



Coordinated Community Support Programme: Swansea

**An exploration of professionals' and service-users'
perceptions and experiences of accessing crisis support**

Amy Edwards, George Dunstall, Isabelle Rothstein & Julia David

April 2021

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
1. Introduction	6
2. Methodology.....	7
3. Findings: Quantitative Survey	9
4. Findings: Qualitative Interviews.....	14
4.1 Defining crisis and crisis support	14
4.2 Accessing and engaging with crisis support	17
4.3 Coordination of services	19
4.4 Impact of Covid-19 on crisis support provision	24
5. Conclusion	30
6. Appendices	32
Appendix A: Survey	32
Appendix B: Topic guide for professionals (LA and VCS).....	38
Appendix C: Topic guide for service-users	40
Appendix D: Breakdown of service-user estimates from the survey	42

Executive Summary

In line with the aims of the Coordinated Community Support Programme, this research project aimed to understand access to crisis support, resources and provision to address underlying needs, and the impact of Covid-19 on crisis support. A mixed-methods approach to the research was undertaken, consisting of a quantitative survey for crisis support organisations and qualitative interviews or focus groups with local authority staff, Voluntary Community Sector staff, and service-users. In Swansea, 15 individuals responded to the survey and 15 individuals participated in the interviews and/or focus groups.

The survey revealed a varied picture of service provision across Swansea, with most organisations operating across the whole local authority. On average, organisations offered three different types of crisis support; the most common forms of support were food vouchers and advice (particularly debt and housing related advice). The majority of those who responded to the survey indicated that there had been an increase in service-use since Covid-19, in comparison to the same period last year.

Whilst the survey reflected the breadth of crisis support available in Swansea, there was an overrepresentation of organisations working with asylum seekers and refugees in the interviews. The interviews highlighted four main themes, which have been summarised below, highlighting the most important aspects in relation to the wider CCS programme:

Defining crisis and crisis support

- Definitions of crisis varied between VCS and LA participants. Some participants described local authority and Welsh Government thresholds as too high, whilst VCS organisations had lower thresholds to support service-users with crisis.
- Individual crisis points within service-users' lives were likely to have consequential effects that lead to further crises, demonstrating the need for holistic support within crisis support organisations.
- Definitions of crisis support remained flexible and adapted in response to local need and issues (e.g., the digital exclusion resulting from Covid-19).

Accessing and engaging with crisis support

- Access to support was facilitated through self-referrals and drop-in forms of support, which provided service-users with the tools to seek help more easily.
- There were geographical barriers to accessing crisis support. More rural support services were harder for service-users to access, especially for those who were reliant on public transport. These issues were exacerbated by Covid, where buses went cashless, which excluded asylum seekers and refugees.
- In order to increase service-users access to support, professionals described the value of service promotion, advertising, and communication to increase knowledge of the support available. Whilst this was true for service-users who could self-refer, there was also value in increasing other professionals' knowledge to facilitate a more coordinated approach to working and onward referrals.
- There was a degree of stigma related to seeking help particularly or accessing services, making certain individuals more reluctant to seek help. However, Covid-19 was described as a "leveller" and was hoped to have removed some of this stigma given the increase in hardship for the general population.

Co-ordination of services

- Professionals highlighted the importance of coordinated services to address service-users underlying needs including coordination between and within the LA and VCS.
- The co-locating of services in one location (e.g., in a food bank) was a particularly effective way of coordinating different types of support and facilitating access beyond service-users' immediate needs. This had been trialled during the Covid-19 pandemic with positive results.
- Coordinated links with the community (initiatives such as befriending or volunteer mentors) were particularly important for addressing service-users holistic needs and understanding local issues.
- Coordination of services to address service-users' underlying needs was conditional on individual service-users wanting to engage with services beyond their initial crisis. This depended on service-user preferences, influenced by the trust they placed in the referring organisation.

**Impact of
Covid-19
on crisis
support
provision**

- There was a shift towards remote working, which was not always conducive to supporting those with complex needs. However, remote working did enable easy and timely access for some service-users, who did have the capacity to engage with remote working practices.
- The pandemic had re-defined crisis for some organisations/service-users. There was a shift from focusing on food crisis to an increasing focus on digital exclusion as a form of crisis in itself. Lack of access to digital devices (or the internet) reduced service-users access to support, both in terms of crisis support but also support from family and friends during the pandemic.
- Asylum seekers and refugees were viewed as a particularly vulnerable population during the pandemic, exacerbated by the digital exclusion within this population. However, given the overrepresentation of organisations working with asylum seekers and refugees, this should be considered in this context.

1. Introduction

A partnership between The Children's Society, Local Government Association, Trussell Trust, the Church of England, Lloyds Bank Foundation for England and Wales, and BBC Children in Need is working in partnership with four local authority areas across England and Wales to pilot a coordinated community support programme to better coordinate provision of emergency financial assistance within local areas.

To add to and complement the wider evaluation of the programme, the objective of the current research project is to explore perceptions and experiences of crisis support from the perspectives of local authority (LA) staff, Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Organisations, and service-users. Through this objective, the project aims to feed into the overall aims of the Coordinated Community Support (CCS) Programme, which are:

- Improving access to crisis support schemes
- A simpler, supported, application process
- Addressing underlying needs to prevent the recurrence of crisis
- Providing aftercare / Building Trusted Relationships / 'Follow-up'
-

This research project will support these outcomes by aiming to inform the current status of each of the programme aims. In each of the pilot areas it will seek to understand access to crisis support (including application processes), resources and provisions to address underlying needs and provisions to provide aftercare for those who have needed support.

This research will support our understanding of the local networks of provision that exist to support individuals and families that have or are experiencing crisis. In undertaking this work, we hope to identify the nature of provision and gaps within it in order to inform the wider programme and seek to work with both the LA and the wider VCS to trial innovative solutions to improve the delivery and coordination of support. Furthermore, we hope to draw together programme wide themes from across all the areas in order to understand the common issues (see accompanying report entitled 'An exploration of professionals' and service-user's perceptions and experiences of accessing crisis support: Research in four local authorities in England and Wales).

2. Methodology

The methodology for this project was designed in collaboration with the project Advisory Group¹, consisting of at least one LA and one VCs representative from each of the pilot sites. Members of the advisory group were approached by the CCS team to join based on the breadth of their work. The group comprised of representatives from emergency food providers, the advice sector, and various Local Authority colleagues.

In order to address the aims of the project, a three-pronged approach was implemented, consisting of a local area survey, focus groups with professionals (local authority staff and staff from the VCS), and one-to-one interviews with service-users. These stages are outlined below.

Local area surveys: A survey was developed in consultation with the Advisory Group for distribution amongst the four local authority pilot sites to better understand the range of organisations currently involved in crisis support². This included questions about the organisation, what support they offer, and the average number of clients that they support (see Appendix).

Focus groups with professionals: Focus groups with professionals from statutory and non-statutory organisations in each of the four pilot areas involved in the Coordinated Community Support Programme were conducted. In relation to the aims of the project, the focus groups aimed to explore definitions of 'crisis' and the point of intervention, facilitators and barriers to support provision (including access, referrals, multiagency working, and addressing underlying needs), any changes since COVID-19 in terms of need and provision, and any areas for improvement and priorities for the future (see Appendix).

Interviews with service-users: In addition to focus groups with statutory and VCS organisations, the advisory group highlighted the importance of engaging with service-users with lived experience of crisis support. Therefore, the research aimed to engage with service-users in each local area, recruited through organisations taking part in the

¹ An initial research proposal was presented to the group without the involvement of service-user interviews, as it was proposed that this could form part of any follow up research. However, the group were all agreed that they would like to service-users involved in this initial piece of work, and therefore the proposal was amended to reflect these changes and feature the voices of service-users in addition to professionals.

² Note: Crisis support was described within the questionnaire's introduction and organisations who self-identified as providing this type of support were eligible to take part.

focus groups and through social media advertisements in the local area. These interviews aimed to better understand how service-users experienced accessing and engaging with crisis support, and the facilitators and barriers within these processes. Service-users were provided with a £20 shopping voucher as a thank you for their participation (see Appendix).

In Swansea, 15 respondents provided responses to the online survey and 15 individuals took part in focus groups and/or one-to-one interviews, across the different participant groups between September – December 2020. A breakdown of interview participant numbers is provided in Figure 1. All focus groups and interviews lasted between 30-90minutes.

All focus groups and interviews were transcribed verbatim and were analysed line-by-line using a semi-structured thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2007). All quotes in this report have been anonymised and identified using only the participant group³.

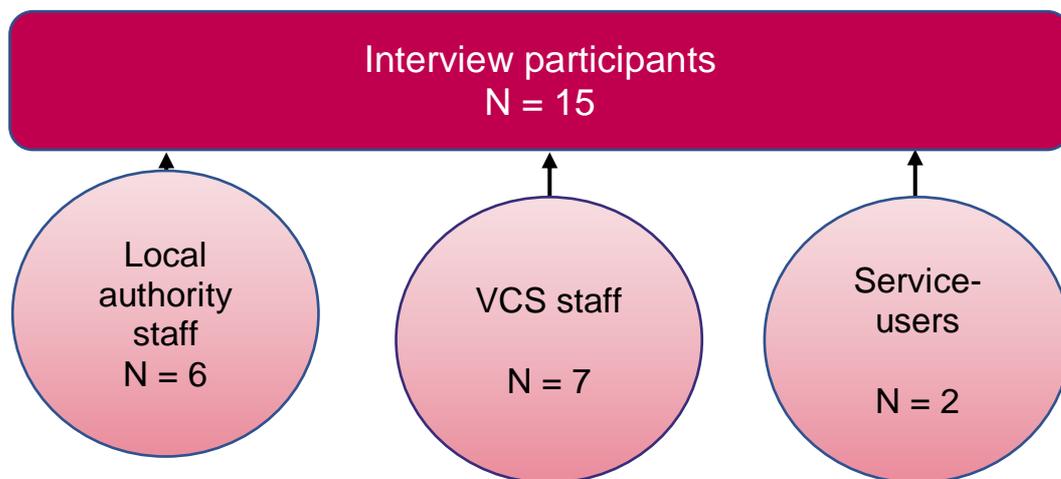


Figure 1. Overview of participant numbers in the qualitative data collection.

³ LA = local authority professional, VCS = VCS professional, SU = service-user with lived experience of accessing crisis support.

3. Findings: Quantitative Survey

There were 15 responses provided by respondents working in crisis support organisations that operated in Swansea. Due to the small sample, both the number and percentage of responses has been provided. This data should be interpreted with caution and may not be generalisable to the full scale of crisis support organisations operating across the local authority. The results, however, do provide a picture of the different types of organisations and support offered.

Participants indicated that the majority of organisations within Swansea were quite well-established and had been operational for more than ten years (N = 10, 67%) or five to ten years (N = 3, 20%). Only two respondents (13%) indicated that their organisation had been operational for two to five years.

Respondents' organisations provided their services mostly across the whole local authority (N = 12, 80%). There were two respondents (13%) who stated that their organisation worked in multiple areas, whereas only one respondent (7%) indicated that their organisation worked nationally across Wales (see Figure 2).

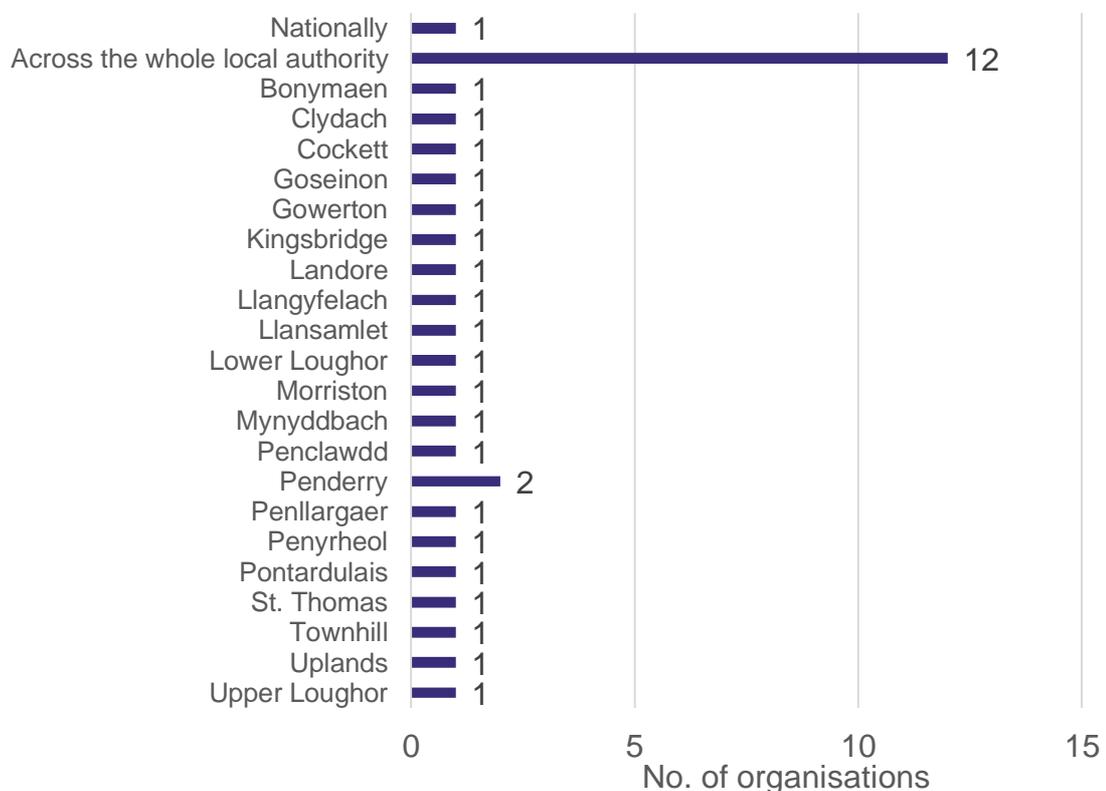


Figure 2. Geographical areas of work across the local authority.

When respondents were asked about the different types of crisis support that they provided, it was found that respondents reported an average of three different types of support, highlighting the multi-faceted nature of organisations. The most frequently provided type of support reported within the current sample was food or food vouchers (N = 13, 87%), closely followed by advice and/or information (N = 12, 80%). See Figure 3.

Among the respondents who selected advice and/or information (N = 12), half of these stated that they provided advice for debts (N = 6, 50%) and housing (N = 6, 50%), whilst 42% (N = 5) provided welfare rights advice. See Figure 4.

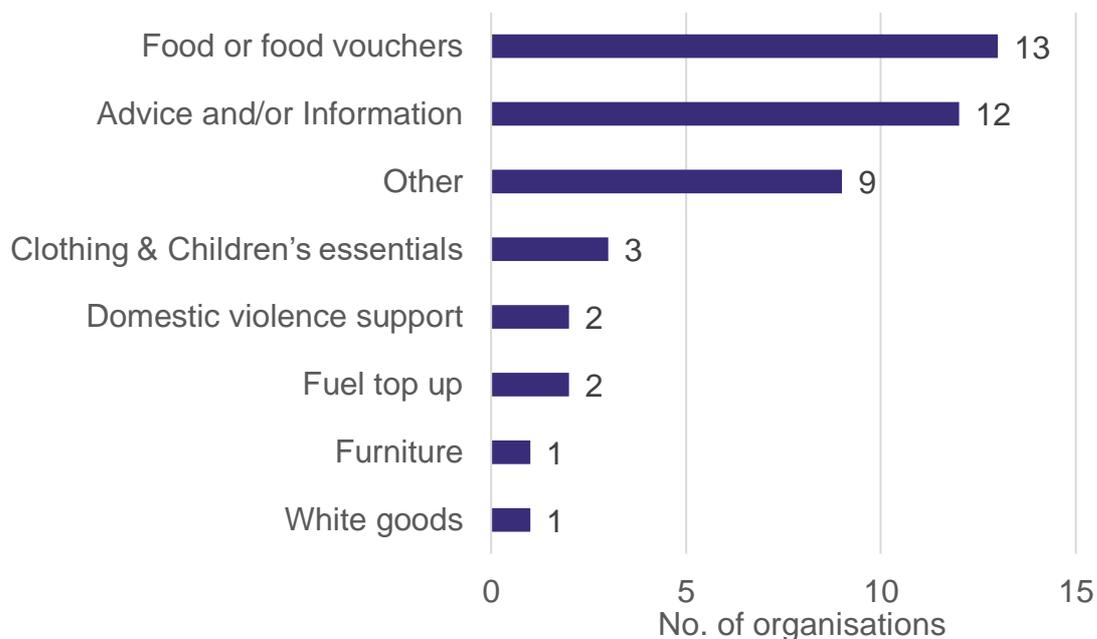


Figure 3. Type of crisis support provided by organisations.

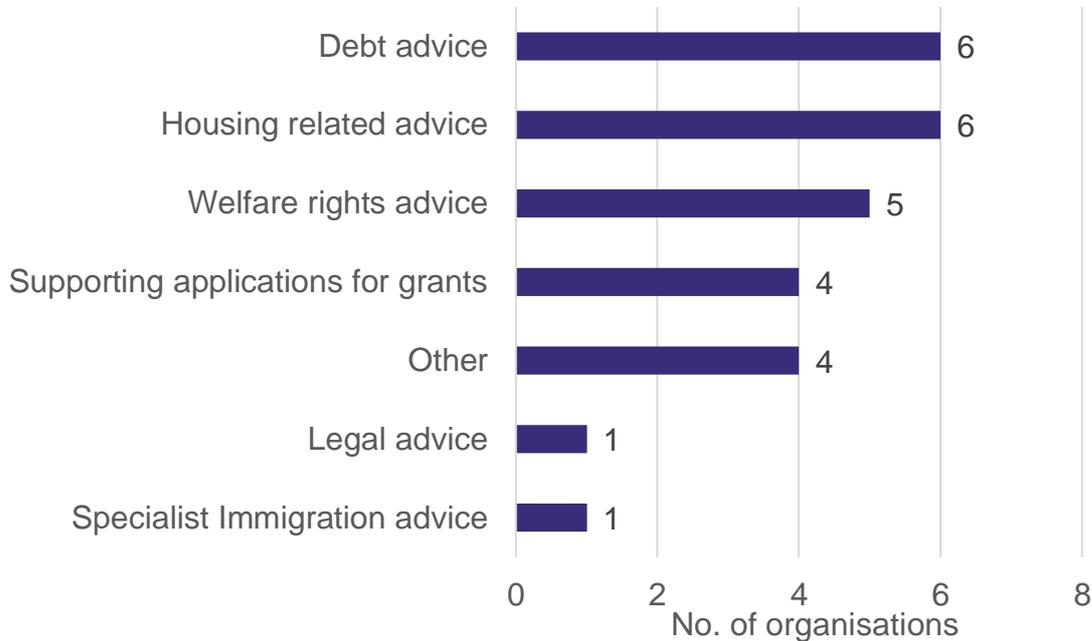


Figure 4. Type of information, advice or guidance provided by organisations.

Each respondent provided the number of people whom their organisation supported since January 2020. They also provided the proportion of service-users that accessed the different types of support as summarized in the table⁴. This information enabled an estimate of the overall numbers of service-users supported by the six organisations across the different types of crisis support.

Based on these calculations, the approximate number of service users that organisations supported in 2020 was highest for food or food vouchers (~1498), which was considerably higher than other types of support. This was consistent with the most frequently reported service being food banks/vouchers, reported previously. The number of people that organisations supported for help with other type of support (~532) and monetary (~454) were the second and third highest types of support reported. See Appendix for full breakdown.

Similarly, the approximate number of people by type of advice was also calculated using the same formula. It was found that the approximate number of service users that had received advice or information was highest for welfare rights advice (~472) and other type of advice (~472). Two were closely followed by debt advice (~422) and

⁴ As a worked example, if an organisation supported 300 service-users and reported that 40-60% were supported with food or food vouchers, then we would multiply 300 by 0.5 (50%) to estimate that the organisation supported approximately 150 individuals with this type of support.

housing related advice (~390). Again, this was largely consistent with the previously reported activities. See Appendix for full breakdown.



Figure 5. Approximate number of service-users supported for each service across all organisations who responded to the survey.

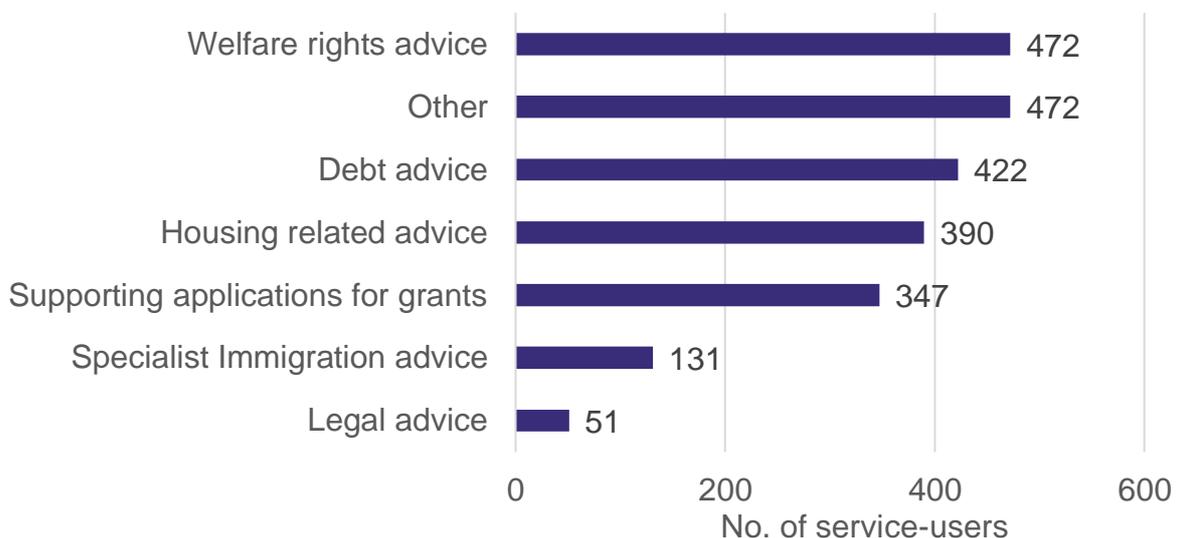


Figure 6. Approximate number of service-users supported for each advice/information type across all organisations who responded to the survey.

Lastly, respondents were asked about their professional perceptions and experiences regarding any changes in the number of clients that their organisation supported in 2020, in comparison to the same period last year, to better understand the impact of Covid-19 on demand for crisis support services (see Figure 7). Among those who

responded this question (N = 14), the majority of respondents reported that the number of clients that their organisation supported in January – September 2020 was significantly or slightly higher (N = 9, 65%). In addition to an increase in overall numbers, organisations also reported that the frequency of contact had changed in some cases. One respondent had the following comment:

“In both years, some people will have used the foodbank more than once, so will have been counted more than once. Not many people will have used the foodbank more than once in 2019 but a greater proportion will have visited more than once this year due to lockdown.”

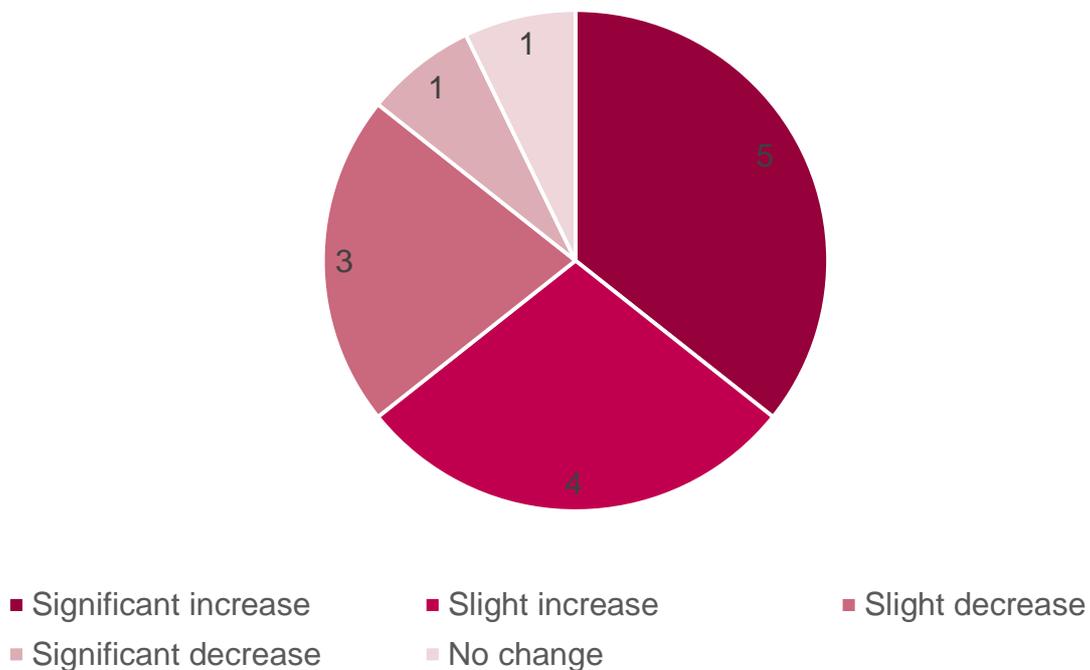


Figure 7. Change in the number of service-users that organisations supported from Jan – Mar 2019 to Jan – Mar 2020.

4. Findings: Qualitative Interviews

There were four main themes highlighted in relation to the research aims. These centered around definitions of crisis support, access and engagement with various types of crisis support and the barriers and facilitators within this, coordinated forms of support for service-users to address underlying needs, and lastly, the impact of Covid-19 on crisis support.

An overview of the main themes are provided in Figure 8.

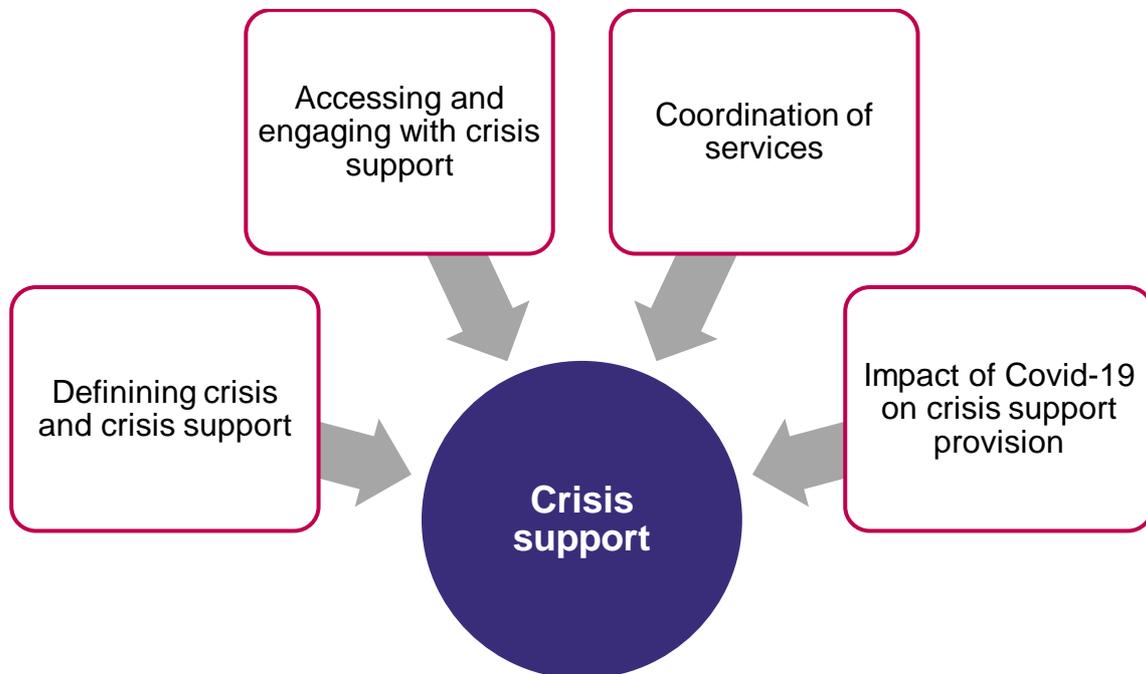


Figure 8. Overview of qualitative themes identified from focus groups and interviews.

4.1 Defining crisis and crisis support

Definitions of crisis and crisis support were variable, reflecting the breadth of experiences that could be classified as crises. Indeed, professionals described how they “supported lots of different people for lots of different reasons” (LA). This could take the form of “a mental health crisis, a housing crisis, or a financial crisis” (LA). Other participants referenced food poverty as a form of crisis: “if people feel that they need to come for emergency food that that is crisis” (VCS). Given the broad focus of definitions of crisis, one participant summarised: “if one cannot meet with their basic needs, that is a crisis basically” (VCS).

“It’s something has happened that has put them into a situation where they just can’t cope momentarily and they need some support to deal with the actual emergency and the crisis but then we’d also want to look at the underlying causes to try and top that sort of happening again or repeating.” (VCS)

Concerningly, participants raised examples of how one crisis could set off a chain events of crisis:

“Inevitably there are those people who do reach crisis point and with rent arrears that unfortunately can lead to action having to be taken against a tenancy and then you often you can find yourself in the crisis point of potentially somebody being evicted from their home which is obviously not what we want to happen.” (LA)

Continuing on from the above quote, this could have an impact on individuals’ employment, physical health, and mental health. Thus, crisis points may have consequential effects that may spiral into further crisis. Thus, the urgency of support was important in supporting service-users effectively.

Furthermore, many participants interviewed in Swansea worked with asylum seekers and refugees. As such, they referenced specific crisis that may arguably be more common in this population, such as mental health issues and managing the transition into *“a new culture, having to learn a new language, having to learn more new social norms”* (VCS).

Whatever crisis support service-users were facing, professionals aimed to help them to *“navigate and find the best support for those particular issues”* (LA). Additionally, participants from the local authority described how they aimed to take a strengths-based approach to help service-users to engage with the support properly and reduce the likelihood of issues re-occurring. There were also felt to be benefits of this strengths-based approach for increasing service-users capacity for *“citizenships and community engagement”* (LA).

This support took the form of *“income maximisation”* (LA) such as reducing outgoings, switching energy providers, calculating benefit entitlements, taking advantage of any grants or schemes that service-users may be eligible for. This was summed up by one participant: *“it’s around ensuring that people are receiving everything that they can get and supporting that money to go as far as it can go”* (LA).

In response to the various types of crisis that service-users may experience, crisis support tried to remain flexible and support in any way that they could, even if organisations did not see themselves as providing crisis support directly:

“We are a second tier service, however if anybody does get through to us and they are absolutely stuck, they don’t know what to do, we tend to try and give them some advice and lead them on their way.” (LA)

Many participants that were interviewed referenced the Welsh Government’s Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF) as a key or “go to” (LA) support mechanism for service-users in crisis:

“DAF is the biggest one as everybody’s mentioned so far, whether that’s for an emergency payment because they’ve lost their money or money hasn’t come through etc or they need gas and electricity to move in straight away, there’s children at the house and it’s been very cold. We also we do get a lot of DAF applications with people ringing through in terms of setting up new tenancies, so wanting your white goods, your crockery, your bedding etc. So, that’s a fund that we certainly use day in day out” (LA)

Nevertheless, there was a slight tension articulated between local authorities and VCS organisations, who were felt to intervene in crisis points differently. Participants referenced that local authority support may be “*slower*” (VCS) with “*more bureaucracy*” (VCS), which was not always conducive to the urgent support that service-users needed. Similarly, some participants felt that local authority thresholds for support were “*set too high*” (VCS), and there was a “*reliance*” (VCS) on VCS organisations to fill the gaps with the lower levels of need that did not reach statutory thresholds.

Whilst responses to crisis were primarily spoken about in a reactive way, addressing service-users’ experiences, participants also spoke of proactive crisis support. Proactive or preventative crisis support was described as services “*meeting someone long before a crisis ever hits*” (LA) to provide ongoing support with the aim of preventing or reducing crisis occurrences. For example:

“When necessary we work with our colleagues in tenancy support and housing options so we work together, we take a kind of joined up approach to look at the cases, so we’ll work on the cases prior to reaching that point and then if appropriate we will use the prevention fund to pay off rent arrears to prevent

eviction, to prevent court action and ultimately prevent homelessness. But, yes for us it's about prevention in the first place really." (LA)

4.2 Accessing and engaging with crisis support

Within Swansea, there were a number of factors that participants raised as affecting access to and engagement with crisis support. These included the impact of referral routes, the availability of different services, awareness and promotion of crisis support services, and the accessibility of these services (with a focus on language barriers).

Organisations and services that operated self-referral routes were spoken about positively in terms of facilitating access and making services more available for the general public. Participants from these organisations stated that they had an "open access" policy, with "no criteria to contact us" (VCS). As such, "anybody" (VCS) could phone or email them for support. This open self-referral method was believed to facilitate access and remove any barriers in terms of more formal referrals.

"Anybody can refer to us it can be the tenant themselves; it can be a professional, family or friend etc. They can refer either by telephone, so you can ring in a speak to our duty officer straight away, or they can email in a referral form and our duty officer will get back to them to complete and assessment. So, its quite easy to access I think. What we usually we find that tenants are worrying about something on a Saturday night at two o'clock in the morning so if they feel they need to get it off their chest they can email in a referral and you know we can pick that up on the Monday." (LA)

Similarly, drop-in support and "surgeries" (LA) were primary methods that organisations used to engage flexibly with service-users and support access. Within the local authority, this involved "rent surgeries" (LA) where tenants could come for support with their rent; but there were also other teams in attendance to help with other issues that they may present with. This allowed organisations to "be present with the person who needed the help immediately" (LA). Thus, this approach facilitated easy and timely support.

Indeed, the notion of timely support was raised as fundamental in accessing crisis support. However, some organisations noted that by the time service-users came through to them, their situation had escalated further. This made supporting service-users more complex:

“Their situation has moved further into crisis and they’ve missed deadlines and so it becomes harder sometimes to rectify what the issues are.” (LA)

In addition to timely support, participants also highlighted the geographical area that support was located in as a key factor in determining ease of access. Professionals described that most services were located in the city centre or other more-populated areas but *“as you go further out, it’s just a massive barrier”* (VCS). These access issues were further exacerbated by public transport, including the availability of bus routes and the price of public transport. This presented issues for many service-users who were not able to get themselves to support services, especially given the high prices of bus routes. This was particularly highlighted in relation to asylum seekers and refugees who were not entitled to bus passes and lived off very little a week – spending *“nearly a fiver”* (SU) on the bus was not possible. Nevertheless, professionals cited food banks as a model of good practice in terms of geographical location as they were *“fairly well dispersed”* (VCS) across Swansea.

In order to promote access to the available support, advertising and communication were fundamental so that both service-users and other professionals knew what support was available. Indeed, organisations that operated on self-referrals were confident that their *“brand is quite well known”* (VCS) and spoke of various advertising methods including social media. Other organisations did not value advertising but relied more on *“word-of-mouth”* (VCS) to communicate their offer. This was important for both communicating support to the general public, but also communicating to other professionals that support was available.

Those services that did not engage in classic advertising were more concerned with integrating themselves within the communities that they served. This embedding in the community acted to promote awareness of the support available and develop a further level of trust and rapport that aided support:

“We’re based in communities so we’re integrated into certain communities throughout Swansea, we get to know the community quite well, the community gets to know us, we know where the resources are, where the networks are, where the groups and activities are, so whenever people need a little bit of advice they know where to find us then they can ask us questions and hopefully find some solutions to their problems themselves.” (LA)

Service-users responded positively to these community-based support models: “we are very glad that the community is always there and they are supporting people for these needs” (SU).

Given the number of asylum seekers and refugees in Swansea, participants also reflected on the value of interpreters to overcome any “*language barriers*” (VCS) in accessing support. Participants praised the BAME hotline in Swansea for providing multi-lingual support for service-users in up to eleven different language. Participants described this as a “*brilliant*” (VCS) service for increasing accessibility of support.

One of the remaining barriers that participants raised was the “*stigma*” (LA) surrounding “*asking for help*” (LA), which was believed to reduce service-users’ motivations to seek out crisis support – even if support was available and accessible. This was something that professionals felt was largely out of their control and was largely dictated by the historical social narratives around being a “*certain class to access benefits*” (LA). As such, there were concerns that there were many more people in Swansea who needed support, but who were unknown and not seeking help. However, there were hopes that Covid-19 had acted as a leveller and helped to reduce this stigma (discussed further in Section 4.4).

4.3 Coordination of services

As cited in participants’ definitions of crisis support, one of the features within this was to address the underlying crisis and then explore service-users more holistic needs to help prevent any further crises from escalating. One of the main ways that participants spoke of in addressing underlying and holistic needs was coordinated approaches to working with partner organisations. Each organisation had a number of strengths, but very few (if any) had the breadth of work to support service-users with multiple issues. Subsequently, organisations were aware that they needed to work together in a coordinated way in the best interests of service-users:

“Organisations working together has clearly shown that that’s the way forward and especially when we are working and supporting the same people. We are not independently able to offer the same, or holistic everything, we need to communicate as organisations so that we are availing that information and letting other agencies know what we offer.” (VCS)

Case Study: Impact of silo working

“Something that happened right at the start of lockdown; for their Universal Credit application, they had used their annual income as opposed to their monthly income, so it knocked them off Universal Credit and the private landlord had told them if they went into arrears then they would evict, they would start the eviction process, they wouldn’t renew their tenancy when it came up for renewal. They were really settled and when we found out about it there was a social worker involved with the family already and it was just like well, yes we’re here, why didn’t you give us a ring? That whole week of this person was in absolute panic, it wasn’t until they accidentally got through to us that we managed to resolve the problem and we resolved them within 24hours. So, yes, it’s just about people using the resources that they’ve got and again that’s about information and communication.” (LA)

Links with the community were discussed as particularly important for addressing lower level and underlying needs of service-users. Some organisations had links with “volunteer mentors” (VCS) and/or “befrienders” (VCS) who were there to just have a “chat” (VCS) with service-users. Within the limits of consent, organisations asked these volunteers to “report back” (VCS) and refer them back into the organisation for further support. This approach was one that was partially responsible for highlighting the lack of Wi-Fi access, among other digital divides, for asylum seekers and refugees. This social approach in tackling underlying and holistic needs was also described by food banks, who noted that before Covid-19, service-users may come in just to fulfil a social need:

“I think a lot of their need is social, you know perhaps because they are very isolated and there are mental health issues they don’t so much need the food as just a little bit of social interaction and someone to chat to them and be kind.” (VCS)

In thinking about these wider needs, organisations tried to support these service-users to access additional services, including mental health support. This was further evidenced by service-users’ accounts of their crisis, where they experienced “isolation, anxiety, and depression” (SU). Indeed, there was an acknowledgement that “people don’t just have one issue going on, it is multiple issues” (VCS), suggesting the need for more coordinated support that address multiple needs. However, with the new ways of working (described further in Section 4.4), there was not always the time available to sit with service-users to get to know them, their lives, and any other issues

that may be occurring. Nevertheless, in future participants saw the value of coordinated support, with food banks at the heart of this approach:

“I think the whole thing about the food banks, putting some kind of holistic support within the food bank, so benefits advice, debt advice, and also maybe things to do with employment advice and employability advice as well. So, you’d have that kind of support around the food hubs in general.” (LA)

Positively, professionals from the local authority spoke of their attempts to facilitate this type of food bank hub as a more coordinated way of working through the Covid-19 lockdown. Whilst this wasn’t a “universal offer” (LA) across Swansea, progress had been made to increase the partnership working, acknowledging the utility of food banks as a place that people visit for support.

Previous attempts to facilitate more drop-in like centres, such as using the food banks as hubs had learned that the type of venues was crucial in determining the success of these attempts:

“We’ve ran like a pop-up café and one stop shop for a while and we had a number of different organisations and teams there offering advice and information to people. Whether that was around drug and alcohol, benefits, welfare advice, but the venue just wasn’t suitable so it ended up taking more of a focus of a community café because we didn’t have a private space so people couldn’t have private conversations about the more intimate things.” (LA)

Within multiagency approaches and the coordination of services, professionals were keen to work with organisations that they didn’t know about, bringing together organisations that would not classically work with each other. Indeed, professionals described that they generally had a good awareness of other organisations working in the same space as them, but if they needed support for a service-users for a significantly different issues, they would not always know where to go. This suggests the value of quite broad multiagency meetings and “different forums” (VCS), in order to truly address a wide spectrum of needs that service-users may present with.

“If people just stick with what they are doing and others don’t know about it, it needs to go out wider.” (VCS)

Working with others also extended to working with other teams within the local authority. Participants from the LA described positive working between various LA teams in the best interests of service-users:

“We provide housing related support for any tenure, so that includes our council tenancies, private rented, owner occupiers etc. A good proportion of our work is helping people claim benefits and make sure they’re on the right ones in conjunction with the welfare rights service. We help set up UC claims, DAF etc, making sure that people are claiming what they’re entitled to claim as all part of really our housing support element. we work in conjunction very closely with our rents and housing options department to ensure that with new tenants and those that haven’t been housed successfully before, we can get them off to the right start, so again it’s about tenancy sustainment and about managing accommodation, you know appropriately and independently and giving them the skills in order to do that.” (LA)

There had also been some positive examples of the coordination of services, arising from Covid-19, which are discussed in Section 4.4 (e.g. cell meetings), where groups of professionals met regularly for updates and referrals. In addition to more formal multiagency approaches, participants also valued informal multiagency workings that had built up organically through professional contacts and networks. Especially between VCS organisations, there was a view that staff were *“all pretty relaxed”* (VCS) so could informally email each other with requests for support for a service-user.

Despite the benefits of multiagency working, there were inevitable challenges within this. Indeed, the tensions in definitions between LA and VCS organisations were echoed within multiagency and partnership working:

“Particularly in the statutory sector, because funding is so tight, it’s like they’ve got a particular role and they address this issue and if it’s not just this issue, they won’t really take this case.” (VCS)

As such, generally VCS professionals found it easier to coordinate and refer within VCS networks, in comparison to working with statutory services:

“It’s quite easy to refer someone to a voluntary organisation and say this person is in crisis, can you help and do anything for them? If you refer to a voluntary organisation the answer is usually yes. What do you know about the

person? I can provide this, that and the other. So, the ease of partnership work with voluntary sector is a different level to statutory sector.” (VCS)

One of the “*major challenges*” (LA) that participants, particularly within the local authority, cited including data protection, “*GDPR*” (LA), and consent for sharing data. Therefore, this presented issues when trying to work with partner organisations and support service-users’ holistic needs. Service-users stated this information sharing as acceptable when they trusted organisations and described it as “*linking it together, like a chain*” (SU).

There were also challenges in terms of a coordination as Swansea lacked a working an “*up to date*” (VCS) directory of local organisations. Participants were aware of directories but questioned “*is this service still available?*” (VCS) and “*is this up to date?*” (VCS). Therefore, participants did not rely on directories as much as they would have liked in order to increase their awareness of the available support in Swansea. Some participants were aware that an up-to-date directory of organisations working in Swansea was currently in development in some fields of support (e.g., support for asylum seekers and refugees).

Not only were there organisational barriers, but there were also challenges regarding service-users agency and willingness to engage with or accept further support from other agencies within a coordinated approach to support.

“As much as we try to identify every particular place they could go for a service, sometimes people just won’t engage on outwards. They’ll take it to the limit of the crisis support they can get and it’s only at that point then where they think alright then I need to do something else. A lot of it is, it’s chaotic life, there’s things which have just gone beyond what they can control.” (VCS)

Indeed, professionals noted that they could refer service-users onto other sources of support and even facilitate that onward contact by “*saying this is how you speak to them, this is how they will contact you; this is what they’ll start doing for you*” (VCS). However, this did not always equate to service-users taking up these additional support offers. Professionals described how service-users were (understandably) concerned with the crisis at hand:

“I just want to deal with this now and people don’t want the holistic approach, they just want to deal with the actual emergency when you know it’s going to happen again. And as much as you try to say, ‘but can we just do something

now?', there's often a refusal. And then when they're contacting us again then we can't refuse to assist and help in a crisis. The pattern continues." (VCS)

This quote illustrates that individual organisations may not have any formal aftercare facilities that support service-users longer term, however service-users were always welcome to come back into contact with services for further support. These limitations on aftercare were primarily spoken about in relation to restrictions on resources and funding, which did not enable organisations to “*chase people up*” (VCS). As such, there was a general agreement with the above quote, where the “*pattern*” (VCS) in seeking support continues, and people risk going back to “*burying their heads in the sand until next time*” (VCS).

4.4 Impact of Covid-19 on crisis support provision

Participants heavily reflected on the impact of Covid-19 on crisis and crisis support across Swansea, noting that it had affected every area of their work; encompassing definitions of crisis and crisis support, access to crisis support, and the scale of multiagency working.

Regarding definitions, participants expressed a view that the pandemic had impacted upon how the sector defined and understood crisis support in this “*new way of life*” (VCS). Prior to Covid-19, there was believed to be a focus on food poverty, however now participants reported that they were seeing a “*new trend*” (VCS) in requests for digital devices or phone credit to “*be connected with others*” (VCS). Not only this, the internet and digital devices were necessary for accessing support online through organisations’ new ways of working:

“It’s been really apparent during Covid that people don’t have access to Wi-Fi; they are suffering from data poverty. So, it’s a massive issue, how do you get information out to people who don’t have, you know about services and what is there, to people who are the hardest to reach?” (LA)

There were certain group of people who participants believed were particularly excluded from digital communication, including asylum seekers and refugees. An asylum seeking service-user commented that they “*don't have Wi-Fi...we need Wi-Fi so we can learn, where we can access English classes and link up with organisations that are doing that*” (SU). They were aware that organisations advertised their services online, through social media and other avenues, but they were not able to access these adverts if they did not have access to the internet. Thus, service-users described

this as a *“huge barrier”* (SU) to engaging with support. As such, service-users recommended the use of leaflets and door-to-door printed materials to communicate the support available to people without access to the internet: *“just dropping in people’s letter box could make it easier”* (SU).

Furthermore, support organisations working with asylum seekers and refugees noted that barriers around lack of digitisation access changed the scope of their work. Indeed, organisations working with these populations had moved to providing digital access and had given out *“nearly 100 tablets or devises or data packages across South West Wales”* (VCS) to support access to services, socialising, and education:

“It was really needed at the time - most importantly to cater to digital need amongst asylum seekers and refugees. There was a big demand for data and phone credit in the first place and then when eventually things moved to digital, especially children who are stuck at home who needed a gadget to go online and do their stuff.” (VCS)

In addition to digital issues, professionals also cited particular issues for asylum seekers and refugees regarding transport. In Swansea, local bus services stopped taking cash once the Covid-19 pandemic hit, which was not conducive for this population: *“for a while some bus drivers weren’t accepting cash so if you didn’t have a bank account with a card you couldn’t do contactless payment to get the bus”* (VCS)

Whilst there were specific issues that were seen to affect asylum seekers and refugees specifically, more generally Covid-19 also had further exacerbated the existing financial inequalities present within Swansea, including food poverty. Participants noted a *“huge increase and demand”* (LA) for food vouchers and *“making sure people had food”* was a priority (VCS). There had also been a huge increase in apparent and alleged errors by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), where service-users were receiving incorrect benefit amounts:

“During Covid the one thing that we have found is people that we wouldn’t have usually dealt with have come through and they’ve been ticking along thinking their benefits were fine and no, there’s been quite a lot of official errors by the Department of Working Pensions, so we’ve uncovered quite a few of them so. Yes, quite frightening actually.” (LA)

Whilst these issues were frustrating, participants also praised the local DWP representatives for their swift response times where professionals had *“managed to*

get things resolved quite quickly" (LA) for service-users. Professionals hoped that these changes were to be sustained post-Covid.

When talking about welfare benefits, participants also noted that there had been a diversification in the service-user profile and types of people that were seeking support. Indeed, participants cited a new group of service-users who had not had to navigate crisis support or benefit services before. This was felt to act as a "leveller" (LA) within society, where people now realised how *"little they're expected to live on"* (LA):

"We've taken a couple of calls and told them that they'd have to claim Universal Credit and they say 'how am I supposed to live off that?' and I said you're lucky your living on it this year and not last year because it's £20 a week higher. So, I'm hoping that it may have changed people's perceptions...it doesn't really help you to live, it just enables you to survive and any sort of upset then, no matter how small can really push you from managing on that line to over the edge." (LA)

"There's still a stigma for a lot of people around benefits and you need to be a certain, in a certain class before you can claim benefits, possibly Covid has changed that a bit because it's impacted so many people and they've had to reassess where they are and what support they need, and they might not previously have sought that because they felt that benefits are for those people over there, which isn't fair at all, they're for everybody to support them whenever the need arises." (VCS)

As a result of Covid-19, organisations discussed the move to remote working from more classic face-to-face delivery, which required them to *"think outside of the box"* (LA). Organisations spoke of using the various communication methods including the telephone, FaceTime, and WhatsApp, however this depended heavily on service-users having access to the right equipment. The particular platform that services used was cited as a point of contention within organisations, where *"bosses were telling them what to use"* (VCS). However, services were acutely aware that service-users *"don't really care"* (VCS) about what platform is used to facilitate support, *"as long as they get support"* (VCS). Nevertheless, there was a wider acknowledgement that remote support was not as conducive to facilitating the *"more human aspect"* (VCS) and holistic conversations, in comparison to face-to-face drop-ins:

“People coming to the food bank, pre-COVID they’d have come in for a drink, a chat, and stayed if they wanted to, they could have talked through what life is like, we’d have spent a few minutes or longer with them. We can’t do that still. So that connection I think was really valuable... its missing out that we just don’t get to know people’s situations as much.” (VCS)

“The drop in was where people would come in and kind of you know maybe there was issues with housing or something, and there’s a concern maybe we are missing some people with the current method of delivery, despite trying everything that we can to make sure you know discussing with partners and everything. But since everyone has changed what they are doing there could just be groups of people that maybe just aren’t getting the full service or access to services.” (VCS)

To try and maintain some level of face-to-face services, organisations also spoke of meeting with service-users face-to-face within the Covid-19 restrictions, such as meeting socially distanced in garden or in public parks. Whilst these methods were not “ideal” (LA), they did help to achieve some level of continuity of services. Moreover, remote working had even served to increase organisations’ capacity as they have not had *“wasted journeys with no shows driving halfway to the other side of Swansea”* (LA).

This move to remote working via telephone and digital communication with service-users was cited as helping to increase access for some service-users earlier on in crisis. Organisations working in tenancy support described how they had stopped sending letters and started phoning tenants, which led to better engagement:

“We changed our initial approach; we used to send a letter as our sort of first point of contact if somebody went into arrears and, instead, we’ve changed that to ring or text or speak to somebody in another way and that has been quite successful, that’s made a big difference in terms of people engaging with us.” (LA)

In addition to the clear changes in remote working, there were also other changes that participants reflected on within organisations. For some teams embedded in the community, their role shifted to focus on *“facilitating the community response to the crisis”* (LA). This involved coordinating the neighbour-to-neighbour support that was naturally evident within communities to *“put people in touch with each other”* (LA) and offer help to those who were shielding or self-isolating due to Covid-19. Within these

efforts, organisations cited social media as key for coordinating volunteers and ensuring the community knew what support was on offer: “Facebook was our best friend” (VCS).

Other examples of increasing access to support were cited by participants. Whilst participants spoke positively about the DAF as a key mechanism to offer support to service-users in Swansea, there were some restrictions prior to Covid on its use (three payments in rolling 12 month period). However, during the pandemic this restriction had become “*more flexible*” (LA) within certain DAF Emergency Assistance Payments). This increase in flexibility demonstrated the timely response from the DAF to support more service-users more often during the pandemic.

There had also been improvements and increases in multiagency support across Swansea, which participants cited as “*amazing*” (VCS). Unlike the definitions of crisis that prompted some tension in local authority and VCS thresholds in support, participants appeared much more positive regarding multiagency working within the context of Covid-19. Local authority staff reflected usually “*things can take so long and that can be frustrating for our partners*” (LA) but Covid-19 had removed some of the bureaucracy and helped to speed things up. Professionals were keen that these multiagency approaches should be “*kept up*” (LA) post-Covid, suggesting that some positive changes had emerged from the pandemic. These improvements in multiagency working were referenced in relation to inter-departmental LA teams working more closely together:

“Traditionally we have to sit with the tenant to be able to make the phone calls where they have allowed us to talk with certain departments, and we’ve sent copies of authorisation etc. But we’ve really been able to progress and quite frankly I wouldn’t want it to go backwards, a lot of departments have made great strides ahead to make it easier for us to break down barriers and just to be able to tackle the issues at the point of need, and that’s something that’s been a big barrier for us previously. Lots of agencies have taken forward steps and it would be really nice to see if they could stay and build on it rather than regress to what we were doing before.” (LA)

There were also positive examples of other multiagency working, including “*cell meetings*” (VCS) that involve VCS organisations, healthcare workers, the police, supported housing etc. These meetings were designed as a “*weekly update of really what the pressure points are for everybody and to make sure everybody’s aware*”

(VCS). Positively, these multiagency meetings had led to other groups that have been set up *“in four weeks, which probably would have taken two years previously”* (LA).

Given the concentration of services in the research working with asylum seekers and refugees, participants spoke of particular multiagency approaches that had been set up to better support this population over the course of the pandemic. This was cited as particularly useful in identifying issues such as the lack of access to the internet and digital devices for this population:

“We’ve got an asylum seeker refugee Covid task group. It’s a fortnightly meeting and it has representatives from organisations like ours and [organisation]. We have some people from the council and some people representing other support organisations and that’s come about because of Covid....The Covid group has been really helpful because we are able to get updates” (VCS)

Despite all of the changes arising from Covid-19, participants remained cognisant that the pandemic was not over. Participants expressed concern over the ongoing impact of the pandemic into the future. At the time of the interviews in the autumn participants reflected that *“another lockdown in the winter months would just be horrific”* (LA). It was noted that the winter was *“more depressing”* (LA) and led to more crisis generally (e.g., in terms of fuel poverty), and another lockdown could exacerbate these issues significantly. Similarly, there were more long-term worries thinking about *“as furlough ends and more people are given their notice”* (VCS). Consequently, professionals were concerned that there would be a significant increase in the number of service-users needing support as Covid-19 support measures came to an end. There were also concerns about the likely increase in mental health problems within the population, resulting from the increased stress arising from the pandemic.

5. Conclusion

This mixed-methods research has shed light on the views of local authority staff, VCS professionals, and service-users regarding defining, accessing, and engaging with crisis support organisations in Swansea.

In terms of definitions, professionals working in crisis support across Swansea had a broad understanding of what crisis was and the many different forms that it could take. They acknowledged crisis was a complex issue and spoke of the potential aggravating effect of one crisis on another. Nevertheless, crisis support aimed to address crisis in an urgent and comprehensive way, putting the needs of the service-user first and encouraging a strengths-based approach to support. The majority of participants referenced the DAF as a key mechanism to provide for support service-users within Swansea, however there was an aim for not only reactive crisis support but also proactive support help intervene early in crisis points.

Consistent with the results of the survey, those who participated in the focus groups and/or interviews, came from a wide-range of organisations, reflecting the breadth of support available across Swansea. Nevertheless, there was overrepresentation within the interviews of professionals working with asylum seekers and refugees, which should be noted. Participants across different crisis support services described the accessibility of services as heavily dependent on a range of factors that both facilitated or challenged access. Self-referral methods were viewed positively as enabling access and there were similar positive reflections on drop-in surgeries for timely crisis support. There were further considerations in terms of the location of support services, with access easier in urban areas with more services and access more challenging for people living in more rural areas who may be dependent on public transport. Similarly, language barriers were highlighted as a concern, particularly for asylum seekers and refugees in Swansea. However, progress had been made since Covid in increasing access for these populations with the development of a multi-language phone service. Lastly, there were concerns that stigma around help-seeking and welfare benefits was still prevalent and affected service-users willingness to engage with crisis support services.

In order to support service-users holistic and underlying needs, professionals described the importance of multiagency working and the coordination of services. Organisations had their area of expertise but were fully aware that they needed other organisations' expertise in other areas to fully support the wide range of needs that service-users may present with. There were benefits to organisations being in the

same place at the same time, and many participants cited food banks as a primary way of achieving this, given that people may present there for a variety of reasons. In addition to more formal multiagency and coordinated approaches, there was also value in informal relationships between organisations. Despite the coordination of services to better support service-users holistic needs, there were challenges in different organisations working with each other. The availability of a live directory of crisis organisations in Swansea, and service-users willingness to engage with support beyond the initial crisis were especially problematic.

Lastly, participants reflected on the significant impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on service provision and service-users' ability to access support. Whilst professionals in Swansea already had diverse definitions of crisis and crisis support, Covid-19 further broadened these definitions, also encompassing digital exclusion as a financial, social, and educational crisis. Commonly accepted crises were also present and exacerbated by the pandemic, including issues stemming from financial poverty and food poverty . This reflects the findings of the survey, which highlighted that the number of service-users since Covid-19 had increased. To respond to these increasing needs, services changed their delivery models to move to more remote support. Whilst this allowed them to continue their vital work there were concerns about excluding people without digital devices, the different platforms various organisations used, and the reduced level of human contact through remote service delivery. Organisations also noted other changes to their working habits, including more flexibility in the DAF, coordinating the community response to Covid, and adopting more holistic multiagency approaches to their work. Despite some of the positive changes in working habits, there were serious concerns about the long-lasting impact of the pandemic, especially where Welsh and UK Government support was going to end.



6. Appendices

Appendix A: Survey

Emergency Financial Crisis Support – Swansea

The Coordinated Community Support Programme is a partnership between The Children’s Society, Local Government Association, Trussell Trust, the Church of England, Lloyds Bank Foundation for England and Wales, and BBC Children in Need. We are working in partnership with four local authority areas across England and Wales to pilot a coordinated community support programme to better coordinate provision of emergency financial crisis support within local areas.

We have designed this survey to better understand emergency financial support in Swansea. The survey will ask about your organisation, the type of emergency financial support offered, geographical areas of work, the number of clients you support, and perceptions about support in the local area.

This survey is for any organisation working in the Swansea area who self-identifies as providing emergency crisis support to local residents.

The questionnaire should take no longer than 10-15 minutes to complete.

Your responses will remain confidential and will be analysed as a group to better understand local provision. The data from this survey will be shared with our external evaluators, Cloud Chamber, and the information will be used to inform a local report which will be published by The Children's Society in early 2021.

If you have any questions, or if you wish to withdraw your data before publication, please get in touch with Isabelle Rothstein from the Coordinated Community Support Team at The Children's Society:
Isabelle.Rothstein@childrenssociety.org.uk

1. The nature and purpose of the research has been explained and I agree to complete this survey. I understand that I am free to stop at any time.

- Yes, I agree to take part
- No, I do not agree to take part

2. Does your organisation provide emergency financial crisis support in Swansea?

- Yes
- No

3. What is the name of your organisation?

4. How long has your organisation been operational? Please select one.

- Under 6 months
- 6 months – 1 year
- 1 year – 2 years
- 2 years – 5 years
- 5 years – 10 years
- 10 years +
- I don't know

5. In Swansea, which area(s) do you work in? Please select all that apply.

- We work nationally
- We work across the whole local authority
- Bishopston
- Bonymaen
- Castle
- Clydach
- Cockett
- Cwmbwrla
- Dunvant
- Fairwood
- Goseinon
- Gower
- Gowerton
- Killay North
- Killay South
- Kingsbridge
- Landore
- Llangyfelach
- Llansamlet
- Lower Loughor

- Mawr
- Mayals
- Morryston
- Mynyddbach
- Newton
- Oystermouth
- Penclawdd
- Penderry
- Penllargaer
- Pennard
- Penyrheol
- Pontardulais
- Sketty
- St. Thomas
- Townhill
- Uplands
- Upper Loughor
- West Cross
- None of the above

6. What help does your organisation provide for those in need of emergency financial support? Please select all that apply.

- Advice and/or Information
- Clothing & Children's essentials
- Domestic violence support
- Food or food vouchers
- Fuel top up
- Furniture
- Monetary
- White good
- Other: please specify

7. What type of advice do you provide to those in need of emergency financial support? Please select all that apply.

- Debt advice
- Housing related advice
- Legal advice
- Specialist Immigration advice
- Welfare rights advice

- Supporting applications for Local Welfare Assistance or other emergency grants
- Other: please specify

8. How many people has your organisation supported since January 2020? Please provide an estimate if you are unsure. Alternatively, you can click "save and continue" to answer the question at a later time.

9. Of the service users that you have supported this year, what proportion of service-users have accessed the following different types of support? Please provide your best estimate. If your organisation does not offer one or more type(s) of crisis support, please select Not Applicable.

	N/a	0-20%	20-40%	40-60%	60-80%	80-100%
Clothing & Children's essentials	•	•	•	•	•	•
Domestic violence support	•	•	•	•	•	•
Food or food vouchers	•	•	•	•	•	•
Fuel top up	•	•	•	•	•	•
Furniture	•	•	•	•	•	•
Monetary	•	•	•	•	•	•
White goods	•	•	•	•	•	•
Other	•	•	•	•	•	•

10. Of the service users that you have supported this year, what proportion of service-users have accessed the following different types of advice? Please provide your best estimate. If your organisation does not offer one or more type(s) of advice, please select Not Applicable.

	N/a	0-20%	20-40%	40-60%	60-80%	80-100%
Debt advice	•	•	•	•	•	•
Housing related advice	•	•	•	•	•	•
Legal advice	•	•	•	•	•	•
Specialist Immigration advice	•	•	•	•	•	•
Welfare rights advice	•	•	•	•	•	•
Supporting applications for Local Welfare	•	•	•	•	•	•
Other	•	•	•	•	•	•

11. In comparison to January-September 2019, how has the number of clients that you have supported this year (Jan - September 2020) changed? Please select one.

- Significant increase
- Slight increase
- No change
- Slight decrease
- Significant decrease

Please use this space to elaborate on any further context for the change that may be specific to your location or organisation.



12. As a part of this research project, we are undertaking interviews with local VCS organisations to further explore access to crisis support, and resources to address underlying needs. If you or a colleague would be interested in participating in a focus group interview, please provide contact details below and a member of the team will be in touch. Please note that your contact details will be kept separate from your responses to the survey.

Appendix B: Topic guide for professionals (LA and VCS)

Focus Group Guide

Section One: Introductions and Background information

- Can you give me a brief overview of your organisation and your role within that?
 - What type of crisis support is offered?

Section Two: Perceptions of crisis support

- What is your assessment of need within the local area?
 - Any trends or patterns in needs? Concern for particular groups?
 - High demand for any particular resource? (e.g. white goods, digital, advice etc)?
 - Has this changed since COVID-19?
- How do you and your organisation define crisis support?
 - Sense that this is similar/different to other VCS organisations/LA?
 - Has this changed since COVID-19?

Section Three: Journey through crisis support

- Can you talk me through how you come into contact with clients/clients come into contact with you?
 - How could access to crisis support be improved?
 - What would need to be done to achieve this?
- What do your referral processes entail? (who is eligible, processes?)
 - Can service-users self-refer or referrals from others (if so, who?)
 - How could application/referral processes be simplified or streamlined?
 - What would need to be done to achieve this?
- How do you address and respond to clients' underlying needs?

- Signposting and/or referrals between agencies (is do, who)?
 - How co-ordinated are these processes between organisations?
 - Information sharing? (and issues with this e.g. consent)
 - How could holistic needs be better supported? (e.g. co-ordination)
 - What would need to be done to achieve this?
- What sort of aftercare support is available? Does support extend beyond addressing immediate crisis?
 - How could aftercare be improved to better address need?
 - What would need to be done to achieve this?
 - What are you most proud of in service and what works well?
 - What challenges are there to providing crisis support? (funding?)

Section Four: Multi-agency working

- To what extent do you work with the LA or other VCS organisations to provide services?
 - What are the facilitators and barriers to multi-agency working?
- How can organisations in the local area work together to better support people in crisis?

Section Fiver: Future thinking

- What impact, if any, has COVID-19, had on your work and your clients?
 - How do you see that changing in the next year?
 - How have you changed your delivery to reflect changing need since Covid-19?
 - Will any of these changes be maintained?
- What are the priorities for the future of your crisis support?
 - Any areas of innovation/improvement?
 - What are the barriers to these priorities?

Appendix C: Topic guide for service-users

Interview Guide for Service Users

Section One: Background information

- Can you tell me a bit about yourself? (general rapport building questions)
 - Where do you live?
 - Who do you live with?

Section Two: Perceptions of crisis support

- Before you were involved with [referring service], what did you know about crisis support?
 - Any expectations about what/how they would be able to help with?

Section Three: Journey through crisis support

We're conducting this project to better understand people's experiences through different crisis support organisations, so it would be really helpful if you could talk me through your journey.

- How did you first come into contact with the crisis support organisation?
 - Referral from organisation/self-referral/advertising?
 - What were your first impressions of the organisation?
 - What could have made this process easier/better?

- What were the application processes like?
 - *[If direct application to organisation]*
 - How did you apply? Phone/internet?
 - How long did this process take? How did you feel during this time?
 - What could have made this process easier/better?
 - *[If application made on behalf of service user to organisation]*

- How involved were you in the application process?
- What could have made this process easier/better?

- How did the organisation support you?
 - What type of support was provided?
 - How did you feel about the type/level of support?
 - To what extent did you feel that your needs were met?
 - What could have made this process easier/better?

- [if applicable] After you were provided with support from [organisation], did they offer any additional support (i.e. aftercare)?
 - Any outstanding needs?
 - Referred to other organisations?
 - Level of co-ordination between services?
 - Do they follow up?

Section Four: Future thinking

- Taking your experience as a whole, what do you feel went/worked well?

- Taking your experience as a whole, what went less well?
 - How could these aspects be improved?
 - Any advice for crisis support organisations?

Appendix D: Breakdown of service-user estimates from the survey

Approximate number of service-users supported for each service across all organisations who responded to the survey.

TOTAL no. service users	Clothing and essentials	Domestic violence support	Food or food vouchers	Fuel top up	Furniture	Monetary	White goods	Other
3000			2700					2100
150	75		45					75
92	9	28	46	9				64
8000			7200					
25	3		18	3	8	8	8	8
1000	700	300	900		100			300
500			150					250
1000			100					900
1000			300			900		900
8110			7299					
20			6	2			2	2
300	30		150					
800	240	240	560					720
TOTAL	1057	568	19474	14	108	908	5	5319
Average	176	189	1498	5	54	454	2	532

Approximate number of service-users supported for each advice/information type across all organisations who responded to the survey.

TOTAL no. service users	Debt advice	Housing related advice	Legal advice	Specialist Immigration advice	Welfare rights advice	Supporting applications for LWA	Other
150							45
92	83	83			64	83	46
8000							
25	3	8	3	3	8	8	3
1000	100	100					100
500		50	50	150	50		250
1000	900				900	300	
1000	900	700	100		100	500	900
20	18						
800		80		240		240	720
1900	950	1710			1710	950	1710
TOTAL	2953	2730	153	393	2832	2080	3774
Average	422	390	51	131	472	347	472