

Resilience: how are we coping under lockdown 2.0?

November 2020



Introduction:

This learning insight is based on the experiences of staff in 6 different third sector organisations, all of whom are helping participants, volunteers and colleagues to get through the current Covid-19 restrictions whilst trying to look after their own physical and mental health.

A colleague with experience of resilience training noted that resilience fluctuates and when external sources of support are taken away, as happens in lockdown, we need to rely on inner resources. These inner resources can wax and wane so it's important to nurture them by looking after ourselves mentally and physically.

Impact on staff:

The general feeling was that staff were "exhausted" and "fatigued with it all" particularly because of the volume of work and the fact that the usual generic support systems - colleagues close by, office banter, informal chats in the tea room and someone to bounce ideas off - are not readily available. Coming back to work after furlough was described as a "culture shock" for some staff members, as they tried to adjust to the new approaches. For trustees and senior staff members there is an added worry relating to the financial stability of their organisations as, for example, there are fewer donations and member contributions. Working from home using a laptop and phone can be hard as it is a very different experience to pre-pandemic roles and the distinction between work life and home life can easily be blurred. For staff with varied work patterns and high workloads it can be hard to find a suitable time to catch up with everyone on their team. One colleague shared that it was a

challenge to stay positive - they feel sad because they are unable to provide the level of support, social contact and activities that older participants and volunteers desperately need.

Impact on volunteers and participants:

Smaller number of volunteers are taking on more support roles, for example making doorstep visits, telephone befriending calls or delivery driving, and this can take its toll; volunteers (and staff) are sometimes finding it hard to remain positive for the people they are supporting, particularly when facing the challenges of lockdown themselves.

There was a general feeling that lockdown 2.0 feels different for participants - more of a 'pause' than a 'stop'. Staff put this down to having their offices open and their telephone and online support systems in place, but also increased Covid-19 testing, track and trace, the likelihood of a vaccine in the near future, schools being open, traffic on the roads and the knowledge that they got through the first lockdown.

One colleague felt that the older project participants were adapting better to lockdown 2.0 as they were less scared to do their own grocery shopping this time around. Another noted that many participants disengaged with the project in the first lockdown, re-engaging when restrictions eased, but this time these participants kept their lines of communication open.

The impact on older project participants is mixed: one colleague reported that, generally, their older members are coping pretty well, however, those with pre-existing mental health issues are not coping as well. For some, the routine of Zoom socials and shopping whilst social distancing is becoming more normal yet anxiety is still present, particularly for those who have little trust in the government or who don't believe lockdown will end in December.

Personal resilience is boosted by:

- Regular contact over the phone and via Zoom when not in the office.
- Having your own 'set of tools' to help you get through the day - colleagues mentioned that they use positive self-talk, meditation and mindfulness.
- Reminding people of the positives - this is a short lockdown, that 4-weeks isn't a long time and they are getting through it as each day passes. Also, there will be more choice of activities once the restrictions end as Zoom and phone support will continue, in addition to the physical activities when they resume.

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- Asking after people's families, showing interest and care and reminding each other that we're all in the same boat and we'll get through it together.
 - Giving and receiving small acts of kindness.
 - Having something to look forward to - two colleagues said that planned group walks outside last month really boosted people's spirits.
 - Being able to contribute and feel part of something - one colleague praised [Shine](#) magazine for helping older people without digital resources to stay connected and was really pleased that funding was secure for a further 12 issues.

An example from The Great Outdoors project:

Prior to lockdown staff arranged small-group 'postcode walks' for people living near each other. Feedback was positive - it was local, friendly, facilitated by staff and stringently risk-assessed. People felt safe attending the walks and it gave them something to look forward to. Some people started getting public transport to the walks - this turned out not to be as scary as they expected after shielding, so they continue to use public transport when necessary. People were encouraged to swap numbers and now there is a lot of peer support available in the project. In lockdown 2.0 the group walks have stopped, but people are keeping in touch with each other (without staff input) and are buddying up so that they can continue to walk outside regularly in pairs during the current restrictions.

Resources:

- An introduction to the [6 pillars of resilience](#)
- [Spotify Wake Up / Wind Down with Niall Breslin](#) - this offers some great mindfulness tips and each session is only 5 minutes long
- [Mindwell](#) has lots of resources to support mental health, including [ten strategies for coping with stress at work](#)

