

# Developing a community led prescription service

Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn: Western Isles

How a community trust worked with local GP practices to ensure that people living in rural Scotland were able to get their prescriptions during lockdown

“being led by a community organisation has been key to enable the development of this service”



Lisa MacLean, Chief Executive, Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn

## What was the community need?

Two GP practices provide primary care services for the Galson Estate communities. They had developed a successful system to provide medicines for the local community by delivering prescriptions to a range of collection points across the local area e.g. local shops.

It was anticipated that the current medicines service would not be appropriate during the COVID-19 period due to the significant number of people in the community who were shielding.

Recognising the established role Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn (UOG) has in connecting across the community the GP practices approached the organisation to ask if they could find an appropriate solution.



## Background to the community organisation

Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn is a community-owned estate of 56,000 acres of coast, agricultural land and moor in the North West of the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland. The estate comprises 22 villages with a population of nearly 2,000 people. The estate passed into community ownership on 12 January 2007 to be managed on their behalf by the UOG.

*“A thriving and well-connected community with excellent local services and amenities, harnessing its natural assets to sustain a unique cultural and social environment.”*

UOG vision for the future

UOG manages a range of projects that focus on the relief of poverty, the advancement of education and employment opportunities, provision of housing, development of communication links and conservation of the environment.

Insights into how community organisations are responding to new community needs during COVID-19



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## What was done differently?

UOG worked in collaboration with local GP practices to develop a prescription delivery service for people living within the community. The service utilises a small number of volunteers with up to 100 prescriptions delivered each day.

The service is coordinated by an UOG employee with collection times agreed with each GP practice. To limit concerns associated with access to potentially high-risk medicines the volunteers making the deliveries are screened, training is provided, and the same volunteers are used each day.

The volunteers pick up the prescriptions and deliver to each home individually. The prescription bag will never be opened by the volunteer and will only be delivered to an adult within a household following confirmation of identity.

The volunteers are also able to use this opportunity to have a chat with people and check that everything is ok. This is especially important where the individual is older and living alone. If there is a need for any additional services or support this can be identified, and solutions found e.g. referral to shopping service.

## Experience of change

The service has been positively received and in addition many people have commented on the value of human contact.

*"The prescription delivery is just wonderful. One's family isn't always available to collect, whether it be work or young families that prevent that. Certainly one of the bright spots in the midst of this gloomy time in our lives. So thankful to those who are willing to help us."*

## Key insights: Lisa MacLean, Chief Executive, UOG

"On reflection, being led by a community organisation has been key to enable the development of this service. We were able to build on existing, trusted and established relationships with communities. We were also able to be flexible in our assessment of risk, to implement mitigating factors to reduce risk to an acceptable level and therefore have the confidence to implement the service.

Crucial to success was the collaboration with primary care services and the support from practice managers to not dictate terms but to develop a flexible approach that is led by and works for the community.

An initial challenge for volunteers was to find the right houses as many homes are not numbered. We realised this caused difficulty for lots of people so have recently secured funding for a house numbering project. This will ensure a legacy benefit for a wide range of services e.g. emergency services, social care providers, delivery drivers.

I feel that during the COVID-19 period the community prescription service is providing a better option for people than the traditional service. However we will look to engage with the community to understand their longer term needs before making decisions to continue."

If you are interested in exploring something similar in your area or to find out more, please get in touch.

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