



MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT

Evaluation of Truacanta Project

Interim report

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Contents

1	Introduction -----	1
	The Truacanta project -----	1
	Intended outcomes -----	1
	The impact of COVID-19 -----	2
2	The evaluation -----	4
3	Methods -----	4
4	Key interim findings -----	5
	Summary of progress in meeting the planned outcomes -----	5
	The community projects -----	8
	Specific outputs and outcomes of additional activities -----	11
	Additional/unexpected outcomes -----	17
5	Learning points -----	19
6	Next steps -----	21

1 Introduction

Janet Biggar Research was commissioned along with Rebecca McFarlane Ltd to evaluate the Truacanta project. This interim report for The Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care presents our findings at the end of the first phase of the evaluation. A second phase will follow with a further, final report in May 2022.

The Truacanta project

The Truacanta Project was intended to support five local communities from different parts of Scotland who were interested in taking community action to improve people's experiences of death, dying, loss and care. The three year project was funded by Macmillan Cancer Support and included a dedicated Project Manager post, operating within the Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care (SPPC) as well as funding for small grants and development of resources. Delivery was intended to largely take the form of dedicated community development advice and support for a period of two years, provided by the Truacanta Project Manager, supplemented by small grants of up to £300 for specific activities.

Following on from preliminary work and a selection process undertaken from March to December 2019, five communities in Ayrshire, North Berwick, Highland, Dundee and Perthshire were selected to receive this support and were working towards beginning their local projects in April 2020 with the Truacanta project launch. Projects were scheduled to run until March 2022.

Intended outcomes

The Truacanta Project is grounded in a community development approach, where local projects are led by local communities, and participating communities set out their own desired outcomes for their local projects. However, at an overall project level, the intended outcomes for the Truacanta project were that:

1. People have improved knowledge of how to respond to declining health, death, dying and bereavement themselves.
2. People have improved confidence/knowledge/skills relating to supporting others through declining health, death, dying and bereavement.
3. People have improved access to relevant local information relating to declining health, death, dying and bereavement.
4. Different organisations/groups undertaking relevant activity have strengthened relationships/mutual understanding in their activities to support people with declining health, death, dying and bereavement.

5. People have more opportunities to plan for declining health, death, dying and bereavement.
6. People have more opportunities to offer support in the face of declining health, death, dying and bereavement.
7. More people offer support to others during times of declining health, dying, loss and care.
8. People receive more support relating to declining health, death, dying and bereavement from community members.
9. SPPC has a better understanding of how to build community/individual capacity to respond to death, dying and bereavement.

The impact of COVID-19

The pandemic impacted severely on the Truacanta project in a number of ways, but most significantly a combination of lockdowns, shielding, furlough and the necessity to redeploy resource from planned activity to COVID-19 response meant that the communities could not proceed with their planned activity. Two communities (Truacanta Perthshire and Say Something Dundee) chose to adapt their plans and deliver some activity, whilst the remaining three were put on hold until March 2021. However, late in 2020 North Berwick Compassionate Community began meeting to discuss how to move forward and are now developing their ideas and a timeline.

After consideration of the need and opportunity to divert resource to other activity to support the development of compassionate communities and consultation with the Good Life, Good Death, Good Grief (GLGDGG) network, the Truacanta Project Manager, whilst continuing to support the two ongoing community projects, planned and undertook additional activities, including:

An Introduction to End of Life Issues online module

A need was identified for some form of training for redeployed health and social care professionals or volunteers who may not have experience in end of life support. A condensed version of the recently developed End of Life skills for Everyone (EASE) course was created as an introductory online module that people could work through in their own time, that would help them to become more comfortable and confident supporting people with issues they face during death, dying and bereavement. A supportive, group discussion was a key element of the in-person course, the option of a facilitated online discussion session is also offered to those who have completed the online module. This was distinct from the full 4-week EASE course which has more recently been piloted online and will be further developed this year, including a facilitator manual and a 'train-the-trainers' approach.

Compassionate Communities workshops

Following consultation with the Scottish Compassionate Communities and GLGDGG networks, workshops were developed and run on the topics of:

- Bringing Death, Dying and Bereavement Work Online
- Community Development
- Creating Accessible and Inclusive Spaces

The workshops focused on interactive networking, discussion and sharing, with invited speakers sharing experiences and were run in October and November 2020.

Online resources and information

Various online resources, information and activities were implemented. These included a Truacanta project blog, Compassionate Communities Week 2020, and Hoping for the best, planning for the worst - COVID-19 information pages.

2 The evaluation

The original evaluation objectives were to:

- Understand the impact of the five local projects.
- Learn about the effectiveness of the overall model (one community development practitioner supporting five local communities).
- Share the learning gained from the project with other communities and stakeholders in Scotland.
- Inform how future 'compassionate communities' work in Scotland is undertaken.
- Contribute to international literature relating to public health palliative care.

The impact of COVID-19 on the project plan and work delivered necessitated a change in focus for the evaluation to include the impact and value of unplanned SPPC work undertaken in response to the COVID-19 situation. The evaluation approach was split into two phases: the first focussing on the unplanned work as described above, alongside initial contact and feedback from all five community projects. This interim report presents the findings from that work and reflects on learning points and potential next steps.

3 Methods

In this first phase of the evaluation, the following work was undertaken.

Activity	Approach
Familiarisation	Review of background information and documentation such as project application forms project reporting, steering group minutes, etc.
Consultation with stakeholders	Depth interviews with the Project Manager and with Director of GLGDGG Depth interviews with members of the Truacanta Steering Group
Review of on-line resources and activity	Desk research
Consultation with community projects	Depth interviews with community lead
Consultation with event participants	Semi-structured interviews with 7 An Introduction to End of Life Issues online module participants and with 8 people who attended the workshops

Research tools were designed to focus on progress towards the intended outcomes, identify any additional outcomes, and as far as possible, to explore the original evaluation objectives.

4 Key interim findings

Summary of progress in meeting the planned outcomes

Overall, despite the disruption of COVID-19, good progress has been made towards achieving the planned outcomes. Some of this progress is clearly and directly attributable to the work undertaken under the banner of the Truacanta project. Some of the planned outcomes encompass quite high expectations and, particularly in the environment of the pandemic, when so many other novel activities were being undertaken within communities and societal attitudes and behaviours were changing, would be difficult to attribute specifically to the Truacanta initiative.

It should also be noted that this is early days and some of these outcomes will potentially take longer to achieve. For example, increased opportunities to offer support and more people offering support to people facing death dying and bereavement take time to build and ripple out from some of the more direct outcomes such as increased knowledge and confidence. There is, however, no doubt that the Truacanta project has resonated with those involved and has made a relevant and valuable contribution at community level.

Our assessment of progress towards each of the planned outcomes is summarised in the table overleaf. This draws on all the evidence sources available to, and generated by, the evaluation.

“ I would love to inspire them to look at how to do things differently because there are ways to do it digitally that might even be better. I hope each can start to come out of this and have energy to do things in a different way and use me as support to drive that forward.

Project Manager

Planned outcome	Assessment
<p>1 People have improved knowledge of how to respond to declining health, death, dying and bereavement themselves</p>	<p>There was strong agreement, particularly amongst participants in the workshops and those who had completed the An Introduction to End of Life Issues online module that their knowledge was improved. For some who already had a lot of knowledge there were useful reminders and refreshers.</p> <p>The online resources also provide a wealth of knowledge and information, and several evaluation participants commented on the quality of the GLGDGG website, finding it to contain a wealth of information and useful resources.</p>
<p>2 People have improved confidence/knowledge/skills relating to supporting others through declining health, death, dying and bereavement</p>	<p>Online module and workshop participants resoundingly declared increased confidence in general, and for participants in the workshop on bringing support online, confidence to do this was acquired.</p> <p>The projects have been using social media to encourage conversations about loss.</p>
<p>3 People have improved access to relevant local information relating to declining health, death, dying and bereavement</p>	<p>The GLGDGG website was mentioned frequently as an information source and some online module and workshop participants felt they had access to a wider range of national and sometimes local information, partly directly and partly through the networking opportunities and new contacts made at the workshops or indirectly from involvement in other activities that they found out about during their participation. Project leads cited sharing of Truacanta and GLGDGG work by mental health services in local areas.</p>
<p>4 Different organisations/groups undertaking relevant activity have strengthened relationships/mutual understanding in their activities to support people with declining health, death, dying and bereavement</p>	<p>The networking opportunities provided through the workshops and online module generated 1 or 2 specific examples of new connections made and ripples out to a wider range of organisations and activities.</p> <p>This is a big part of what has already been achieved by the community projects.</p>
<p>5 People have more opportunities to plan for declining health, death, dying and bereavement</p>	<p>The extent to which this has been achieved has depended on individual circumstances, but some participants felt that their involvement with Truacanta had led to more opportunities and others pointed out that with</p>

Planned outcome	Assessment
	<p>more understanding, they were more likely to create opportunities. The workshops enabled more opportunities to work collaboratively and use shared knowledge to develop planning. One project lead was drawing Truacanta work into other streams of her professional activity with other organisations.</p>
<p>6 People have more opportunities to offer support in the face of declining health, death, dying and bereavement</p>	<p>✓ The extent to which this is achieved depends on individual circumstances and has been affected by COVID-19, but participants felt that their increased confidence is likely to be leading to these opportunities. Some workshop participants have made new links that are likely to lead to more opportunities and others felt that the amount of resource they were linked to through participation would definitely result in additional opportunities.</p>
<p>7 More people offer support to others during times of declining health, dying, loss and care</p>	<p>✓ There is some early evidence of this and a few specific examples of participants offering new or qualitatively different support as a result of increased knowledge or confidence. Awareness may have been raised through the Truacanta project blog, although this is not measurable.</p>
<p>8 People receive more support relating to declining health, death, dying and bereavement from community members</p>	<p>? This is likely to take time and is very difficult to assess without a benchmark and in the circumstances of a pandemic and increased levels of death, dying and bereavement, would be difficult to attribute. There was evidence of interest from people already involved (such as volunteers) wanting to become more literate and capable.</p>
<p>9 SPPC has a better understanding of how to build community/individual capacity to respond to death, dying and bereavement</p>	<p>✓ It is clear that SPPC has developed a great deal of understanding in this area. Community capacity building was a new approach within the organisation and the appointment of the Project Manager represented the introduction of a new skill set within the organisation. We can further assess the extent to which this understanding is embedded during the second phase of the evaluation. Project leads described SPPC (beyond the Project Manager) as very helpful and engaged.</p>

The community projects

The community projects have already achieved a great deal through forming local partnerships and working through the process of devising a project and achieving their status as part of Truacanta. These were new partnerships for some, introduced to each other by the Truacanta Project Manager. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging for them all and has made it impossible to continue with their activities as planned. All five project leads were interviewed and verbatim quotes from them are included in this section.

” *A lot of stuff just gets lost, and everyone involved has more work pressure of their own things.*

Project lead

Because of COVID-19 people are stretched, re-tasked and working harder than ever.

Project lead

The two community projects that have been able to continue, and one beginning to revive activity more recently, have had to adapt their plans as a result of the pandemic, but view the need for compassionate communities related work, peer support, cohesion and partnership working as stronger than ever. There was recognition of the skills that exist in communities and the need to find ways to develop and support these. Project leads have appreciated the flexible attitude to the approach they've been able to take.

” *For us COVID-19 has given us more drive, there's a real passion and more need for what we're doing now.*

Project lead

The broadening of Truacanta has been really helpful, rather than focus on loss and grief we were reassured that it was OK to do something slightly different because this is a national change, we are all going through and all absence/loss is relevant.

Project lead

Impact and reflections

Project leads reported that, despite the circumstances of the pandemic, they had been able to achieve things through their involvement in Truacanta that would not otherwise have been possible. The small amounts of funding would not have been accessible through any other source and funded activity that could not have otherwise taken place. The real benefits though were the support of the Project Manager and the credibility of being part of the project in leveraging other resources or partners.

” *The encouragement and support ... being able to chat through ideas and her knowledge of community engagement, that is worth more than anything.*

Project lead

Being part of wider network and sharing learning and experience and a sense of pride in being picked as a community, this definitely enabled us to get funding from the area partnership. I don't think we would have got that otherwise. We have more recognition now after having this voice.

Project lead

Others talked about a growing understanding in their local professional communities of not being bound by very precise project management or logic model approaches, but a more evolving organic approach emerging from a sense of community, place and culture. They report positive responses from professionals they did not think would be interested, wanting to contribute to the broader process and emerging local initiatives and partnerships.

” *The planning event included 3rd sector organisations and since we put in the application there is a local 'no one dies alone' 3rd sector organisation come into being, so they will be included too. So, there is a wider range of organisation involved now.*

Project lead

Say Something Dundee spoke at one of the online workshops and participants found that a really useful and informative input. Several mentioned their intention to think about how they could do something similar in their own community.

Effectiveness of the model

Community development was a new approach for SPPC and for the GLGDGG network more widely. For that reason, a lot of work was put into supporting the projects shortlisted to develop their approach and applications. This was viewed as a successful approach and it is evident that both the project leads and SPPC learned a lot from the process. Stakeholders commented that the difference between the original notes of interest and the final 'vision for change' submitted by each project was notable. Project leads affirmed that they had found this process useful in clearly thinking through what they wanted to achieve for their communities and importantly, what their community would like to see.

While there were mixed views on the effectiveness of an approach that offered central community development support to disparate local communities, overall, the support provided by the Truacanta Project Manager was viewed as invaluable. The approach of mentoring, encouragement and providing a sounding board, enabled

projects to be community led but supported to develop their capacity. This was particularly experienced by those who did not have extensive community development experience within their partnership.

“ *[Project Manager] brings a lot of experience. Sometimes we can go off on a tangent. She helps to keep us focused as a group and has been hugely beneficial to us. We get easily sucked into other work and she helps keep us on track.*

Project lead

Others felt that a central community development resource was counter to the bottom-up approach that good community development work should take and were keen to point out that they have community development expertise, although they may not have used it in this context before. For these projects, the key benefit of the model is in the networking opportunities and the chance to share learning and knowledge with others from other areas.

“ *For me, the key things are accompaniment and connection to a wider network, learning and being part of something bigger.*

Project lead

It worked well because, with her experience, she can come into meetings of different people from different services. She can listen and then reflect what she sees and it's helpful to have that outside view.

Project lead

The availability of only small amounts of funding associated with being part of the Truacanta project was seen as enough by most of the local projects, with the exception of one that is volunteer-led and has no other resource. However, even for this project, being part of Truacanta has enabled them to leverage funding and a partnership that they would not otherwise have been able to access. The advantage of not being highly funded, some pointed out, is that there is less pressure to be accountable to a funder.

“ *It's much more active support than the normal funding approach – though perhaps less accountable?*

Project lead

It was a good process as these three organisations probably wouldn't have come together. It was a good opportunity and clever because it was not about money.

Project lead

We are a small group of volunteers. We know about community development so don't need educational input on how to do it. We don't need to be empowered, we want to contribute and shape and provide

networks and partnerships but not have that level of responsibility, which makes the support part difficult.

Project lead

From SPPC's point of view it was important to reverse the normal power dynamic between community projects and funders, to empower them to make change happen without forcing change from 'above' and to be innovative with the assets available. This was a new approach for SPPC and for the Project Manager. It was hoped that, by supporting projects to develop from a community development stance, sustainability would be more likely to be assured.

“ *It's a new approach to me too, but I think it's really positive. It's a problem I've faced over the years in communities with short term funded projects – that's valuable but there's no sustainability. So, this is a good model and idea because sustainability has to be built in from the outset. I wonder if more stuff like this will emerge now. There's lots of interest in organic community responses in the wake of the pandemic and the way communities responded.*

Project Manager

What could we [SPPC] helpfully offer people that wasn't going to change them? Who gets money and who decides what it's spent on? ... so we have small amounts of money so we don't have reliance... it's not helpful to do a short-term project and then remove yourselves. This approach encourages you to be quite innovative – and you can do more with less.

SPPC

While many recognised the benefits of the approach, some suggested that more networking between the projects would be a useful addition to the approach to date, in particular to share experience of community development and their common interest in culture in different communities and how this impacts on loss and grief. Sharing experiences relating to rural versus city communities would also be useful.

Specific outputs and outcomes of additional activities

An Introduction to End of Life Issues online module

Nineteen people have completed module evaluation surveys, and all agreed with statements to say they found the module helpful, felt more knowledgeable about death, dying and bereavement, and that the module had given them confidence in their innate ability to support and care for people through difficult times. The following subsections outline our findings from telephone interviews with seven module participants.

Motivation

Most participants told us that they had primarily completed the module for professional reasons, but several had a personal interest as well. For some, it had provided reassurance and confidence in what they were already doing for people they support in their professional lives. For some with personal experience of caring for a loved one, it brought some comfort that they were doing/had done the best they could.

” *I wanted to bring something to those that I support.*

It benefited me in two different ways: retrospectively and into the future too, definitely.

Delivery

The online delivery of the module was perceived to have been accomplished really well. The mix and balance of video clips and other content helped people to follow the module in a way that flowed and supported their learning.

” *The course was perfect!*

It was exceptional: really, really well done. People’s manners were empathetic and there was a lovely gentle manner throughout. It was really reassuring about death and dying.

The course explained in a really lovely way, flowed really nicely and the examples and videos were really good.

I felt looked after even though I was on my own doing it remotely.

All the video clips were very helpful. I had the concentration for it. Online wasn’t an issue.

One participant mentioned a follow-up zoom discussion that they didn’t hear any more about and one mentioned that no-one turned up to the one she attended. One had clearly been involved in a follow up zoom session and felt it had been very useful. Another said that some interactive discussion after the video clips would have been helpful.

There were a couple of suggestions for additional materials including a manual/booklet at the end of the training that could serve as a reminder/refresher to refer to, and a refresher module, perhaps in a couple of years to update and refresh knowledge. One participant suggested that maybe a podcast would be a way to deliver this kind of knowledge in communities.

Learning

Participants talked about a range of learning from the module and enjoyed the ‘scenarios’ and the amount and range of useful information provided. For those who

felt quite experienced, there was an appreciation of the module as a reminder and refresher of the things they had forgotten they'd forgotten.

Others mentioned new things that they would now be thinking about in their support work, such as information about plans and choices in relation to medication and how and by who it is administered or the range of feelings of the person dying.

” *There's always something new to learn. Some things like active listening you think you know, but you pick up new things – good pointers.*

It was good to develop confidence and sometimes it helps to reinforce what you do know. It gave me a 'go-to'.

I now have more tools to help me. It gives me more confidence that I know how to deal with the situation.

A very good general module touching on a lot of areas – the emotional and spiritual issues were also very good.

Others mentioned what they had learned about other resources and sources of support for dealing with death, dying and bereavement. Depending on their particular roles and circumstances the extent to which the participants had had the opportunity to put what they had learned into practice varied, but those who had had the opportunity were able to reflect on the differences in the ways they now support people dealing with death, dying and bereavement.

” *There are very subtle changes in the way I'm speaking to them. I would previously have shied away from contacting people just bereaved but through the course I have felt it is important to acknowledge. I now call back and give them space and time to talk about what happened and follow up with questions about how they're feeling, which I might not have done previously.*

Additional topics

Asked what else they would like to learn about, a couple of people mentioned they would like more on how to support families and carers, both during dying and after a bereavement. One mentioned the area of supporting people after a suicide. Other suggestions included more on managing palliative care and end of life medication, information on Power of Attorney and Wills, and information on trauma and the physical effects on the body of grief.

” *One of the things that worries carers is their own upset in front of the person and how they manage that. I would've benefited knowing more about supporting family members.*

More focus on supporting bereaved people as opposed to dying and end of life.

Compassionate Communities workshops

Motivation

All three workshops were well received by the participants we spoke to. Most had a professional interest and were keen to learn more about how they could deliver the support they offer in the COVID-19 environment, and about what others were doing.

” You become confident in your own way of working. To have the confidence to bring the sensitive stuff online. It’s important to know how to do it properly. It was really helpful to hear how someone had done that and create the safe space to do it online.

I really like the idea to bring people from lots of organisations to deliver the same thing but also have that overarching support that links you and connects you, sharing resources and experiences. It’s the sort of work you don’t want to be isolated while doing, so whatever brings people together is good.

Delivery

Workshop participants, whether they had been to all three or just one or two, were really positive about the ways the workshops were delivered. The use of the breakout groups and chat function, and modelling/demonstration of additional tools such as Padlet, were both effective and helpful in developing participants’ own practice. The online delivery was seen as a positive and helpful approach, both in terms of accessibility and learning.

” One of the things I liked was the use of Padlet as group exercise. I took this back and used in a workshop then shared it for people who couldn’t make it or had to leave early so they could input following session. It was really useful, and I will use it again.

I wouldn’t have travelled for a 2-hour course, but this really works for snippets of education and sharing.

The workshop approach was a welcome opportunity to connect with others and over the three events, for those who attended them all, connections were strengthened. Several mentioned ongoing connections or collaborations that have arisen from meeting at the workshops and additional learning or collaboration opportunities they found out about from other participants. Some were relatively new in their posts and found the networking particularly useful in a time when the usual ways of connecting with people are restricted. The tone was reassuring and supportive and the workshops were perceived to be very well facilitated.

” It was such a positive experience being around such nice and knowledgeable people ... that networking opportunity was brilliant.

It really gave me opportunities to network, sharing experiences and knowledge.

There was really good modelling of a collaborative approach, sharing each other's assets.

Related to this, there was a positive reaction to the peer learning/knowledge sharing aspect of the way the workshops were run and an appetite for more opportunities for this. Participants found discussions around things that were happening in other areas/organisations really helpful and thought provoking. Some felt that the networking opportunity could have been extended, either at the end of each workshop or in a more ongoing way.

” *There's no bumping around or meeting people in the pandemic ... I felt less like the only person doing this.*

It would have been helpful at the end to go back to breakout rooms or have an opportunity to network and reflect even just to keep meeting open for people that want to stay and chat a bit.

Establish a community of practitioners, people you're connected with regularly through a brief discussion or seminar and maybe like a supervision group, so there's a bit of discussion and sharing practice and then a bit of peer support. An ongoing community of practice would be great.

Linked to this, a more formalised approach to sharing contact details was called for by some, either by sharing a list of attendees in advance or during the workshop. One participant commented that email addresses were shared in the chat at the beginning of a workshop, but she didn't have time to note them down.

Learning

Workshop participants all stated that they had a very positive learning experience that was well balanced and relevant to their role, giving them additional tools and confidence at a time when they really needed them. They identified changes to their own practice as a direct result of what they learned in the workshops.

” *Listening to [speaker] speak about how she is doing digital and I had no idea how to approach this and how it would work. I was worried people might be triggered. Now I am confident and know I can do this.*

The advice on good practice, useful hints and tips, practical things like how to set up online workshops, the number of people you might need, counselling afterwards, things to do with people, really useful things. It was gold dust and gave me confidence that it is possible

Initially, on paper, the third one was of least interest and it turned out to be the most useful of all. It was a gut punch and a launch point for engaging with this community. It wouldn't have been on my radar if I not been to that one.

It definitely does help me to support others

It modelled really good possibilities, so I'm now looking at current limitations with a more opportunistic eye. Modelling gives me courage to translate skills to a new medium. It is possible to do something authentic.

As well as increased knowledge, tools, connections and confidence, workshop participants felt more connected to resources that they could explore to help consider what would work best for their own roles and communities. They appreciated the opportunity to link with SPPC and Truacanta work and to the Compassionate Communities approach and network, for guidance and consistency.

” *It's important for me to know what the action plan is and linking in with the team just to ensure we're singing from the same hymn sheet because compassionate communities can be badged in many different ways.*

Online resources and information

The project supported the delivery of various online resources and information made available through the GLGDGG website. These included a Truacanta project blog, information on the Compassionate Communities Week 2020 and information webpages targeted at those who are at an increased risk of contracting and/or dying from COVID-19 - Hoping for the best, planning for the worst. This section provides some analysis of the webpages' Google Analytics data to provide an idea of how much the resources were viewed. While only a small number of interviewees mentioned the online resources, for those who had engaged with them, the feedback on both the specific project webpages, and the wider GLGDGG website was positive.

” *Their resources they have on their website are really great.*

Workshop participant

I signpost people to the compassionate community resources and share on our website and twitter. There's a lot of work to be done on community development and people's understanding of it. People are more aware of it now and it's good to have a toolkit.

Project lead

The things they're doing and talking about and the people associated with them, they have really interesting projects on the go. I was interested in what they were doing.

Workshop participant

Scottish palliative care is world-leading

Workshop participant

Truacanta project blog

The blog was established to enable those involved in and/or associated with the Truacanta project to share their experiences and stories. Ten blogs have been written to date, a third by the project manager, and two thirds by guest writers, mainly project leads. Six were written in 2019, three in 2020 and one in 2021. Page visit/viewing statistics reflect the number of blogs posted. For example, views in 2020 (436) were half what they were in 2019 (848). Blog post views make up just 1% of the total views on the GLGDGG website. The blog can be viewed [here](#).

Compassionate Communities Week

Compassionate Communities Week took place across Scotland from 27 April to 3 May 2020 to acknowledge, share and grow the compassion and innovation that communities were showing in response to COVID-19. During the week, the team at GLGDGG encouraged people to share their good ideas and examples of the practical actions community groups had been taking to help those most vulnerable during the crisis. These examples were then presented on the webpage: Community Responses to COVID-19. Eight examples of community projects were suggested and posted on the page. The page had a similar number of visits to the blog. A total of 433 visited the page between March 2020 and February 2021 (less than 1% of total visits to the GLGDGG website), with an average time spent on the page being two minutes. The webpages can be viewed [here](#) and [here](#).

Hoping for the best, planning for the worst (COVID-19 information pages).

These web pages were set up to provide information for people in Scotland who may be worried that they, or someone they care about, is at increased risk of getting seriously ill and potentially dying from COVID-19. The pages include information on a range of topics, such as what to expect, the care and treatment available, how decisions are made, planning, and what to do if someone dies. The table below shows the number of visits to the various pages available.

Webpage	Number of views (Mar20 to Feb21)
Support with COVID-19	3,727 (7% of total GLGDGG views)
After a death COVID-19	978 (2% of total GLGDGG views)
COVID-19 information films	457 (>1% of total GLGDGG views)
Community responses to COVID-19	433 (>1% of total GLGDGG views)

Additional/unexpected outcomes

We asked all project leads and stakeholders to reflect on whether they had noted any outcomes in addition to the planned ones and whether anything had surprised

them about the project. Of course, many of the project activities varied from those planned at the outset, so there were correspondingly different outputs and some resultant expected variation in outcomes. To some extent, this is part of the nature of community development approaches at any time.

“ *It’s almost like we’re re-defining the Truacanta project, but you’ve always got scope for that with community development.*

Stakeholder

However, the pandemic and re-direction of the project led to some interesting additional outcomes including the development of the Introduction to End of Life Issues online module, making it accessible to a wider range of people and the development of completely new very successful online workshops, also much more accessible/ far-reaching than face to face workshops would have been. These activities were highly valued by participants and clearly contributed to achieving some of the project’s intended outcomes, but arguably with a wider geographical and organisational reach than the originally planned activity. It is likely therefore, though not measurable within the scope of the evaluation so far, that the identified increased confidence and knowledge will contribute to achieving some of the wider community-based outcomes in time. The train the trainers EASE courses now running will provide an opportunity to enhance this further.

5 Learning points

The community response to the crisis and extent to which community efforts have supported people most in need across Scotland demonstrates the level of compassion that exists within communities. As we emerge from the pandemic the challenge for the Truacanta project and for the wider Compassionate Communities network, will be to capture and build on that potential. Stakeholders noted a more widespread interest in the impacts of ageing and dying and co-morbidity around social isolation and in community resilience and compassion as a result of their experiences during COVID-19.

” The essence of the Compassionate Communities movement was never more relevant. The challenge now is how to continue.

Stakeholder

Longer term this pandemic will pave way for much broader engagement around end of life.

Stakeholder

The pandemic necessitated a complete re-think about how best to support both the Truacanta projects and communities more widely. Both the Project Manager and SPPC as an organisation have learned a great deal about **what can be achieved through online interaction** and how to successfully deliver online training and learning. This is currently being rolled out to include a 'train the trainers' approach so that the EASE skills can be more widely developed within local communities reaching more people than anticipated at the outset of the Truacanta project.

” There is more understanding emerging of what community development actually means. Seeing the response from communities in the early days of pandemic was very informative and inspiring and there is a lot of learning in terms of what organisation's role can be.

Project Manager

One project said they wish they had started a year ago and would have been in in place, as their work is needed now.

Project Manager

It's allowing a lot of different people to take part than would have been possible before. We are all getting our big boots on in terms of the digital space – that's a COVID-19 silver lining.

Stakeholder

The online training and events have been exceptionally successful and meet a key need in an environment where many organisations have found it difficult to continue to support people and communities. Specifically, there is useful feedback for ongoing development of online learning, namely:

- Additional opportunities to network via video call would be helpful and could be delivered at the end of a learning event or separately and more regularly
- Peer support and knowledge sharing is invaluable and more and more regular opportunities for this sort of activity online would be appreciated
- Even when face to face learning is again possible, online formats have a lot to offer, particularly for workshops/seminars and can be more accessible for some
- Modelling of online tools and approaches is an effective way to build capacity for knowledge sharing
- More use could be made of the comments function on the blog to allow for opportunities to network and share information.

All involved have learned something valuable about **a new model of support for community projects**. It was challenging for SPPC, the Project Manager and for project leads to work in a different relationship without large amounts of funding and associated criteria, goals and measures. In general, and at this early stage, it is viewed as a successful approach. The flexibility it has allowed to adapt to the crisis has been invaluable. Despite the challenging environment and need to revise their plans *Say Something Dundee* and *Truacanta Perthshire* have both been able to provide vital support and all projects have built partnerships and foundations for further achievement: they attribute this success to the support of the Truacanta project.

As an organisation, SPPC has responded successfully to a huge challenge to deliver responsive and relevant, far-reaching support. It will be interesting in the second phase of this evaluation to reflect on the extent to which the new skills and learning developed within SPPC are embedded and likely to become sustainable beyond the end of the Truacanta funding.

6 Next steps

We are at the end of phase one of the evaluation, a point agreed for review and consideration of the path for the remainder of the evaluation. To date, the original proposed approach has been adapted to cover the additional unplanned work undertaken under the Truacanta banner in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Initial conversations with all five of the originally planned community projects have also been undertaken. Phase two as agreed to date should focus on ongoing work with all active community projects to support meaningful and relevant evaluation of their activities. In addition to this, we would like to suggest (and believe we have resource for within the parameters of the original budget) the following:

1. Evaluation of the train the trainers EASE activity and follow up with the trainers as they roll out training more widely (within the timescales of the evaluation). There are some early data from course evaluation forms, which we have not covered in this report and we believe a short unstructured telephone interview with a sample would yield additional useful information.
2. Activity to be agreed as appropriate to evaluate any other additional/unplanned work undertaken as part of the Truacanta project, within scope of the budget and timeframe.
3. Further consultation with a few key stakeholders towards the end of the evaluation period to reflect on their perceptions and experiences and to consider key learning points for the SPPC and Compassionate Communities movement and the GLGDGG network more widely.