



Education Services:
Glasgow Stories of Recovery,
Resilience and Re-connection
Working with Partners

February 2021



GLASGOW: Nurturing City





GLASGOW STORIES

OF RECOVERY, RESILIENCE AND RE-CONNECTION

WORKING WITH PARTNERS



2. WHAT WERE THE CHALLENGES?

Not all schools were aware of the full range of help they could get from the third sector

Some third sector organisations faced challenges accessing the funding they needed to provide their service



3. WHAT DID WE LEARN?

The pandemic brought huge challenges and community supports were essential to making sure families' needs were met

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1. WHAT WENT WELL DURING LOCKDOWN?

Many schools and third sector partners had strong relationships before the pandemic and so they worked well together throughout the lockdown to support families

The third sector was able to adapt quickly to supporting families remotely through video and phone calls

The third sector provided practical support to families with financial help, food parcels and digital devices



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4. NEXT STEPS

We will consider ways to raise awareness of the range of third sector partners working within communities

We will continue to strengthen existing partnerships and form new partnerships to support families and communities





Image provided by FARE Scotland

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Front cover image provided by FARE Scotland

The photos in the publication were not all taken during the lockdown period.



Introduction from the Executive Director



Image provided by FARE Scotland

On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organisation declared the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) a global pandemic.

Schools and nurseries in Glasgow closed on 23rd March with the exception of those which remained open to operate as hubs for children of key workers and vulnerable children including those on the child protection register.

The key priority for Glasgow's education establishments was to ensure that all staff, children and young people (68,500 across Primary and Secondary schools and 12,000 across the Early Years sector) and families remained connected with a focus on wellbeing, compassion and care as well as learning. Schools and nurseries continued to work with their families during the closures, offering support and advice, learning plans and resources for learning at home. Glasgow remained committed to ensuring that all children and young people continued to improve and achieve their potential regardless of their circumstances.

In the first report in this series of papers we consulted with school staff to capture the stories of relationships, resilience and new learning experienced by staff as they responded to the measures put in place to keep people safe during the pandemic. Some key themes emerged from both the written submissions and the focus group discussions one of which was 'Working with Partners'. Schools and nurseries worked closely with colleagues from the HSCP, the Health Board as well as third sector and charity organisations throughout the pandemic.

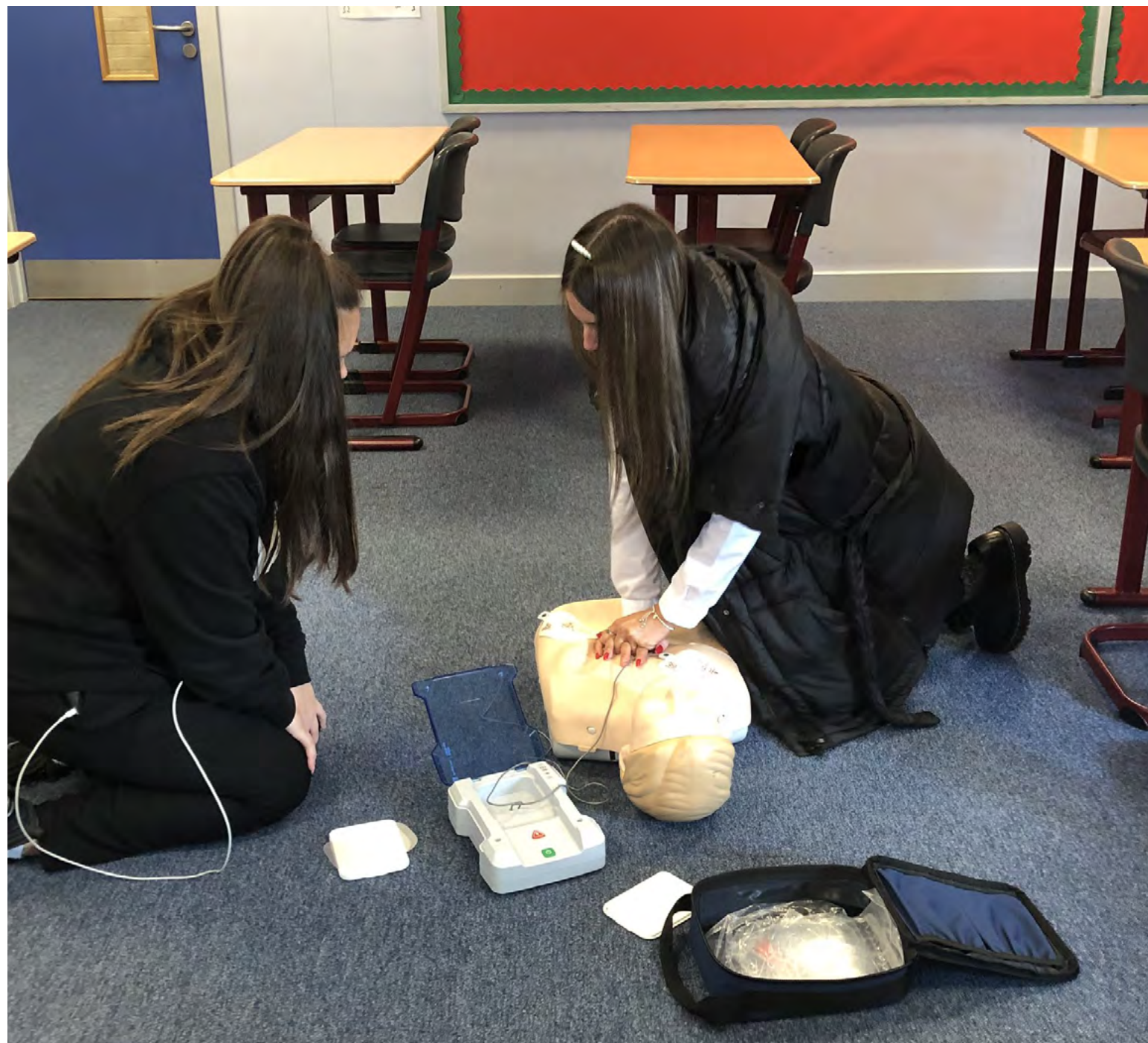
This report contains further exploration of the working with partners theme by capturing the views of third sector organisations who have been directly involved in working with Glasgow's schools during the first lockdown. The report details some of the ways in which schools and partner organisations worked effectively in collaboration to support children and families as well as some of the challenges they faced throughout this time.

Maureen McKenna

February 2021



Methodology



A survey was sent to third sector organisations that were identified by headteachers and the Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector as having worked with schools throughout the pandemic. The aim of the survey was to solicit the views of participants on working in partnership with our schools during the lockdown. Survey participants were given the opportunity to provide contact details if they were interested in taking part in follow up focus groups. A list of organisations that responded to the survey is provided in this report (appendix 1).

Following closure of the survey two focus groups were held on Microsoft Teams. Eight representatives from the third sector took part in the discussions which were facilitated by two Educational Psychologists and scribed by Performance, Planning & Research staff. Some key themes emerged from both the survey responses and the focus group discussions.

For the purposes of this analysis responses have been grouped under the broad theme headings below:

- Communication
- Identifying and Responding to the Needs of Vulnerable Families
- Community



Communication

The importance of effective communication with both schools and families and the impact this had on the support 3rd sector organisations were able to offer in response to the lockdown was identified by many partner providers.

The Importance of Relationships

Strong existing relationships between Glasgow's schools and partner organisations prior to the lockdown meant that organisations could respond quickly to provide support when the restrictions were announced. Where schools and partners had existing relationships, organisations found communication with schools and senior management teams to be excellent.

"As we entered lockdown we already had a well-established referral process and strong relationships with schools. This was a good basis for considering how supporting families remotely would work."

Opt In 2 Communities Quarriers

"Our close working relationships with schools is a key success factor in our ability to identify and support children and families who are most in need."

Govan Home and Education Link Project

Having these solid foundations in place meant partners could be more creative and flexible in their approach, using both formal and more informal means of communication to communicate with headteachers and school staff. Communication channels worked particularly well where providers could link directly with headteachers or with an identified link person in the school. With schools facing many new challenges and demands on staff resources, these links between schools and partners enabled partners to effectively target their resources where they were needed most.

"Direct engagement with Head Teachers and Senior Leadership Teams allowed PEEK to identify vulnerable children, young people and families who would need access to food and wellbeing support. Through weekly conversations we were able to ensure we were reaching the most vulnerable providing and them with the right support, in the right way at the right time."

Possibilities For Each And Every Kid (PEEK)

Although lockdown meant that a lot of existing interventions and programmes could no longer function, partners and schools were able to work together to put new supports in place quickly. Indeed services had to adapt fast to meet the emerging needs of young people and their families.

Schools were very supportive of providers and played an active role in sharing information from partners with families. This was done verbally, via emails and letters and also using school social media channels.

"Schools retweeting our tweets was a great way of making families aware of the support that we were offering."

Govan HELP

Linking with Families

Many partners had to change the way they communicated with children and young people and make the transition to offering support remotely by phone and video calls. This new approach required parental approval which led to direct engagement with parents and carers and allowed partners to forge closer relationships with families as a whole.

Schools provided practical assistance such as delivering food parcels enabled organisations to interact directly with families and build relationships. This meant partner providers could more closely monitor wellbeing and respond directly to emerging needs.





"Our good relationships with parents enabled us to support families who experienced anxieties as they emerged from lockdown. We went on socially distanced walks to get them out in the community again."

Stepping Stones for Families

The flexibility of the third sector and the network of contacts that they were able to engage with during the pandemic allowed providers to expand their range of services and to target support for schools and families. Providers were able to offer social and emotional support remotely. They were also able to support school staff as they faced new challenges.

"Some families struggled to communicate to schools what their issues were – be it financial issues, access to food sources or other issues. Barnardo's were able to support staff in schools to have these difficult conversations with families."

Barnardo's

The excellent relationships that schools have with families was evident throughout the pandemic response and partner organisations were able to augment these relationships with their support and services.

"...enhanced relationships with parents providing a link from community to school."

FARE Scotland

Communication Challenges

The impact of lockdown on schools did have consequences for communication with partners in some cases. Having to implement and maintain remote learning from March to June 2020 meant schools had less staff resource to communicate with partners to engage their support. This was particularly evident where relationships between schools and partners were not as well developed pre-pandemic. Subsequently there was a lack of awareness in some areas with regards to the role of the 3rd sector and the services that they could offer.

In some cases the breakdown in communication was linked to schools understandable initial confusion over continuously changing guidelines and health and safety rules, resulting in them

being less likely to engage partner providers.

Some partner organisations felt that communication with senior management in schools at a more strategic level would have allowed for a more joined up approach to service provision. They felt that this, coupled with a more consolidated focus on communication centrally, would have helped in raising awareness of the supports that partners could offer to schools.

"We need more centralised support to connect partners and schools. A centralised system for communication."

Ecodrama

Open and effective communication between partner organisations and schools has been key in allowing providers to play a vital role in the pandemic response. Whilst there are areas that need to be worked on going forward it has provided the opportunity to strengthen existing relationships and also to foster new ones.

"Covid19 and the restrictions, I believe has strengthened these partnerships and has highlighted the important role of the Third Sector in supporting parents/carers/ children and young people. We have a better appreciation and understanding of each other's strengths and challenges."

Stepping Stones for Families



Identifying and Responding to the Needs of Vulnerable Families



Image provided by FARE Scotland

The majority of partner agency respondents reported that they collaborated closely with heads of establishments to identify and respond to the most vulnerable families during the first lockdown. Referrals made by schools and nurseries to request support came through various channels.

"We picked up these cases with formal referrals or sometimes more informally. Sometimes families self-referred."

Quarriers Opt-in

"Our trusted relationship with schools supported us well in the work we carried out throughout the pandemic. This meant that headteachers were able to be flexible in their ask of us in the knowledge that we would be able to deliver our services in a variety of ways to best meet the emerging mental health and emotional needs of children and families."

With Kids

Collaborative Working

As with communication, collaborative working benefitted from strong pre-existing relationships. In many cases partners and school staff worked closely together to plan and deliver programmes aimed specifically at supporting children's physical and mental health and wellbeing. As well as directly delivering programmes in schools, some partner agencies trained school staff to deliver outdoor learning experiences.

"From the first days of lockdown Active Schools staff were directly involved in supporting school hubs. In partnership with schools, Active Schools Coordinators designed a planned programme which allowed for structured physical activity and play in both indoor and outdoor settings."

Active Schools



"In partnership with Eco Drama we successfully delivered training to primary school staff and delivered a 5 week residency with children in a school. Our work focuses on outdoor learning, drama and storytelling which is essential for wellbeing and safety at this time."

The Village Storytelling Centre

Helping Schools Support Families

Some third sector agencies helped senior managers initiate discussions with families around sensitive issues such as financial hardship. They recognised that those establishments who already had existing positive relationships with families were best placed to have those discussions. As one third sector practitioner explained:

"Schools are the interface."

Barnardo's

Through those discussions, specific needs were identified and families were supported to access the most appropriate support services, both universal and those that were more targeted, such as emergency funding. Moreover, schools and third sector agencies could make each other aware when families required further support.

"I received high levels of communication from the Head Teacher to highlight families that may require additional support during these difficult times. She was also readily available to contact if concerns arose and provided support for families where possible, including sessions at school for families at risk of breakdown."

Action for Children

Digital Inclusion

Partner agencies helped families overcome barriers to digital inclusion by arranging access to devices for home learning. As well as working with schools, third sector organisations also collaborated with other partner agencies such as Health and Social Work, to ensure children were not left behind.

"We were able to link with schools around young people not getting homework, and by us lending tablets, and the schools helping young people access Glow accounts, enabled the young people to access school work."

Youth Community Support Agency

"We sourced internet devices, sim cards etc for families so that children could engage with their school."

Stepping Stones for Families

"In addition, any known partners e.g. health or social workers, made contact where they were aware that families were missing vital equipment to support their children through the lockdown and we were able to provide some IT equipment, play resources etc."

Barnardo's

However, it was acknowledged that support had to be targeted to meet the needs of individual families and not all families would benefit from the same resources. For example, digital devices were not always deemed the most useful resource for some families.





Providing Financial and Practical Support

Third sector agencies worked closely with education establishments to identify and support those families who had lost their regular source of income due to the pandemic.

"We were able to access funding to help alleviate some of the more immediate financial worries."

Children 1st

Partner agencies supported families to access basic necessities as well as home learning packs, family activity packs and games, along with offering wellbeing support, both over the telephone and in person.

"We also accessed funds to cover utility bills, white goods, beds and bedding, clothing for the children... We provided food deliveries on a weekly basis, telephone/text, support and social distancing walks to address issues including: stress, isolation, anxiety, poverty, domestic abuse, parenting

and also provided age appropriate activity packs for the children and young people. We checked on parent/carer and children's wellbeing when we delivered the food."

Stepping Stones for Families

Third sector agencies worked closely with schools to set up and deliver food facilities, particularly for families who relied on free school meals but also for any families who required this.

"In response to the pandemic Govan HELP started a new Foodbank for families from the local area; schools played a key role in promoting the project to vulnerable families through sharing on social media and referring many new families to our service which has now provided over 3,000 food parcels to vulnerable families in the Govan area."

Govan Home and Education Link Project (HELP)

"FARE, with Glasgow education department, set up three very large food hubs in St Mungo's Academy, Knightswood secondary and Rosshall Academy. The three hubs packed and delivered over 1,000,000 meals working alongside secondary schools and their feeder primaries from Glasgow east, west and south."

FARE Scotland

For those families who received Farmfoods supermarket vouchers, partner agencies helped provide top up vouchers along with offer practical support in relation to their use, such as funding taxis to get to and from Farmfoods if it was far away from their home, and helping families maximise what they could get for their money.

Providing Emotional Support to Parents

Many parents felt there was a stigma attached to the difficulties they faced during the pandemic, such as having to ask for support and finding it difficult to have their children home with them all the time. However, those feelings were often reduced following support from partner agencies.

For many parents who were already experiencing vulnerabilities including mental health issues and isolation, the pandemic only served to intensify those problems. In such cases a high level of emotional support was offered by the third sector agencies to parents who often received weekly or even daily support, particularly at the beginning of lockdown.

"The increased contact we had with parents helped identify crisis issues as they happened."

Quarriers Opt-in





"For some parents this was their only avenue to talk to someone and "let off steam" in terms of the challenges they were facing."

Barnardo's

Funding to Continue Third Sector Support

A number of the third sector agencies highlighted the various funding streams that they accessed in order to support their most vulnerable children and families.

"Barnardo's was able to provide access to the Scottish Government Wellbeing Fund to all the schools we are working in partnership with."

Barnardo's

"Funding (was received) from trusts and foundations, private donations, GCC and Scottish government."

CEO, FARE Scotland

"Our Action for Children PEF service in schools has been highly valuable and, in particular, during the Covid Pandemic. The 3rd sector has been able to adapt quickly and very effectively reaching the most vulnerable."

Action for Children PEF Service

However, partners also highlighted the challenges in accessing appropriate and targeted funding and the impact of reductions in specific funding allocations, such as the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF).

"Some of our partner schools, due to a reduction in PEF allocation for the forthcoming year, could no longer afford as many days of our service as previously....This will have a significant impact on (those children's) ongoing emotional wellbeing"

CEO, With Kids

Collaborative Working within the Third Sector

Third sector agencies worked very closely and creatively in collaboration with one another during the pandemic. Those collaborations involved identifying key issues, sharing resources and meeting the needs of the most vulnerable families within Glasgow.

"There was a need for creative approaches to keeping children healthy and happy. A lot of effort was put into creating and sharing resources among partners involved in family support."

Quarriers Opt-In

With respect to ongoing partnerships between schools and the third sector, there was hope from all respondents that those partnerships would continue to grow.





Community

Throughout both questionnaire responses and focus group discussions the sense of responsibility to and connection with local communities was strongly emphasised.

Connection with Local Communities

"The pandemic situation has reinforced further the fact that across this city there are extremely dedicated, hard-working and caring staff, both in the statutory and third sector organisations such as ours that hold children and young people at the heart of what they do every day in their various roles"

Glasgow East Women's Aid

The strongest partnerships were seen as those which had a good understanding of community needs, pre-existing relationships and a shared willingness to 'get our sleeves rolled up'. Partners commented that when this was seen in action by families, they then felt more connected to schools; relationships improved and perceptions about schools changed.

"This made our joined-up approach visible to everyone as staff could be seen rolling up their shirt sleeves and helping out"

Children 1st

Some partners also noted that school was the only community link accessed by some families who otherwise would have been isolated within their community and lacking support in times of need.

"I've realised that schools are a massive community hub for families and nowadays school is sometimes the only supportive network families have. For some people school is the only organisation that people can turn to in a time of crisis because they have a lack of family, friends or community support."

Action for Children

Overall, most existing partnerships were seen to be strong and responsive to local need with partners agreeing that these will continue. Partners were hopeful that through the experience of lockdown new partnerships will be formed with existing funding maintained and perhaps new funding being made available as new needs emerge.

Joint Planning and Strategic Links

Whilst partners reported strong links with schools and early years centres these were seen to be based on individual relationships between agencies and particular schools, not always linked in to wider community or strategic priorities. As awareness of the role of schools in supporting communities developed during lockdown so too did awareness of the range of third sector partners who were working within those communities. The potential for better-targeted services co-ordinated around agreed priorities was mentioned by several partners.

Partners were keen to link with clusters of schools and early years centres to discuss priorities and agree a more planned and strategic approach to meeting families' needs.

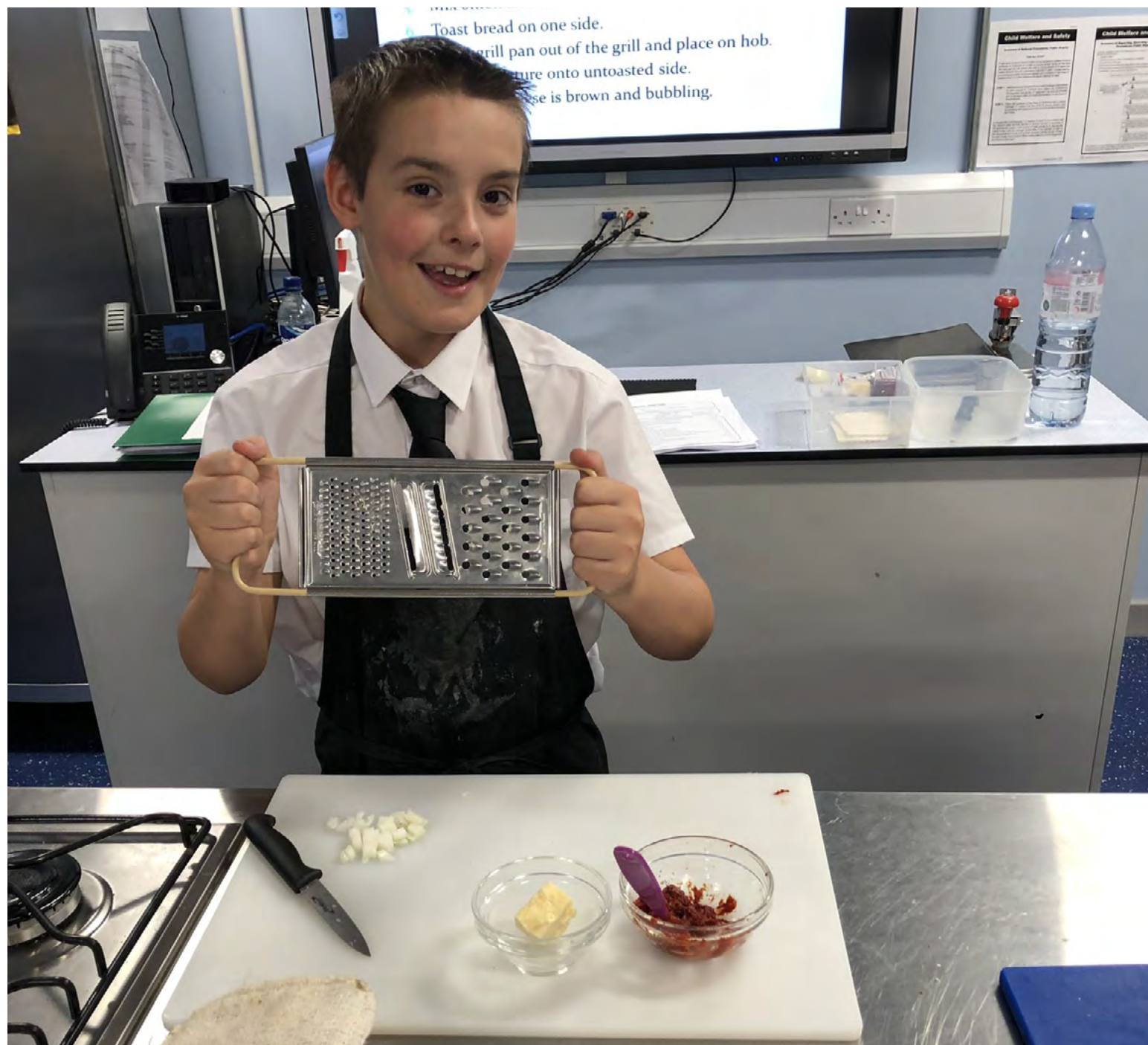
Similarly partners noted that stronger strategic links with planners and service managers may have brought greater consistency to how COVID-19 guidance was being interpreted and implemented.

Many partner organisations felt stronger links and clearer messaging about the impact that partnerships with 3rd sector organisations can have on attainment and wellbeing would bring about greater consistency in how the contributions of 3rd sector organisations are recognised and publicised.





Summary



As lockdown measures were being introduced to Scotland in March 2020 two significant reviews of how we support our children and young people were being considered by Education and Children's Services. Both the Care Review (known as The Promise) and the Additional Support for Learning Review highlighted systemic improvements required to ensure all our children and young people are included, valued and well supported by all agencies involved in their lives.

This cannot be achieved by agencies working in isolation and therefore how we develop and sustain effective partnerships becomes essential in meeting the aspirations of these reviews.

The crisis intervention of lockdown measures meant that attention was very quickly focused on those children and families who needed extra care and support. Restrictions placed on school attendance and limits on social connection meant that community supports were essential to ensure those families' needs were understood within this new context. Where school communities responded speedily and effectively this was done in conjunction within existing partnerships with a range of third sector agencies.

Where education staff had invested in these relationships and strengthened the community role of their establishments teams swung into

action, identifying needs and 'rolling up their sleeves' to make sure those needs were met.

Throughout the Glasgow Stories research participants have commented on the crucial role third sector partners have played in both the crisis response and in supporting resilience and recovery as lockdown measures were lifted.

Similarly third sector partners recognised that many schools are not just places of learning but function as community hubs providing vital support and connection for isolated and vulnerable families.

These experiences have the potential to further strengthen partnerships and support more strategic integration and joint planning between all partners in local communities. Sharing priorities should ensure better use of our resources and more targeted action planning to improve outcomes for all our children, young people and their families.



Appendix 1

Survey respondents

Action for Children

Barnardo’s - Glasgow Family Learning and PATHS Team

Children 1st - Glasgow Supporting Families Team

Eco Drama

FARE Scotland

Glasgow East Women’s Aid

Glasgow South West Foodbank

Govan Home and Education Link Project

Home-Start Glasgow South

Police Scotland

Possibilities For Each and Every Kid

Quarriers

Saheliya play and learn centre

Scottish Childminding Association

Stepping Stones for Families

The Notre Dame Centre

The Village Storytelling Centre

With Kids

Youth Community Support Agency

Ypeople

