should prioritise ways of enabling and engaging local people to contribute as volunteers.
- **Old Belvonians as a Resource.** It was apparent that some new volunteers had connections with the Belville area, and that they tended to have a more positive outlook toward Belville than those who did not. Consideration might be given to how this wider community on 'old Belvonians' might contribute to the work of Belville in the future.
- **Low volume volunteering.** It would be useful to learn more about the experiences of those who contribute only a little to the overall volunteer effort. More than one half of the volunteers by number were recorded as contributing either one or 'two or three' shifts. From an organisational view, it would be helpful to appraise to what extent this was benefit or burden, and whether there are ways in which any problems caused could be minimised.
- **Reflect on issues that matter to volunteers.** The majority of volunteers expressed an interest in all of the aspects of Belville's work – poverty, food security, community development and environment. It was notable that slightly fewer volunteers were interested in the issues that have defined Belville to this point in its history, i.e. food security and environment.

Annex 1: About the Evaluation

Introduction

This Appendix describes the approach taken by the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit (SPIRU) when reviewing volunteering work with Belville Community Gardens Trust during the coronavirus crisis.

Timeline

SPIRU was invited to undertake this evaluation at the start of May 2020. Data collection was undertaken in May and June 2020, with a draft report presented on July 23rd, and the final report delivered in August 2020.

Our Approach

The evaluation comprises three parts: (i) a review of volunteer labour; (ii) a survey of 44 volunteers; and (iii) in-depth interviews with 10 volunteers.

Staffing

Professor McKendrick managed the evaluation, taking responsibility for the survey and the secondary data analysis of volunteer hours. The interviews were undertaken by Jed Graham, a postgraduate research student within the Unit.

Belville Community Garden Trust

This is an independent evaluation, although Belville CGT provided essential support throughout.

Belville CGT: (i) identified volunteers who were able and willing to be interviewed about their experiences; (ii) provided access to time sheets and an online registration system to allow volunteer labour to be reviewed; (iii) provided encouragement through group e-

mails to volunteers to complete the online survey; and (iv) set up a computer in the volunteer workplace to enable volunteers to complete the survey.

The Survey

Professor McKendrick designed the survey, which was approved by Belville CGT, prior to distribution.

The final survey comprised 28 questions. Two of the questions were in relation to ethical principles of informed consent (Q1 and Q2) and two of the questions were in relation to accessing the results (Q27-Q28). Eight of the questions were in relation to their work with Belville (Q3 through Q10); three in relation to their wider connections with the Belville neighbourhood (Q11-Q13); three in relation to wider patterns of volunteering (Q14-Q16); and ten questions were posed for the purpose of population profiling (Q17 – Q26). Where appropriate, question style replicated those used in national surveys to facilitate comparison. For example, the questions on volunteering are the same as those asked in the Scottish Household Survey, which are used to profile volunteering in Scotland as a whole.

The online survey platform, SurveyMonkey.com, was used to manage the survey. This was a platform that was familiar to the research team and which provided the full functionality required to administer an effective online survey in an ethical manner.

The survey was launched on mid May 2020, with the initial tranche of responses received by mid June. A further attempt to boost survey returns was made, with some success, in early July 2020.

It is acknowledged that online surveys have disadvantages, compared to the approach taken in those social surveys that aim to

generate official statistics. In particular, online surveys are not equally accessible to all. Of note:

- The survey is less accessible (inaccessible) to those whose English language skills are less well developed.
- The survey is less accessible (inaccessible) to those who do not have personal access to online computing and personal e-mails.
- Those with stronger opinions on volunteering may have been more highly motivated to complete the survey.

Belville CGT assumed responsibility for sharing, promoting and raising awareness of the survey among its volunteers. This was considered to be ethical, particularly as it allowed Belville CGT to ensure that SPIRU avoided approaching volunteers with less capacity to independently complete survey and/or for Belville CGT provide support to those who wanted to complete the survey, but who would struggle to do so independently.

44 survey returns were received. On the assumption that the *When I Work* database (edited) is the whole sampling frame, this represents a 41% response rate (107 volunteers in total). Although the response rate is acceptable, caution is taken when interpreting the survey results, as it is not assumed that this is a representative sample of volunteers, and the total number of respondents is low.

In accordance with standard survey practice, data were quality checked and cleaned prior to analysis. Data analysis was largely described, although some exploratory data analysis was undertaken to examine whether there were any systematic differences among the survey population.

Online surveys are not unproblematic and the same degree of confidence in findings cannot be attributed to online surveys, compared to social surveys administered using more conventional survey techniques. On the other hand, this survey of Belville CGT volunteer experiences achieved a sufficient number and

proportion of survey returns to profile volunteer work. With careful and cautious interpretation, it provides insight into volunteer work with Belville CGT during the coronavirus pandemic of early 2020.

The Interviews

These semi-structured interviews were focused⁸ and short in length, ranging from 8 minutes to 23 minutes, which ensured that research objectives were fulfilled, without being overly demanding on the parents, who often had busy and demanding schedules.

Semi-structured interviews allow for a purposeful, systematic, and comprehensive exploration of participants' experiences of the project, while keeping the interview focused on the desired objective.⁹

A topic guide was prepared, which explored the following issues:

- Background of interviewee
- Connections with Belville area
- How they became involved with Belville GCT
- Their work with Belville GCT
- Thoughts on how work with Belville GCT has impacted on their life
- Thoughts on impact of Belville CGT on wider community
- Future role of Belville CGT
- Thoughts on future for self

Interviewees were also afforded the opportunity to add any additional comment on issues of importance that were not covered.

The interviews were conducted via telephone, as lockdown restrictions made face to face interviewing impractical. The recording was made with an additional phone and backup dictaphone, should any technological issues occur. All respondents were initially contacted by text message to agree a suitable time to call. All the conversations were good humoured and the respondents were notably pleased to have been asked to discuss the Belville Garden.

Interviewees consented for the interviews to be audio-recorded, and these were then transcribed, coded, and analysed by the research team. Thematic analysis was utilised during the data analysis process.¹⁰ This data driven, bottom-up process of analysis involves six phases: data familiarisation; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing themes; defining themes; and writing-up findings. Both Professor McKendrick (initially) and Jed Graham, reviewed the transcripts.

The Secondary Data on Volunteer Labour

Professor McKendrick was registered on the *When I Work* portal that gave access to the online system used by Belville CGT to manage volunteer work during the coronavirus crisis. Volunteers used the system to register for work, and Belville CGT could use the portal to raise awareness among volunteers of shifts that needed to be covered, and to disseminate to volunteers other information of interest. Personal details were maintained on the system and were accessible to all who consented to this at registration. Most significantly for the purpose of this research, *When I Work* maintained an archive of the work undertaken by each volunteer. The following data were available for each volunteer:

- What task they completed
- Where this was completed
- Day of each task
- Start and finish time of each task

Spreadsheets could be generated, which outlined all shifts completed by individual workers or all workers, for that week or for a user-defined period. With some manual manipulation of these data, this allowed records for each volunteer to be generated, which comprised:

- Name (first and last)
- First shift in period
- Last shift in period
- Total number of shifts
- Total number of days worked (which might differ from number of shifts, as there were two shifts each day)

- Total number of hours
- Total number of weeks worked
- Positions undertaken
- Location
- Email
- Telephone number

Preliminary analysis of these data by SPIRU was used to profile participation and to classify volunteers according to degree of engagement. The three-month period comprising April, May and June 2020 was set as the timeframe, with the analysis being undertaken early in July 2020.

It was apparent that many volunteers had not registered for volunteer work using the *When I Work* system. SPIRU asked Belville CGT to quality check the data and to add comment on volunteers as appropriate. The purpose of these additional comments was to better understand the background to the volunteer. For example, some of these comments explained that volunteers were co-opted or 'belonged' to other organisations who were helping out with the work of Belville CGT, others explained that volunteers had to stop their work due to shielding. In total 61 comments were provided for the 122 'volunteers' who were on the system, and details of a further 15 volunteers were provided who were not on the *When I Work* system.

Belville CGT also provided SPIRU with the sign-in sheets that were used to register volunteer presence in the Belville Community Gardens workplace. Sign-in sheets were provided July 2019 through to July 10th 2020, i.e pre and during the COVID period.

Volunteers were asked to sign in and out, each time they left the workplace. Of note:

- The records are incomplete – not all volunteers who sign in, record their time out.
- The records only relate to presence in the Belville CGT offices. Of note for this research is that they do not record volunteer work from the Crawfordsburn distribution base

Together – the online registrations, written clarifications and time sheets – are used by SPIRU to generate a best estimate of volunteer work participation and to develop a classification of volunteer by work participation. It is accepted that there are limitations with these data and some inconsistencies across sources.

Where inconsistencies arise over participation, the position taken is that any indication of work is taken as indication that work was completed. Thus, each of the following would could as work completed:

- A shift registration on When I Work that was not confirmed in sign-in sheets.
- A registration in the sign-in sheets, that was not confirmed in When I Work
- A shift registration on When I Work portal and a registration in the sign-in sheets.

In presenting data on hours worked, it is assumed that full shifts are worked as described in the *When I Work* system. Additional shifts recorded manually in the Belville CGT sign-in sheets were acknowledged.

Analysis and Data Management

The findings from the survey, secondary data

sources and interviews were analysed separately, and then considered as a whole. An inductive approach to analysis of interview data was adopted - generating key findings and themes from the data, rather than pre-determining through expectation and examining whether these are accurate. Although surveys often are designed with a deductive approach, the primary purpose of the volunteer survey was descriptive. Some exploratory data analysis is undertaken, comparing responses across the volunteer population, however, this is not undertaken to test pre-determined hypothesis based on precisely specified theory.

All data were stored securely, with the intention that recordings and transcriptions will be destroyed within twelve months of publication of the final report. In this report, all contributions have been anonymised.

Our Principles

SPIRU is consistent with best practice in social research, and adheres to ethical and research guidelines developed by our institution and our professional bodies. The conclusions reached in this report are independent.

Endnotes

- ¹ For more information about the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit, please visit: <https://www.gcu.ac.uk/gsbs/research/spiru/>.
- ² For more information about the work of Belville Community Garden Trust, visit: <http://belvillecommunitygarden.org.uk/>
- ³ McKendrick, J.H. and Campbell, S. (2020) *Local action in Scotland to tackle food insecurity during the coronavirus crisis. A report for the Poverty and Inequality Commission*. Glasgow: SPIRU. <https://povertyinequality.scot/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Food-insecurity-SPIRU-final-report-June.pdf>
- ⁴ For more information about the work of the Inverclyde Community Action Response Group, visit its Facebook pages at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/509429306657049/>
- ⁵ At the time of writing (July 2020), Jenna Woods, a Postgraduate Masters degree student in MSc Social Innovation, is currently undertaking research on 'food citizenship for a sustainable food system in Inverclyde'. This work is due to be completed in August 2020. For more information, contact Professor McKendrick at jmke@gcu.ac.uk.
- ⁶ Belville CGT (2020) Volunteering [online]. Accessed at: <http://belvillecommunitygarden.org.uk/about/get-involved/> [23 July 2020].
- ^{vii} Scottish government, *Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, Data to Download, 2020*. This can be accessed at, <https://www.gov.scot/collections/scottish-index-of-multiple-deprivation-2020/#datatodownload>
- ⁸ Merton, R., and Kendall, P. (1946) 'The Focused Interview', *American Journal of Sociology*, 51, 6: 541-557.
- ⁹ Creswell, J.W. (2007) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, Thousand Oaks: SAGE.
- ¹⁰ Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 2: 77–101.