

GROWING HOPE IN OUR COMMUNITIES

S T R A T E G I C D O C U M E N T



GROWING COMPASSIONATE COMMUNITIES

*Working towards inclusiveness of all
diverse groups and people*

Charity number: 1176047

www.growingcompassion.org.uk



Growing Compassionate Communities Trustees

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Dedication

This document is dedicated to all those people and groups who are isolated, lonely, and stigmatised, and find themselves on the margins of their communities.

Foreword

Michael Tomlinson MP

I was delighted to be asked by Peter to write a foreword for this important document. I have followed this project closely and attended several GCC events – all have been fascinating and a great opportunity to connect with others and support our local community.

It is clear that the title is well crafted, and in fact speaks for itself. Growing a compassionate community is something for every resident to be involved with. It is an aim that we should all share, as we all collectively input to it and benefit from it. Perhaps especially now, in the middle of a global pandemic, at a time such as this, the importance of compassionate communities is so clear, not just for us here in Dorset, but right across the country.

I applaud the passion, drive and commitment that has gone into this movement, and commend this report and the hard work undertaken in its production. Do read and learn from it, as I have, and be inspired to get involved in growing your local compassionate community.

Introduction

Peter Jones: Chair Growing Compassionate Communities

As chair I see my role as providing clear leadership and vision to the Growing Compassionate Communities charity.

We seek to deliver this vision of growing compassionate and inclusive communities for all diverse groups and peoples through the creating of partnerships and collaborations.

This document emerges directly from those partnerships and collaborations when we all came together on the 7th March 2020 in Corfe Mullen.

Delegates were invited to reflect on their communities and organisations in terms of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This was a ground-breaking event in many ways but principally it brought together groups from across the county in one place and through consensus arrive at a place to move forward as a whole.

This strategic document seeks to bring together all those conversations in such a way as to begin to grow a vision that facilitates the growing of hope in our communities.

We have embarked on a significant journey that may well change the landscape of our communities forever in a way of promoting inclusiveness and growing hope in the communities in which we seek to serve.

A significant outcome of the conference was the formal launch of a strategy to engage with groups and peoples was a hidden disability scheme consisting of a green wrist band to be worn by community helpers and a green ribbon to be worn by people to communicate that they may have hidden disabilities. We plan to roll this important scheme out across all communities.

Moreover, this document provides a roadmap for this journey, one that is committed to growing hope in our communities. It provides an evidence base to build on and shape our communities for future generations.

Background

This document takes a grassroots approach to understanding emerging themes and issues as well as unmet needs in our communities. The conversations took place within the Growing Compassionate Communities inaugural conference, Growing hope in our Communities on the 7th March 2020.

The conference provided a window into local communities whilst providing the opportunity to:

- Take stock of our communities' journey and achievement's
- Sharing each other's vision for our communities
- Provide space to share and pool practice and experience
- Provide an opportunity to network
- Explore and agree next steps

These were the primary focus conference. The various chapters of this document pick up these themes then seeks to translate them into a 5-year action plan.

Another outcome of this conference was the creation of a steering group to deliver on - the outcomes of the conference. This steering group will sit below the Growing compassionate communities' trustees and be accountable to them.

The key focus of this steering group is to facilitate the delivery of the 5-year action plan that emerged from the Growing Hope in our Communities' conference.

Methodology

The SWOT exercise was conducted within the Conference, with over 40 delegates attending. During the morning, as part of the process, the delegates broke into small working groups with the agenda of exploring Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT). They discussed their thoughts and experiences and recorded these in the different areas on flip chart sheets. These were then shared with the Conference, with opportunity to read through what other groups had put and to reflect upon and discuss outside the groups.

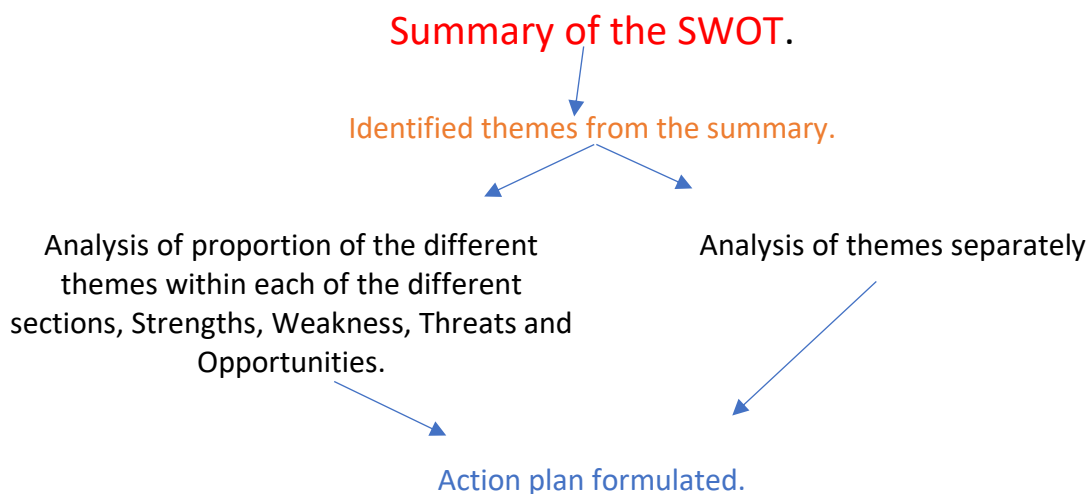
A thematic analysis was later conducted at several levels to draw out key themes and messages from the SWOT analysis. These levels included:

Drawing together an overall summary of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats across the whole exercise, using percentages to show relative differences and size. Within each of these different areas of the SWOT exercise, themes began to emerge. These were analysed to identify primary key themes.

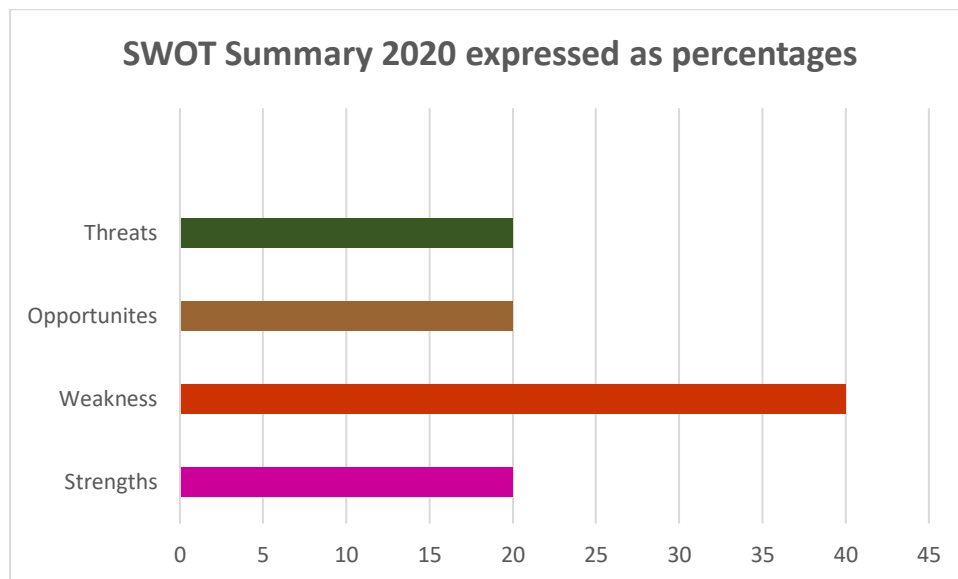
These key themes were then explored separately in more depth, looking at each theme and the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that had been identified within these.

From this whole analysis, an action plan was formulated, rooted in the emerging themes of the exercise to inform the next steps in the community.

The process was as follows:



Analysis of the themes emerging from the SWOT Consultation



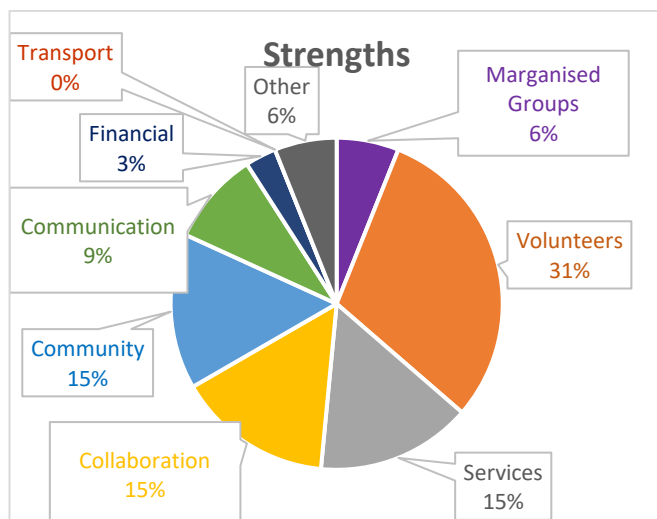
Graph 1.

The above chart (Graph 1) shows the summary of the SWOT analysis, showing clearly that delegates of the Conference felt that there were more identified weaknesses in our communities than strengths, threats, and opportunities. An initial observation of the data was that the Weakness section was double the order of the other 3 sections, coming in at 40%, compared to 20% for each of the other 3 sections.

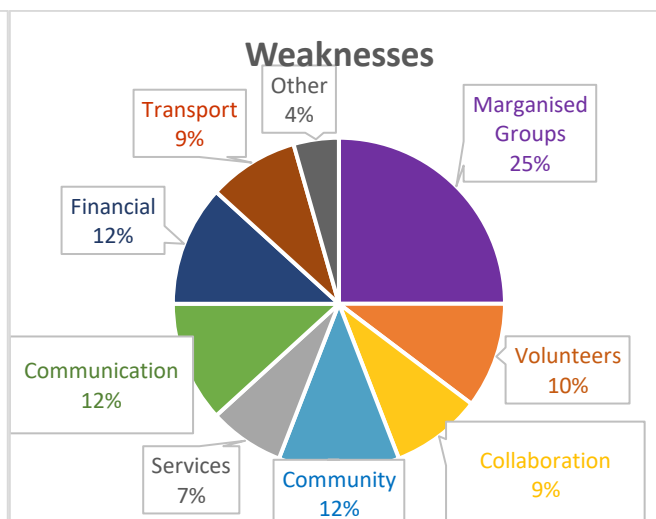
When analysing the data, the following themes emerged:

- **Volunteers:** that offer their help and support to manage the community's activities.
- **Marginalised groups:** This refers to groups and individuals on the edges of the community.
- **Services:** which included what communities offer by way of activities for marginalised groups.
- **Collaboration:** within and across communities and Groups.
- **Community:** This relates to the wider community in which the groups operate.
- **Communication:** This theme included both online and written communication.
- **Financial**
- **Transport**
- **Other**

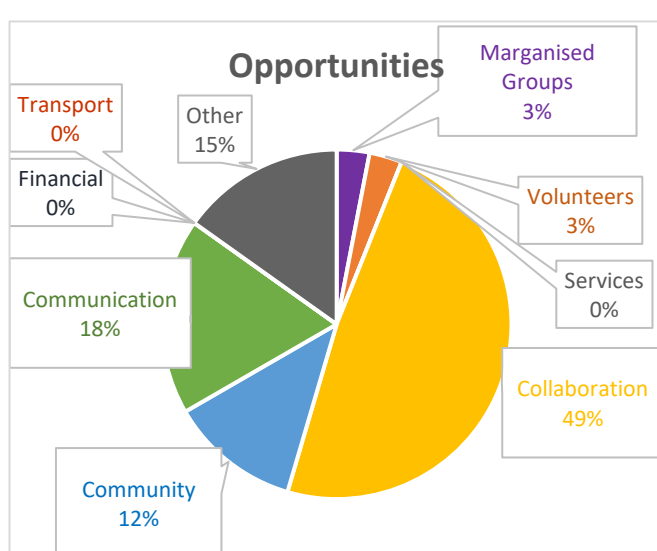
The next 4 graphs (Graphs 2-5) illustrate the breakdown of each these themes of the SWOT activity.



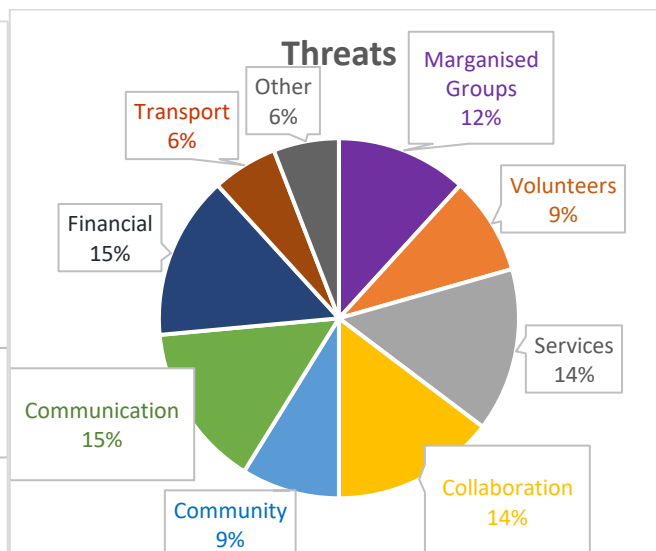
Graph 2.



Graph 3.



Graph 4.



Graph 5.

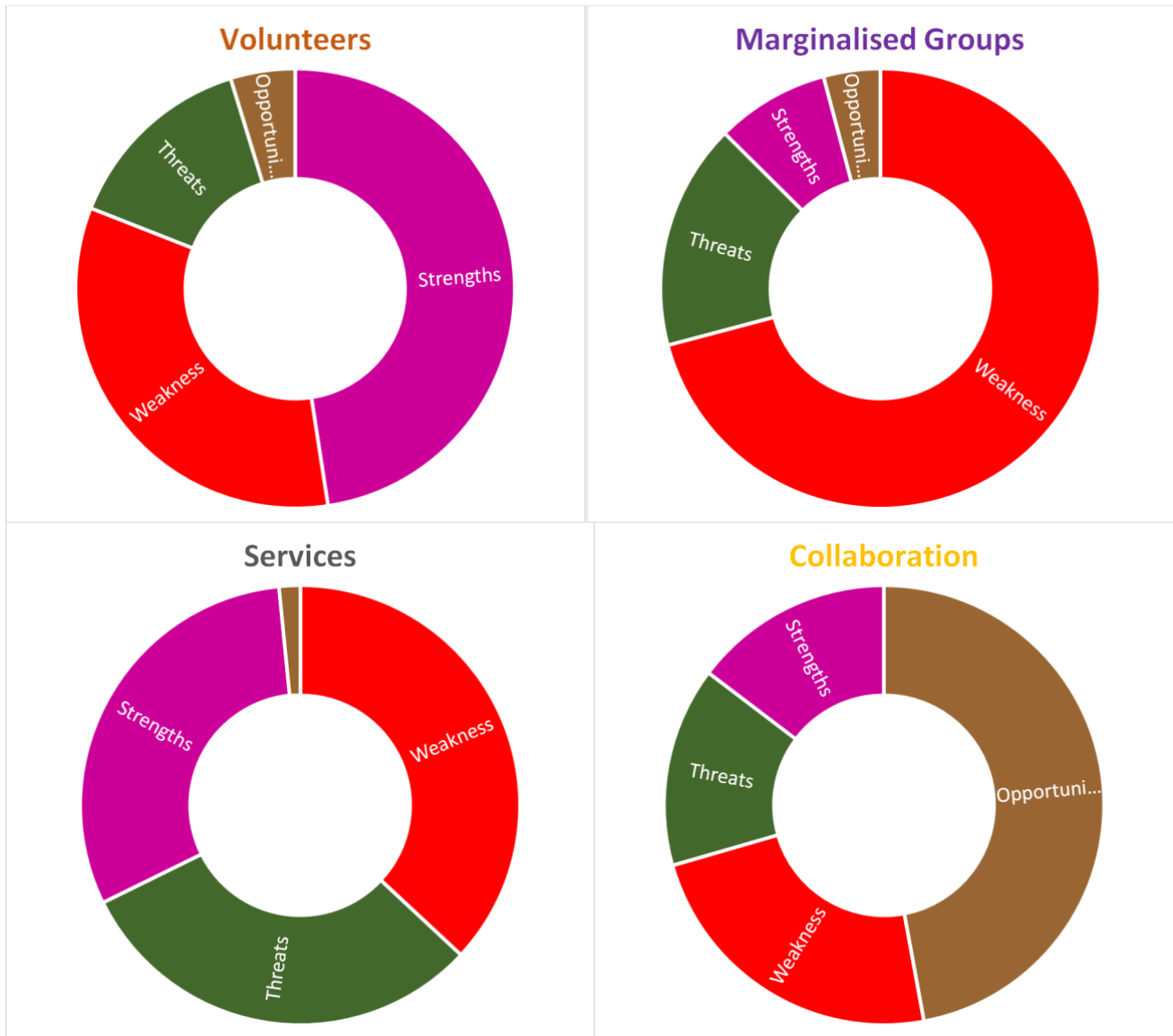
From these graphs (2-5) the most significant strength in our communities identified during the Conference was volunteers.

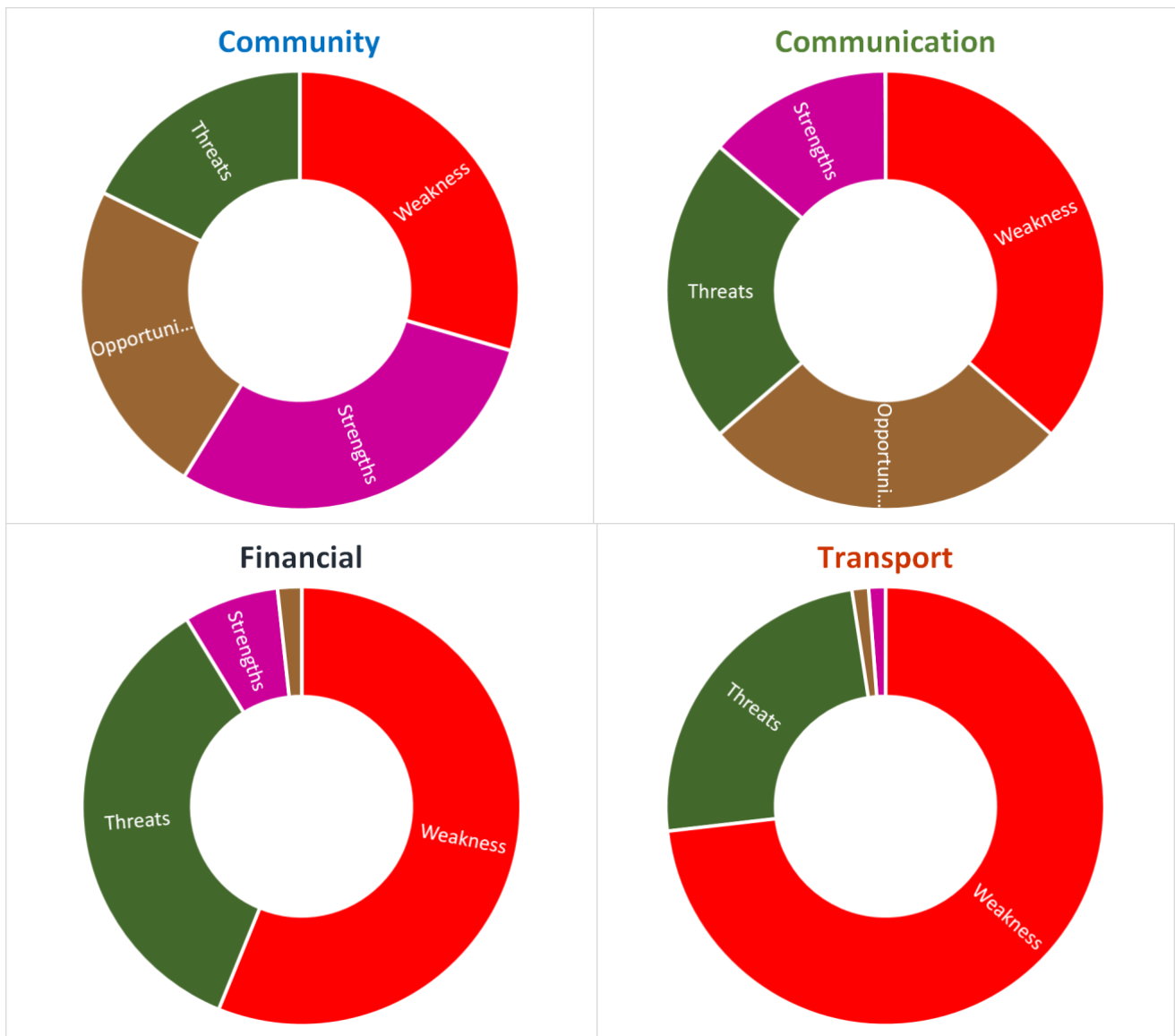
The biggest weakness delegates felt were the Marginalised Groups, which seemed to identify health inequalities across the various communities and not meeting the needs of these groups.

The Opportunities section of the SWOT section seems to offer a remedy to some of these inequalities. It suggests that working collaboratively is the greatest Opportunity. One that we need to grasp.

The Threats appear to be more evenly distributed, with Financial, Communication, Collaboration, Services and Marginalised Groups all coming in above 10%.

A more in depth look at the themes:





From these, more detailed graphs, some evidence emerges about the extent and divergence of the themes. These graphs give real clarity to the extent of the **strengths**, **weaknesses**, **opportunities**, and **threats**. On further exploration of these, the following analysis can be drawn out:

- The most significant **Strengths** were identified with volunteers and in services.
- There appears to be a real clarity in the depth and size of the **weaknesses** in each theme. Marginalised groups, transport and financial concerns were the most sizable weaknesses identified.
- **Opportunities** included collaboration, community, and communication.
- Potential **threats** that emerged included financial, services and communication. This offers real opportunities to address within the Action Plan that emerges from this document.

Discussion of themes

This section will seek to elaborate on the emerging themes from the SWOT analysis as well as highlighting some of the key messages from the analysis. These will then help to inform the action plan going forward. Moreover, we have discovered a rich vein of evidence to build on to inform our response to the findings.

A starting point is the overall summary of the SWOT exercise (Graph 1). This suggests there are a significant number of weaknesses identified by the delegates. More specifically the weaknesses constituted a total of 40% of the total. These are examined in more detail as we travel through the analysis.

The key message of hope that emerges from the analysis is that the SWOT analysis provides significant opportunities to address these weaknesses. The dominant strength in the form as antidote to the weakness is collaboration; a quote from one of the working groups helps to put this more succinctly:

“This conference! Networking. Pulling together to move forward”

However, several pitfalls that emerged from the working groups. These included the following quotes:

“We pull together, make plans, but no one takes responsibility to deliver outcomes”

This would seem to illustrate anecdotally the past experiences of some delegates and offers evidence for the lack of progress in particular areas. To address this, we need to move past the rhetoric and begin to deliver on our promises and commitments to the lonely, marginalised, and stigmatised. It requires communities', groups, and organisations to learn from past mistakes and not keep repeating them. I would suggest that it is these behaviours that sabotage progress and prevent communities fulfilling their potential in meeting the needs of marginalised groups.

Some key messages from the conference help to clarify some of these behaviours and challenges facing communities going forward. These include:

- **“Stop creating silos of sufferers and carers – should be more joined up.”**
- **“People in competition with one another.”**
- **“Joined up groups not happening.”**

The above concerns raised by delegates would seem to mitigate against collaboration and progress. If progress is to be made in making a positive difference, then community groups and organisations really need to discover a way to learn from these experiences and not repeat them.

It would also suggest there is a culture of isolationism of the various groups and organisation’s both statutory and third sector. This would seem to manifest itself in competition for funding and other resources such as venues and volunteers time as well as duplication of resources.

Another implication of this culture of isolationism is the failure to share and pool innovation and practice. What you discover is various groups and organisation’s re-inventing the wheel. This is both costly to the community as well as to the marginalised groups in the communities.

There are significant opportunities (Graph 4) and advantages to emerge from collaborative working. Here are some of them listed by delegates:

- Visiting network groups to spread the word.
- Collaboration- shared ideas / goals.
- Shared expertise – share what we do – sharing ideas.
- Having more opportunities to network and meet.
- Holding public events around social isolation etc

The analysis of the themes has raised some key areas for action and attention. This in turn has highlighted key priorities. All these outcomes will help formulate an action plan as well as shaping the agenda for the steering group.

- A key focus of the action plan will be to interrogate the threats and weakness within the various themes. There are several identified threats (Graph 5) that could well mitigate against progress these included:

Poor transport links also emerged as a key weakness (Graph 3). These included

- Transport problems. Older people in our communities.
- Transport to address social isolation.
- Public transport.
- Transport.
- Mobility / accessibility issues.
- Transport barriers – lack of transport.

Meeting the needs of marginalised groups as well as a threat was also a theme with the greatest number of significant weaknesses (graph 3). It was also low on the strengths (Graph 2) This was a consistently significant issue emerging from the analysis. Below are just a few examples of the challenges faced by marginalised groups

- The invisible carer – mental and physical health.
- Post code lottery. Carer support. Councils not joined up. BCP vs Dorset.
- Carer is in crisis – not fit for purpose. Must address immediate need. Urgent response.
- Free prescriptions for carers.
- Poor support for financial advice for carers.
- Complex bureaucracy to get benefits. e.g. PIP and blue badge.
- More awareness needed for legal rights.
- Sitting service.
- Those that are completely isolated – no family or friends to advocate for them. How do we reach them to offer help?
- Need more clarity on how to contact people when needed. GDPR / safeguarding.
- Burden of bureaucracy.
- More 1:1 Support / befriending.
- Isolation.
- Language.
- Suspicion – councils and churches.
- Stigma remains with accepting support.
- Need to cover / include all groups and communities.

Financial threats in relation to the lack of funding opportunities. More specially identified by delegates included:

- Lack of funding. Funding can be withdrawn.
- Competition with funding.
- Financing social care.
- Competition from limited pool.
- Venues, location cost

Volunteers figured highly on the threats. these included such things as:

- Volunteer recruitment.
- Increase demands for volunteers.
- Potential volunteers reduced by increased retirement age and caring for grandchildren.
- Lack of volunteers, commitment.
- Expecting too much from volunteers

This discussion has sought to marry the findings and analysis together and draw out some key action points and themes. These will form the Action Plan going forward.

Recommendations

There are number of key recommendations that emerge from this strategic document. These include:

- Creation of steering group. The primary purpose of this group will be to deliver the action plan formulated through the outcomes and findings of this document.
- Formulate 5-year strategy through the creation of an action plan.
- Continue to consult the wider reference group on next steps.
- Plan and deliver the 2021 Growing compassionate communities conference.

Concluding Remarks

The overwhelming conclusion emerging from this conference and findings is working collaboratively and forging new and creative partnerships. The delivery group will take a primary lead in undertaking this process.

To underpin this strategy going forward a framework has emerged that is consistent with the underlying philosophy of the Growing Compassionate Communities Charity, these are:

- Grow the Vision from the grassroots
- Search for a consensus to inform the decision making process
- Grow Creative partnerships and collaborations
- Listen to the culture and the collective voice of the community
- Pool experience and expertise

Another key outcome has been the importance of inclusiveness. What is noticeable from the findings is how marginalised groups continue to remain on the margins of communities, but it is not clear as to why this is the case. These will merit further investigation in due course. I want to conclude with a quote:

“We must learn to regard people less in the light of what they do or omit to do, and more in the light of what they suffer.” — Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Memories of the Conference





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- Delivering info based information - remote access!
- more 1:1 support - expanding
- FUNDING!
- Needing more volunteers!
- Shared volunteer - can they help?

MARK'S HAS A GOOD REPUTATION & INDIVIDUAL REPUTATION. BARRA AT ST MARY'S HOME. Homed. & Prepared to go the extra mile & prepared to go the extra mile. WELCOME. PARE TIMES. PARTICIPATION. CELLA BOUNTY. COMMUNITY

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Acknowledgements

With thanks to the following for their contribution to the conference

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Suzanne Dominy	Art Workshop Swanage
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Alan Hawkins	Poole -Men's Shed
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Sarah Rampton	In Jolly Good Company
Lynne Rees	St Mary's Church Ferndown
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Nick Viney	
Jonathan Webber	Age UK Dorchester
Anthony Weber	GCC Trustee. Coles Miller Solicitors
Cindy Weller	Accredited Counsellor, Health & Wellbeing
Paul Wilkinson	Carer

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