

**GWSF**

Glasgow and West of Scotland  
Forum of Housing Associations



# Community Controlled Housing Associations: Supporting Communities in the Covid Crisis

# Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations (GWSF) Mission Statement

Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations (GWSF) is the membership body for community-controlled housing associations (CCHAs) and co-operatives in west central Scotland. Its main purpose is to promote, represent and campaign on behalf of CCHAs and to share information and best practice.

[www.gwsf.org.uk](http://www.gwsf.org.uk) • Tel: 0141 946 0645 • Follow us on Twitter @GWSForum

## Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	3
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	4
<b>2. Publication aims and outline</b> .....	5
<b>3. Supporting Communities Fund – an overview</b> .....	5-7
<b>4. Food and fuel provision</b> .....	8-9
Parkhead, Shettleston & Tollcross HAs .....	8
Paisley HA .....	9
Argyll Community Housing Association .....	9
<b>5. Working with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities</b> .....	10-11
ng homes .....	10
<b>6. Addressing social isolation</b> .....	12-13
West of Scotland HA .....	12
Cernach HA .....	13
<b>7. Partnership working</b> .....	14-15
Linstone HA .....	14
Govan CCHAs .....	15
<b>8. Community anchors come in all shapes and sizes</b> .....	16-17
West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative .....	16
Spire View HA .....	17
<b>9. Reflections</b> .....	18-19

Thanks to Spire View HA for the wonderful cover page image.

# Executive Summary

The Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown placed unprecedented pressures on individuals and communities. The humanitarian response from Community Controlled Housing Associations (CCHAs) was both swift and remarkable.

Throughout the crisis CCHAs worked tirelessly, alongside local people, third sector organisations, and public sector colleagues to support their communities. These collective efforts focused on frontline services, and responded to crucial immediate needs. This publication has two key aims. Firstly, to capture the vital contribution CCHAs have made on the ground; and secondly, to highlight the importance of CCHAs' community anchor role via the Scottish Government's Supporting Communities Fund (SCF).

The Scottish Government directed £35million of its overall funding package, aimed at tackling the impacts of the pandemic, towards the SCF. The key aim was to route funding through community anchor organisations, allowing them to disseminate funds to other community bodies and groups responding to the challenges on the ground.

The Forum was invited by the Scottish Government to sit on the Fund oversight/approvals group as an Intermediary Funding Partner, to support our members through the application process. Thirty GWSF members received SCF funding, sixteen of these in Glasgow and fourteen in other local authority areas in the west of Scotland. The total amount awarded equalled almost £2.7million.

The SCF funded a wide range of activities in communities throughout Scotland and the publication features members' case-studies which capture key themes around emergency and ongoing needs, and delivery of services. The case-studies illustrate CCHAs' innovative approaches to: food and fuel provision; tackling social isolation; working with BAME communities; and partnership working.

CCHAs, and other community anchor organisations funded through the SCF share core characteristics including: longevity; trust; reach; and a track record of responding quickly to deliver change. It is these same qualities which have enabled them to provide real, tangible support, in the midst of the Covid-19 crisis, and crucially to get SCF funding to where it was needed most in their communities.

As we move tentatively towards recovery it is clear that the health, well-being, economic and societal impacts of the pandemic will continue to resonate for a long time, especially in disadvantaged communities. Inevitably, community anchors will continue to play an important role in helping to build resilience in their communities.

By placing community anchor organisations at the heart of the SCF the Scottish Government recognised their value. As we move into recovery, we would like to see the lessons learned from the SCF approach being carried forward.

CCHAs' extraordinary response to the Covid crisis has emphasised like nothing else could, the value of being truly local.

# 1. Introduction

## Background

The world changed completely in March 2020. Ahead of the Covid-19 pandemic this statement would have sounded hyperbolic and improbable. Many months later however, as we find ourselves living in an unrecognisable, and constantly evolving new environment, we understand it to be true.

Fears and concerns about the health impacts of the virus itself, and the immediate challenges and longer-term implications of lockdown, combined to create an unprecedented set of circumstances for both individuals and communities to cope with.

Community Controlled Housing Associations (CCHAs) too have had to deal with these unprecedented circumstances. And they have risen to the challenge. Firstly, as social landlords and employers: and secondly as community anchors supporting their tenants and wider communities throughout the Covid crisis.

## Social landlord/employer role

With the processing of void properties and reletting becoming all but impossible in the early phases of lockdown, the primary focus as landlords was on making contact with as many tenants as possible, most commonly through phone calls. The aim was to explain how repairs would be dealt with and, critically, to ensure as far as possible that tenants potentially facing difficulty paying the rent knew they could get advice and, if need be, practical support with making a Universal Credit claim.

Inevitably these calls to tenants often became general welfare calls and led to many people then benefiting from the wider help associations and their local partner organisations ended up providing through the funding described in this report.

## CCHAs' humanitarian response

The Covid pandemic and subsequent lockdown have resulted in unparalleled pressures for everyone. However, as is the case with all disruptive systemic events, the impacts of the pandemic have hit the most vulnerable the hardest. At a community level, as the crisis unfolded new and immediate needs rapidly emerged, CCHAs have been at the forefront of responding to these.

CCHAs have over forty-years history of supporting their tenants and wider communities in myriad ways through their broad ranging wider role activities. This extensive experience has allowed them to react quickly and with agility to support their communities. In these extraordinary times, CCHAs' response has also been extraordinary.

## 2. Publication aims and outline

The key aim of this publication is to capture our members' contribution in helping to mitigate the impacts of the Covid emergency in their communities.

The Forum has been involved as an intermediary funding partner in the Scottish Government's 'Supporting Communities Fund'<sup>1</sup> (SCF), guiding members through the application process. This has allowed us to work closely with recipients, to capture emerging and ongoing needs on the ground and how CCHAs have responded to these.

We begin by providing a brief overview of the SCF, including: the aims of the fund; the key activities which it has supported; and the importance of the funding being routed through Community Anchor Organisations (CAOs), and subsequently disseminated to partner community organisations and groups. We also consider how the key lessons from the SCF approach might be applied moving forward.

The bulk of the publication features case studies from members who have received SCF funding.<sup>2</sup> The case studies demonstrate the range and volume of activities which CCHAs have been involved in, and the many innovative ways these have been delivered. They also capture key themes which have emerged in terms of individual and community needs and local responses.

Finally, the publication offers some reflections based both on feedback from members and our own experience supporting them through the SCF process. This section focuses on where we are now and considers key issues as we move into recovery.

1 The SCF is one strand of the Scottish Government's £350million funding package to help mitigate the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

2 Whilst it falls outwith the scope of this publication, we would like to acknowledge the Covid response work that we know is being carried out by all GWSF members.

## 3. Supporting Communities Fund – an overview

### Background to the fund

On 18 March 2020, the Scottish Government announced an investment of £350 million to support local communities and households to tackle the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Within the overall funding package £35million was directed towards the Supporting Communities Fund (SCF).

The Scottish Government stated:

*“Community Anchor Organisations sit right at the heart of their communities and many are already responding to and co-ordinating effort in their communities and neighbourhoods to help people in need of support: [they] exist across communities in Scotland in many forms, know best what their communities need, and have a wealth of experience in responding to complex social challenges and delivering networked activity.”*

Consequently, the Scottish Government invited the Forum (along with a range of other key organisations with community anchor members) to sit on the SCF oversight group as an Intermediary Funding Partner. This has involved supporting our members through the application process and providing ongoing assistance.

### 3. Supporting Communities Fund – an overview (Continued)

## GWSF members and the SCF

**30**  
GWSF  
members  
received  
funding  
via the SCF

**16**  
CCHAs in  
Glasgow &  
**14**  
in other local  
authority areas

Total amount  
of funding  
received =  
**almost**  
**£2.7**  
**million**

The key aim of the SCF was to use CAOs to provide a route through which other community organisations and groups could access funds and support in responding to the challenges created by the pandemic.

### Overview of key SCF-funded activities

The SCF funded a wide range of activities in communities throughout Scotland, and many of these are highlighted in the case-studies which follow.

In broad terms these included –

- Providing and delivering food to those who cannot buy it for themselves or are unable to access it due to self-isolation
- Providing advice for people to access benefits and emergency funds for fuel, accommodation etc
- Connecting services and volunteers to where they are needed
- Financial support for community organisations to increase or deliver new activity to meet additional demands for energy (e.g. fuel cards)
- Funding to support community organisations to deliver services in new ways in response to Covid-19, for example, digital tools to enable people to remain connected
- Funding to support and maintain the cash flow and staff costs of small community organisations while dealing with the emergency, for example, due to loss of other income sources
- Funding to meet costs of supporting personal safety

## The importance of a community anchor focus

By channelling the SCF through CAOs the Scottish Government has been able to get funding out quickly, and to where it's most needed in communities. This has meant relying on CAOs and believing in their agility, unique local knowledge, existing relationships, and trusted place in their communities.

GWSF members have applauded this approach, along with the light-touch, accessible and speedy application process.

*"It has just been great that the Scottish Government has trusted us as community anchors to get the money out to where it's needed. To recognise that we know partners and other groups in our community, and to trust us and that it's making a difference."*

*"In the circumstances, things needed to happen so quickly [in response to the pandemic] and because of the SCF they have. We've been able to pass on the funding and support the crucial things that have made a difference – food, fuel, all the other things."*

*"It has all been so fast, and I know it's because we're in a unique situation but it's really refreshing, it shows it can be done, and it would be great if it could continue like this. Less bureaucracy I guess."*

## Other benefits of the SCF approach

Associations also emphasised that the SCF approach had resulted in a deeper reach into communities. Smaller community organisations and groups were able to access funding via CAOs, and although many of these operate at the extremely micro level, they have been crucial in providing support. If not for the SCF's CAO focus many would not have been able to access any type of funding since they lack the capacity to do so.

*"We know, because they've told us, that these wee groups would just not have had any way in, to getting any funding. In some cases, it's just a couple of local people providing the service but making a big difference. They just would never even think about, let alone have the capacity to, apply for funding."*

Finally, recipients were keen to emphasise that the SCF had led to the creation of new partnerships and new approaches in their communities. Furthermore, in many cases these have created new ways of working together, which would be carried on into the recovery phase and beyond.

*"The SCF award made us consider a holistic approach to dealing with the crisis, working with a range of partners from a range of sectors. And that has broken down barriers, and led to joined-up thinking and doing! And it's an approach we'll be taking forward to benefit our whole community."*

*"Through the SCF grant we're now aware of organisations and groups that we weren't aware of before and lots of us are saying the same thing. We now have a whole new range of partners to work with."*

# 4. Food and fuel provision

## Parkhead, Shettleston & Tollcross HAs – food provision – The Pantry Model



Plans to establish a food pantry in the community had already been drawn up by Parkhead Housing Association. With the outbreak of the Covid pandemic, the project was quickly both accelerated and expanded.

The original Parkhead Food Pantry proposal was to transform the Drill Hall at Parkhead Schoolhouse – the last building that required extensive fabric repair – into a subsidised community shop using the pantry model, regarded as the “gold standard” method of food provision. Under the plans, which differ from the foodbank model of free provision, families on a low income or recovering from a crisis would be offered dignity and choice in exchange for a small membership fee of around £2.50 to £3 a week. There was also the option for those not ‘in need’ to use it as a subsidised shop.

But the project took on a new urgency and scale with the onset of the pandemic. A spokesperson for Parkhead Housing Association explains.

*“We were planning to set up the pantry in the local area prior to Covid-19, to support the many families and individuals unfortunately living in food poverty.”*

*“A pantry shop where people in the community can become a member for a small fee and then access nutritious food on an ongoing basis is a better longer-term solution to food poverty, while also providing volunteering opportunities for local people. It really is the gold standard for a sustainable form of food provision.”*



*“As a result of the pandemic and the economic impacts, it was clear that more people than ever would be in a position where they might be facing food poverty. Initially, the pantry seemed like a good idea, but it soon felt like an absolute necessity.”*

Identifying that surge in need, plans to open the Parkhead Food Pantry were speeded up, while new funding from the Scottish Communities Fund was also used to establish two pop-up pantries in partnership with Shettleston and Tollcross Housing Associations.

While already operating successfully in other parts of the UK, the pantry model is relatively new to Scotland. In this case, surplus, fit-for-purpose food will be provided through a partnership with Fareshare Glasgow (a franchise of Fareshare UK, operated by the charitable organisation Move On) and will include fresh fruit and vegetables, and quality meat and dairy. The partnership will allow the Association to streamline food supply, demand and logistical constraints, identified as a vital element to the success of a food pantry operation. Unity Enterprise, who operate The Spoon café ventures, will use their catering expertise to support the running of the ‘The Pantry’ and offer recipe and cooking advice.

## Paisley HA

Paisley HA's SCF award allowed the Association to work with a range of partners to support local people throughout the Covid crisis. One vital aspect of this support focused on providing direct fuel support to many vulnerable residents in the community.

### What kind of fuel support has been provided?

Renfrewshire foodbank, with support from the Association, has been delivering emergency fuel vouchers to its service users who have prepayment meters and are at risk of self-disconnection.

The process involves a paypoint/payzone voucher being issued to individuals which is redeemable at a local outlet. This allows people to stay connected to their supply and alleviates the risk to their physical and mental wellbeing. Along with this direct fuel support, the service user is referred to an energy advice organisation to address any underlying issues.

At present 45 clients have received vouchers, and the demand for the support is increasing. The service has been extremely well received by foodbank users, and within the wider community.

## Argyll Community Housing Association

Argyll Community Housing Association (ACHA) is a Registered Social Landlord providing more than 5000 affordable homes for rent. The Association has housing stock across 11 islands, and in every major settlement in Argyll and Bute.

As well as being a highly-respected social landlord and factor, ACHA is involved in a range of wider role activities which benefit all residents in the Argyll and Bute region. Therefore, the Association was well placed to support its communities when the Covid-19 crisis, and subsequent lockdown, struck.

Key activities focused on emergency food parcels, prescriptions and other vital necessities; and also, on the procurement of PPE to enable all activities to be carried out safely. ACHA also wanted to support up to 900 families living in fuel poverty, by providing them with fuel vouchers. The Association made a successful application to the SCF which enabled them to do so.

Alastair MacGregor, ACHA's Chief Executive commented:

*"It is our view that fuel poverty is a greater issue within Argyll and Bute regardless of Covid-19 and we have the added complication that we have a higher proportion of*

### Some of our feedback

Woman with children whose relationship had broken down due to domestic abuse during the Covid lockdown:

*"I thought I would have to get a loan for my electricity from a member of my ex-partner's family. He would then have known I was not managing."*

Single man: *"I will be able to cook my food and get a wash. I have been sitting in the dark at night."*

Woman, just discharged from hospital: *"This certainly helped me. My meter is on emergency and I have no payment coming for a week, and I have been in hospital."*

Foodbank Manager: *"This funding has made such a difference. It is wonderful being able to provide this help for our foodbank visitors who otherwise would be sitting in darkness, with no heat, and with no facilities to heat the food we have given them."*

*people working in industries that have been impacted to a greater extent by the pandemic. Therefore, the income of people living in Argyll and Bute has been affected to a greater degree. For example, we have 8.8% of people working in fishing, agriculture and forestry, the Scottish average is 3.2%. There are also seasonal industries. We have 12.5% of people working in tourist related industries compared to the Scottish average of 7.9%.*

*"These industries have been devastated by Covid-19, they tend to be low paid and this will have an extremely negative impact. There is a higher proportion of people working part time and seasonally in Argyll and Bute and the number of self-employed is also high.*

*"Additionally, the fuel poverty rates in Argyll and Bute are higher because of the fact that over 50% of our properties are off the gas grid and rely on expensive electric heating, but income is generally lower.*

*"So, in summary, the impact of Covid-19 is devastating the main industries that people are employed in by either being furloughed at a lower rate of pay, or by losing their income completely. This all means that, in essence, there has been a double whammy for our communities."*

# 5. Working with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities

## ng homes

ng homes operates within North Glasgow, covering the communities of Springburn, Possilpark, Parkhouse and Balornock. The Association manages circa 7,000 properties and delivers a range of activities within these wider areas. It has developed strong partnerships with BAME groups through a variety of community activities and interventions which have progressed over the past six years.

These relationships and activities have become vital in terms of the community response to the pandemic. Throughout the Covid crisis and lockdown the Association has been working alongside a number of community hubs and local organisations to provide food parcels and hot food supplies.

An ng homes spokesperson commented:

*“Our award from the Supporting Communities Fund has meant that we have been able to provide specific and vital support to BAME communities.*

*“African Challenge Scotland (ACS) has played a major role in our relief efforts during the Covid-19 lockdown. ACS has a long-established community engagement history through multicultural events and other empowerment programs since 2014. This rich experience means that ACS has a better understanding of the needs of Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities.*

*“Their engagement with the BAME communities has shown that many families, especially single parents and refugees, are struggling with meeting basic family needs during lockdown. Over the period, they have worked with hundreds of families providing culturally appropriate food to make sure no families are left without support.*

*“Those helping have included the Lord Provost of Glasgow, Councillors Graham Campbell, Christina Cannon, Ruairi Kelly, Annette Christie, Anne McLaughlin MP, Bob Doris MSP and African Challenge Scotland young ambassadors and adult volunteers. African Challenge Scotland deeply appreciate the selfless services of the passionate and dedicated volunteers whom they have always relied on over the years.”*



Ronier Deumeni, Founder, African Challenge Scotland, with Anne McLaughlin MP, Councillor Graham Campbell, Glasgow's Lord Provost Philip Braat, and other volunteers

Ronier Deumeni, Founder of African Challenge Scotland, said:

*“Many of our incredible volunteers have made a difference through their extraordinary acts of kindness by providing African food parcels, toiletries, feminine products, and financial support to BAME families across Glasgow and beyond. This was possible with the support from all our funders, partners and ng homes.”*

Anne McLaughlin, Member of Parliament for Glasgow North East, observed:

*“The work African Challenge Scotland is doing is so important and it's been important to me in my work as an MP. In delivering food with them I have met people in extremely isolated positions who I've been able to help. One was a woman had been in her flat for three months with her three-month old baby. When I told her she could form a bubble with a friend she said she didn't know anybody in Glasgow. Not a single person. African Challenge Scotland is getting to the people who need them the most.”*

## Afghan United provides much needed support to community

ng homes has also been working closely with Glasgow Afghan United (GAU) during the Covid crisis. The organisation sprang into action to support those members of the Afghan community, including asylum seekers, with food support and welfare calls. Abdul Bostani, Chair of GAU, quickly put together a team of volunteers to help provide culturally appropriate food to families who had to isolate at home. The organisation has continued to work with families and other organisations to support them throughout this difficult period.

In addition, GAU delivered much needed food to families to mark Eid, at the end of July. This is normally a time

when families would get together, instead culturally appropriate food was delivered to their homes to enable them to mark the occasion, whilst still remaining safe.

ng homes has also been supplying community hubs with halal food to support individual families. An ng homes staff member explained:

*“We have built up a supply chain with the relevant suppliers and also connected with Glasgow Central Mosque who previously provided food packages during Eid.”*



Abdul Bostani, Chair of Glasgow Afghan United with volunteers

# 6. Addressing social isolation

## West of Scotland HA

Inevitably, the Covid-19 lockdown had a serious impact on the wellbeing of many tenants – but community controlled housing associations were quick to respond to their needs.

Among them, West of Scotland Housing Association put supporting socially isolated or vulnerable tenants at the heart of its response to the pandemic. Backed by funding of £73,000 from the SCF, WSHA set up a range of new services, as well as adapting and expanding others that already existed.

Since lockdown, support and assistance to tenants and the wider community has included delivering meals and providing advice on energy, welfare rights, money, rent and other housing issues. But one of the most active programmes has focused on wellbeing, with the introduction of a daily wellbeing call and the offer of wellbeing support in other ways.

Between the end of March and late July, more than 10,000 calls – lasting from a minute to an hour depending on individual circumstances – have been made to older tenants in sheltered housing, many self-isolating, with a further 2,850 calls to 550 mainstream amenity tenants aged 65 and over. Wellbeing support has been offered to 211 sheltered housing tenants across nine sites to address issues with loneliness and isolation. And 80 activity packs containing adult colouring-in and word-search books, playing cards and a stress ball with easy to follow exercises have been provided to help ease lockdown boredom. Digital support has also been available to help connect older tenants with their families through Skype, Zoom and WhatsApp.

One WSHA tenant, who lives in Yoker, explains the value of the wellbeing service:

*“Moving into sheltered housing was the best thing that could have happened for me and at exactly the right time in my life. And since becoming a tenant of WSHA around six years ago, I have been very independent.*

*“But I have some health issues which meant that I have been self-isolating since March and unable to go out or to the shops since the official lockdown. I have been worrying about Covid-19 and I’ve been feeling a bit isolated and anxious. I get weekly food shopping from a relative, but this is the only contact that I have for a wee chat through the window. It brightens my day but it is always too short.*

*“So, I particularly look forward to the call from WSHA – it’s nice that they check up on me and it really lifts my day. It’s great to hear a different, cheery voice. I think WSHA does really well and was quick to react to the pandemic, which I am grateful for.”*



A child's drawing in the window of a sheltered housing tenant's home.

## Cernach HA

Until recently, the Chest, Heart and Stroke charity shop in Drumchapel Shopping Centre was a focal point for engagement with the community. But Covid-19, and lockdown, forced the team responsible for that valuable work to think again. Their response was immediate and wide-ranging: intelligence gathered from Cernach Housing Association (the anchor organisation for the Thriving Places initiative in the area) and other community organisations identified two priority groups at risk of social isolation and economic hardship; an application was made to the Supporting Communities Fund; and a new, remote support system was rapidly established.

Ted Scanlon, a Community Connector with Cernach HA, explains more:

*“We quickly realised that social isolation, along with economic hardship, would cause major difficulties for a lot of people in the community. The Thriving Places team has been providing face-to-face engagement at the charity shop since 2016. And it’s worked really well – we were visible in the community and the shop had coffee-making facilities, IT support and access to free Wi-Fi. We saw lots of different people in the community, often dropping in for a coffee at first but engaging with us over time. Unfortunately, that changed when the shop closed during lockdown.”*

And with social distancing in place, there was a real danger of losing contact with those who needed it most, and with the issues facing people – isolation, strains on physical and mental health, unemployment and poverty – potentially becoming even more pronounced. As a result, families with additional support needs and self-employed people left with no income due to Covid-19 were identified as priority groups in a successful application for £40,000 funding from the SCF.

Through a system administered by Cernach HA, an assessment was made of individual family circumstances, with support of up to £500 provided. Examples of those who received grants included a woman with two autistic boys, aged 11 and nine, one of whom was finding it extremely difficult to adapt to social distancing guidelines. They were anxious about going outside and household bills had shot up during lockdown. Her response was a huge thanks to the team for the support they gave: *“I am in shock. You do not know how much this means to me and my family – you guys are a godsend.”* After receiving a grant of £300, the message was echoed by the wife of a man shielding due to a number of physical and mental health conditions, with worries about rent payments and mounting debt: *“This money will make a huge difference to us – I can’t thank you enough, you are amazing.”*

Ted Scanlon says the stories are just two examples from many. But he stresses that a common theme among those supported was trust in community organisations and workers.

*“We believe that, in Drumchapel, most people know who we are, what we are all about and trust us. There is also a strong value base within Cernach, the Thriving Place team and partners, all of which benefits the community. Cernach Housing Association, the anchor organisation for Thriving Places, has clearly demonstrated its ability to look beyond its own tenant base, reaching out to the entire population of Drumchapel for the good of the whole community.”*



## Govan CCHAs



The Govan Orchestra

In a matter of weeks, the three community controlled housing associations in Govan came together, identified emerging needs, met with key partners and formed a Covid emergency response group. Soon after that, they secured £200,000 of funding from the SCF and began to distribute much-needed cash to community organisations, providing vital services to those most in need.

Such a rapid and effective response, according to the Covid-19 Temporary Emergency Funding Group, was possible because of the strategic and co-ordinated approach taken by Govan, Elderpark and Linthouse Housing Associations.

*“As community anchors with an in-depth understanding of local needs, we recognised the impact the pandemic was having on people,” said a spokesperson for the Group. “Given our shared vision and values, we quickly decided to work together to provide the support that was desperately needed.”*

The Group, which included representation from Glasgow City Council, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, and the local Thriving Places initiative, developed a series of online surveys which were circulated among local organisations, social media groups and housing association residents to identify their needs. In addition to the surveys, housing association staff carried out telephone check-ins and knocked on doors, asking residents personally whether they needed help or support.

All of this feedback was used to determine the focus of the first SCF tranche. Key issues identified included - tackling unemployment, food preparation and distribution to the vulnerable and isolated, dealing with

domestic abuse, and supporting young people and their families facing financial hardship.

The corporate and governance structures of the housing associations facilitated the distribution of the funding. For transparency, decisions taken by the Group were available online. Work supported by a second tranche of funding included the provision of grocery boxes, hot food, literacy support, a programme to tackle digital exclusion and a campaign to promote health, agility and wealth locally.

A spokesperson for the Group commented:

*“Community anchors are regulated with existing governance, which allows us to quickly and effectively serve our communities. It was vitally important to get this money to the organisations on the ground who were doing such an incredible job. We applaud their efforts and know full well how committed they are to our fantastic communities. This has represented an unprecedented community-wide effort to make a real difference.*

*“And we are truly delighted that the Group applied for and was successfully awarded a further £200,000 from the SCF – doubling the amount of money, helping to support the Govan community in these difficult times.*

*“It is often the case that local people look to their housing association – given our vital community role – for leadership and help in times of crisis. Our residents are already in one of most deprived areas of Glasgow – health and financial pressures will remain for some time.*

*“With our partners, we have been offering that essential helping hand – something we hope to keep going over the coming months and years in the ongoing recovery from the pandemic.”*



The Unlock Employment staff team

# 8. Community anchors come in all shapes and sizes

## West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative

West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative (WWHC) is a tenant owned and controlled, fully mutual co-operative with charitable status in Whitlawburn, South Lanarkshire. The Co-operative was formed in 1989 through large-scale voluntary transfer and has 644 properties in its management. WWHC provides high quality housing and services at affordable rents, and aims to promote community and environmental sustainability.

WWHC is viewed as the local community anchor by its tenants; and has worked hard to directly support them through the unprecedented times created by the Covid crisis.

With the help of its SCF award the Co-operative has delivered more than 1667 food parcels, 704 hot meals and 141 food vouchers to vulnerable tenant/members of the housing co-operative, and their families since the start of the pandemic.

Paul Farrell, director of WWHC, said:

*“It was clear from the outset of the pandemic that we would need to mount a massive response to meet the*

*needs of our vulnerable tenant/members who would be isolating and shielding. Our housing staff, working in conjunction with our Community Development Team in Whitlawburn Community Resource Centre, have responded magnificently.”*

Stuart Borland, centre manager at Whitlawburn Community Resource Centre, added:

*“It is a great team effort. Our staff, Claire and Myra, along with Michelle from the cafe and the UTD sports guys, are working tirelessly to deliver vital supplies to the needy at this time of crisis.*

*“The appreciation from tenant/members has been wonderful. We have received many compliments for our work. One tenant/member even said we must be mind-readers as the food parcel she received from us almost mirrored her normal weekly grocery list.”*

WWHC is continuing to provide essential and emergency/urgent services and is available for tenants/members to contact staff 24 hours per day.



Stuart Borland, Manager, Whitlawburn Community Resource Centre, with staff members Claire Forrest and Myra Maguire

## Spire View HA

As a CCHA with 557 properties, Spire View HA has long proven its worth within the local community, both as a reliable social landlord and as a trusted community anchor. As lockdown loomed in the middle of March, Spire View, Copperworks and Blochairn Housing Associations, along with Royston Youth Action, Rosemount Development Trust, Help 4 the Homeless, The Hub on the Hill Café, Rosemount Lifelong Learning, North Glasgow Community Food Initiative, North Glasgow Healthy Living Community and Councillor Allan Casey, got together to formulate a plan of action. The aim was to ensure that every resident who required support would receive it. This was the beginning of the Royston Covid Response Group.

The partners got to work quickly to put together a co-ordinated list of those people requiring support, as well as a list of volunteers. Spire View HA successfully applied for Lottery funding, and were awarded £63,040, which allowed delivery of food parcels and hot meals across the local community for a period of 16 weeks.

This 'hub' of activity takes place at the Roystonhill Community Hub, which Spire View and Copperworks have kept open throughout the Covid outbreak. Preparation and delivery of food parcels is co-ordinated by the housing associations' tenancy support officer Geraldine Burgess, supported by her colleague Tracey Blair and Copperworks' estate caretaker David Manners, along with a group of incredible volunteers. Hot meals are prepared by The Hub on the Hill Café chef Pauline Frati, who had only just launched her new business venture within the Roystonhill Community Hub a few weeks before lockdown.

Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations supported the group to make an application to the Scottish Government's Supporting Communities Fund, which resulted in an additional £48,605 of funding being made available. This award allowed the group to retain the tenancy support officer/Covid response co-ordinator. The SCF funding also allowed Royston Youth Action (RYA) to distribute over 250 packed lunches every week to local children, again in partnership with The Hub on the Hill Café. Furthermore, RYA also prepared and distributed activity packs to local children and elderly/vulnerable residents over a 12-week period.

Another member of the group, Rosemount Development Trust, secured over £20,000 Scottish Government funding



Food for Good deliver supplies to the Roystonhill Community Hub

to support Royston Youth Action in other areas of work providing emergency support to local children and families in the form of mobile top-ups, food vouchers and wellbeing/care packs. RDT was also able to assist Rosemount Lifelong Learning with funds for family activity packs.

As a result of a funding partnership with Good Things Foundation, Spire View was able, through DevicesDotNow, to acquire 10 brand new electronic tablet devices for distribution to people in the Royston community who were completely digitally disconnected. Recipients were provided with the devices and 24 GB of data and are being supported by Spire View's digital engagement officer.

As well as this co-ordinated partnership response in the community, all partners continue to engage with their service users. The CCHAs' housing management teams are contacting elderly and vulnerable customers on a weekly basis to ensure they are supported and feel less isolated. Financial capability and money advice services continue to operate and are supporting all those in need of their services at this very challenging time.



# 9. Reflections

As the initial Covid-19 virus threat reduces, and we tentatively move out of lockdown, albeit mindful of the risks associated with a second wave, it is useful to offer some reflections: on both how individuals and communities might move forward, and the support they will require to allow them to do so.

These reflections are based on GWSF's work supporting members through their SCF journey, and from associations' own experiences during the immediate crisis phase of the pandemic, and into the recovery period.

## The transition from crisis to recovery

CCHAs have been at the forefront of delivering aid to their tenants and wider communities throughout the Covid crisis and as a result have a clear view of the picture on the ground. The consensus amongst associations is that moving from crisis to recovery will be a complex and tricky process, and probably not a linear one. As some people's specific needs lessen others may increase, and this will have an impact on what types of support are required.

*"It's not the case that we're going to get to a point when we say that's the crisis phase over now. Time to move onto recovery. Of course, that's the ultimate aim...but we're going to have to support people to get there."*

*"What we are seeing is people hitting crisis at different times. So, for instance, some people who have needed food deliveries are now able to get out and get their own. Some people who have been furloughed and needed help with food or fuel are back at work and don't need the assistance any more. But then you have people who have been furloughed, and have now lost their jobs and are really struggling, and now need help."*

*"As things have progressed, we have identified new problems that tenants are facing, and I think these are well-recognised. Domestic abuse, impacts on mental health, social isolation...people just feeling scared...a loss of confidence. And there's no quick fix for a lot of these problems...it's going to be long-haul solutions that are required."*

## Current issues

Many of the ongoing issues are obviously reflected in members' SCF activities, and this support remains just as crucial for many individuals and families. This includes: providing help with food and fuel; mitigating social isolation; and supporting vulnerable people.

*"There is still a real need for help with the basics – food and fuel, in fact for some people it's more urgent now. They've lost their jobs, and really need this support to help them get through."*

*"It's so important...now more than ever in fact... that we try and keep people connected, and for our older tenants we've been doing a number of things. Ringing them every day, visiting, providing activity packs. All of it helps, and we know from their feedback that they really appreciate it, that it all helps."*

*"We are working with a range of our partners to support young people in the community. This has taken a real toll on them...especially young people who were feeling vulnerable before...so outreach work [and making sure this is carried out safely] is more important than ever."*

## Emerging issues

Members identified a number of key issues in relation to emerging needs in their communities which will need to be met, as we move into recovery. These include: support with mental health; increased demand for money advice and welfare benefit services; and an intensification of poverty for many individuals and families.

*“Even before the pandemic a lot of the people we saw were struggling with some form(s) of mental illness. And now this has just sent them to the very edge. They will need a lot of dedicated ongoing support to help build up their resilience.”*

*“The demand for our money advice services is off the charts. There are so many people needing help, including those who have never been in this position in their lives, never been out of work, never needed to seek this kind of help.”*

*“So many families are really struggling, even with the basics like food and fuel costs, but then if you add in other stuff like back-to-school costs they just can't cope with it all financially.”*

## Moving forward

Undoubtedly, the health, well-being, economic, and other reverberations of the pandemic will be felt for a long time at both an individual and community level. For CCHAs this will present challenges on several fronts, not least in resuming repairs services, continuing to support tenants with paying their rent, and addressing homelessness and other urgent needs for rehousing.

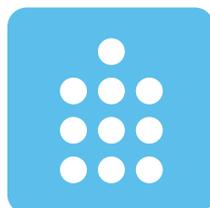
In addition, associations will continue to support their tenants and wider communities through the fallout of the Covid pandemic. The SCF has supported CCHAs, who have supported other local organisations and groups, who in turn have supported those who need it the most.

As we move into recovery, we would like to see the lessons learned from the SCF approach (as discussed in Section 3) being carried forward. We would welcome formal recognition of the value of community anchors as key conduits for getting Scottish Government funding to where it's most needed in communities. Never before has the value of being truly local been brought into such sharp focus in such a short time.



## List of GWSF members who received SCF funding:

- Argyll Community Housing Association
- Ayrshire Housing
- Barrhead HA
- Bridgewater HA
- Cassiltoun HA
- Cernach HA
- Cloch HA
- Dunbritton HA
- Faifley HA
- Ferguslie Park HA
- Govanhill HA
- Hillhead HA
- Linstone HA
- Linthouse HA
- Maryhill HA
- Milnbank HA
- New Gorbals HA
- ng homes
- North View HA
- Oak Tree HA
- Paisley HA
- Parkhead HA
- Queens Cross HA
- Ruchazie HA
- Shire HA
- Southside HA
- Spire View HA
- Thenue HA
- West of Scotland HA (WSHA)
- West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative



**GWSF**

Glasgow and West of Scotland  
Forum of Housing Associations

Unit 3D, Firhill House  
55-65 Firhill Road  
Glasgow G20 7BE  
Tel: 0141 946 0645  
E: david.bookbinder@gwsf.org.uk  
E: colleen.rowan@gwsf.org.uk

[www.gwsf.org.uk](http://www.gwsf.org.uk)

GWSF's purpose is to promote and represent local community controlled housing associations and co-operatives in Glasgow and the west of Scotland