



West Lothian
Council

THE GATEWAY

Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian

Annual Report 2022 – 23

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Introduction

This is the third annual report produced by West Lothian Council and Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian (VSGWL) covering 2022/23. The aim is to provide an overview of how the sector, West Lothian Council and other Community Planning Partners worked together to deliver vital support for communities.

The context of much of the previous reports was shaped by the Covid-19 pandemic and the effect of this over all our communities. In 2022/23 it is the cost of living crisis that is impacting most on West Lothian communities.

West Lothian Council, Community Planning Partners, Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian (VSGWL) and the wider Third Sector continued to work together positively to provide a coordinated response to provide help and support to vulnerable individuals and communities across the local area. As in previous reports the changing landscape continues to see innovative ways of working to ensure services are delivered in a way that meets our community's needs. This continues to be the way of working that underpins the activity within this report and is highlighted by some of the case studies.

Contained within the report is information on the size and scale of the Third Sector, with a focus on volunteering, both in terms of the Scottish context and West Lothian. The information highlights the number of organisations, the number of staff employed and the spend in the local economy. It aims to show the scale and impact of the sector and highlights that the sector within West Lothian is a predominantly locally grown sector.

The report pulls together a wider overview of the overall investment, support and partnership working that takes place across a number of Council Services and other Community Planning partners such as health. It is not meant to be an in-depth analysis, as the detail of the activity is reported and scrutinised within the lead area for delivery, it is however, an attempt to show the range of partnership work that goes on and a wider understanding of the funding that helps support the work in our communities.

It is not a complete picture as links, networks and partnership working take place all the time and is not always captured easily. Similarly, with funding, there is much more investment that supports the Third Sector and Council to deliver than the investment that goes into the Third Sector through Council. The key importance of how the Third Sector is able to draw down funding from external funders is recognised and how that ability helps to deliver key support to our local communities whether geographically or thematically. This is something that needs to be better understood going forward and something the Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian is looking at to provide a clearer picture of the full impact of the sector.

The report highlights over £41M of funding going into the sector from West Lothian Council and Health partners in 2022/23 but partners and organisations are aware of more investment not captured within the report summary.

West Lothian Council and the Third Sector have worked closer than ever before and strengthened existing processes and relationships. This partnership approach is not just about funding but also about planning strategically to ensure a joined-up approach so that available resources are best targeted to deliver for our communities, including an officer led Third Sector group that continues to support joint working on strategic areas for development. Some other areas of this activity are captured within the report under partnership working and are meant to highlight the breadth of activity but these are only some aspects.

In terms of defining the Third Sector, for the purposes of the report this includes local community-based organisations groups (mainly charities but some unincorporated), West Lothian wide groups, national charities operating within West Lothian, Community Development Trusts and other social enterprise models).

2022 SCOTTISH VOLUNTARY SECTOR INSIGHTS

Key Stats



There are over 46,000
voluntary organisations
active in Scotland



89% of voluntary
organisations are
local



35% of organisation
are in rural or remote
areas



In 2021 the voluntary
sector in Scotland had a
turnover of £8.5 billion



In 2021 voluntary
sector spend was
£7.9 billion



7 in 10 charities saw
income and spending
drop in 2021



1,182,000 people
volunteered with
organisations in 2020



Scotland's voluntary
sector employs
135,000 paid staff

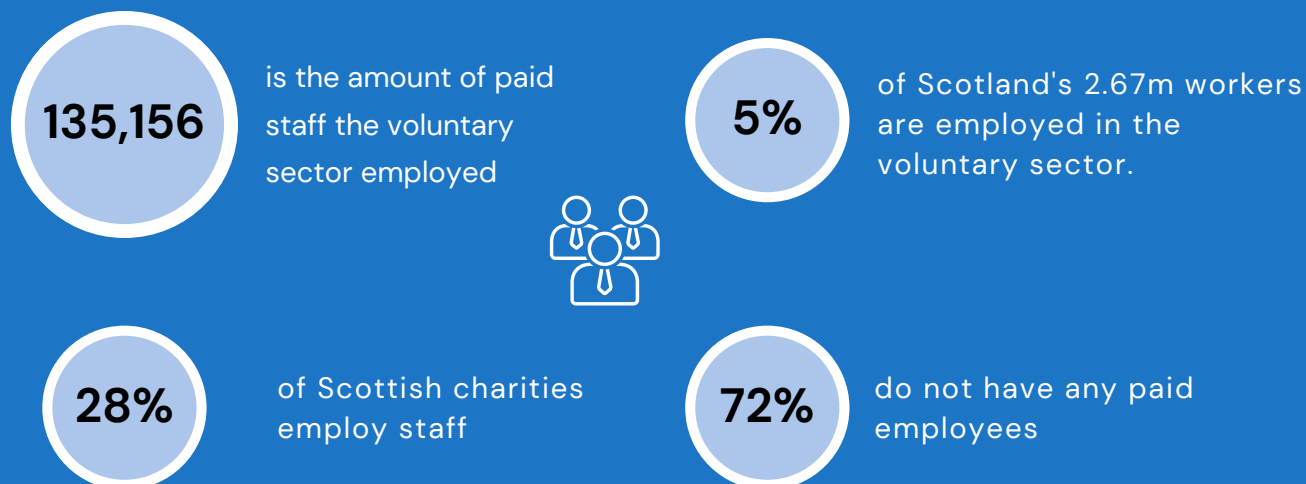


Women make up 64.5%
of the sector's
workforce

Charity Formations and Closures



Scottish Voluntary Sector Workforce



Staff Costs

The sector spent £2.89 billion on staff in 2021 (up from £2.4bn in 2018), making up 43% of the sector's total spend in 2021.

7 in 10 voluntary sector charities employed no paid staff in 2021, while 3 in 10 charities did employ staff.

For charities that do employ staff, wages and pensions form a substantial part of their expenditure. Large social care and health organisations employing hundreds of care staff and support workers have particularly high wage bills. Around 70–80% of their annual spend is on staffing.

Smaller charities employing staff typically spend 20–40% of their annual expenditure on paid employees, with the sector average for staffing costs sitting at a third of total spend.



Living Wage

13.9% of people employed in `not for profit` sector were paid below the Living Wage.

SIZE AND SCALE OF THE SECTOR IN WEST LoTHIAN

513

REGISTERED CHARITIES OPERATING



68

focused on Community, Economic and Social Development



95

focused on Sport and culture



166

focused on Social Care activities



77

focused on Religious Activities

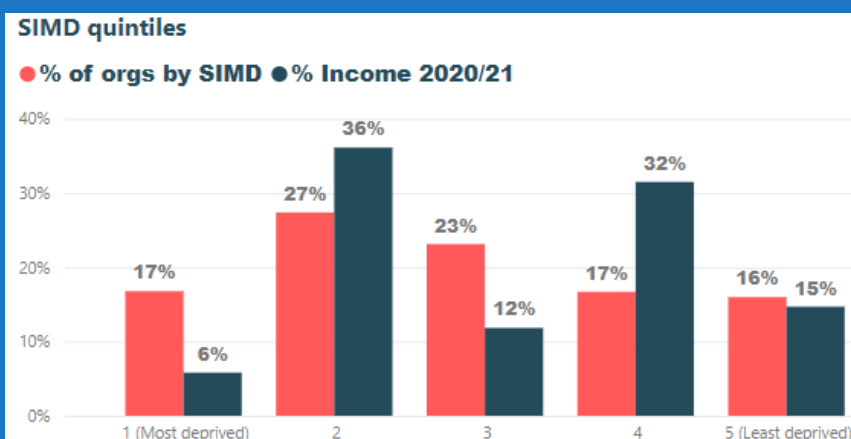
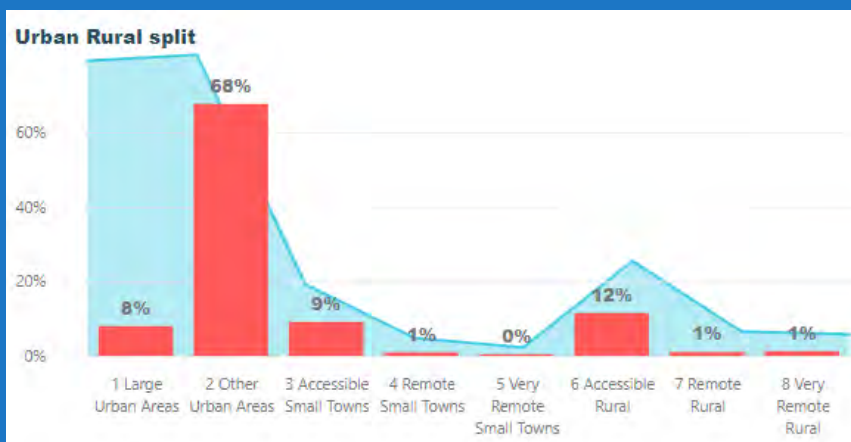


INCOME
£110,000,000

EXPENDITURE
£89,500,000



Urban / Rural Split and Deprivation



Challenges from the Third Sector perspective in 2022/23

Cost of Living Crisis

The cost of living crisis is impacting on everyone – individuals, communities, and businesses. The impact is greatest on those who are already vulnerable and disadvantaged resulting in the crisis leading to more pressure on those already entrenched by inequalities. There have been real concerns that the critical support and services provided by the Third Sector to those most disadvantaged in local communities will be cut back or simply not be there in the future due to the cost now of delivery as a result of the Cost of Living crisis. Furthermore, many of the staff and volunteers in the sector are themselves, directly impacted by the crisis.

In response to the challenges locally, the Third Sector Strategy Group agreed to the establishment of a dedicated Third Sector Cost of Living Forum to consider how to work together to identify ideas, opportunities, and potential solutions to the challenges being faced. <https://www.voluntarysectorgateway.org/third-sector-cost-of-living-forum/>

A Sub-group has been established to pull together an impact report to document the significant challenges facing the sector. This will be published later in 2023.

The activity of the forum has been feeding into the Community Planning Partnerships cost of living working group, established during 2022/23. The working group has been responsible for introducing a number of measures including warm hubs across West Lothian to mitigate the impacts being faced by communities.

Volunteering

The important contribution of volunteers was particularly apparent during the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic when 64% of Scotland's adult population gave their time.

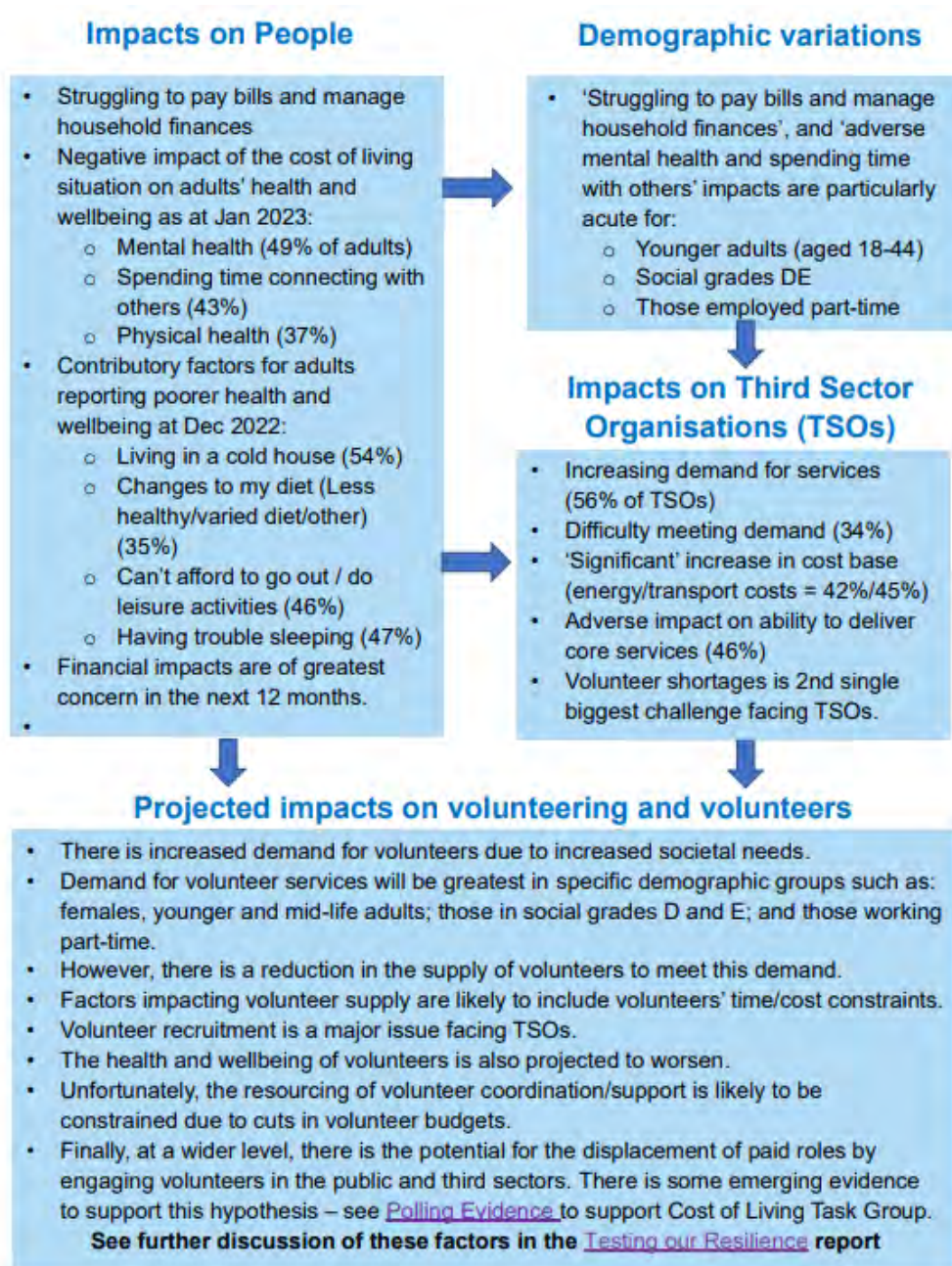
Volunteer-led services often focus on preventative and community-based interventions, helping to reduce the burden on our statutory health and social care services. The contribution of volunteers has also been vital in the response to the current cost of living crisis, with people in West Lothian and across Scotland giving their time to support access to food, warm spaces and essential advice for those who need it.

Despite this vital contribution, nationally it is being reported that volunteering is under threat. Many individuals who wish to volunteer are facing a range of practical and emotional barriers presented by the current cost of living crisis which is having an impact on their ability to volunteer. Whilst it is being reported nationally that services that engage volunteers are experiencing significant challenges, of increased demand, rising costs and stagnating income.

Nationally, Volunteer Scotland has produced research on the impacts on volunteering. – <https://www.volunteerscotland.net/news/cost-of-living-crisis-the-hard-facts>

Volunteer Scotland analysis has highlighted the following findings:

- The crisis is not affecting people equally – younger adults, social grades D and E, and the grouping of 'students, the unemployed, those not working, other', are being disproportionately affected.
- Volunteers' own health and wellbeing is at risk – volunteers' health and wellbeing may be even more susceptible, especially if they are undertaking demanding volunteer roles, and juggling their volunteering contribution with work and caring responsibilities
- Recovery from COVID-19 has been compromised, the cost of living crisis has extended the problems experienced during COVID-19.
- Increased demand for services driven by societal needs, the increase in demand for core services and activities experienced by two thirds of TSOs is likely to increase the demand for volunteers.



Partnership and Strategic Working

Investment, partnership working and sharing of expertise is vital to both shaping strategy and delivering for our communities. The establishment of the Third Sector Working Group as an important link between the Council and the Third Sector has been pivotal in shaping policy and funding developments. This will be further strengthened moving forward. It is one example of several key strategic discussions that involve West Lothian Council, Community Planning partners and Third Sector representatives.

This approach is reflected across a wide range of partnership structures, from the development of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan through the Community Planning Partnership Board to community level and the development of locality plans where the Third Sector is key to planning, sharing best practice and taking actions forward based on where the gaps are. This maximises the ability for limited resources to be best targeted to address the key priorities for our communities.

It has been a long standing request from the Third Sector for the ability to apply for multi-year funding from the Third Sector Community Support Fund. In 2022/23 this was made possible with organisations being able to apply for funding for 2023/24 and 2024/25 in January 2023, with a number receiving multi-year funding. This was alongside improvements in the processes including the time period the funding covered being re aligned to align with the Council budget setting process, the setting of an annual date for the fund to open which was after the Christmas holidays and the inclusion of a link officer for all organisations that received funding.

In 2022/23 the Third Sector and Council have worked together to support the Third Sector to represent the sector at Council Policy Development Scrutiny Panels. VSGWL has a seat at all Panels, to ensure wider sector representation and voice in shaping policy. During the year the Third Sector working group has supported the identification of representatives and undertaken training to ensure they are supported to participate. Each panel now has a dedicated sector representative and a mechanism has been put in place to support the sector to feed into the representative to present the collective view of the sector.

Food Network Support

In December 2022, Voluntary Sector Gateway began to support the Food Network structure by providing independent governance support to the Food Network and a recently established Steering Committee. Support, to date, has centered on the development and sustainability of the Network moving forward.

The Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian has also been asked to assist with governance and grant management of the Food Network in 2023/2024, pending development of a new legal structure. A transitional plan has been submitted on behalf of the Food Network setting out how the £280,000 of funding that West Lothian Council has ringfenced for food support will be managed and allocated in addition to what support will be provided to partner organisations to engage in the network.

Below lists examples of current partnership and strategic working groups. Some of these are touched on further in some service updates throughout this report.



Summary of Annual Report

£41,739,606.20

across all sectors covered in this report

Voluntary Sector Gateway

£560,500
total grants paid out



£70,000 unpaid carers funding

£469,000

Community Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund – 37 projects



£21,500

Rural Community Led Development Fund

Partnership & Strategic Working



Over 40 partners groups involve representatives of third sector organisations.

Economic Development

£825,980.12
total grants paid out



supported **79** social enterprises with business planning and sustainability.

Rural Communities Local Lead Development Fund

£115,128.12

supporting 12 groups



Employability



Employability Training grants totaling **£238,854**

Third Sector Employability Review **£29,998**

£442,000 of funding created **49** opportunities through Employer Recruitment Incentives

Community Wealth Building

£2,771,991.11
total grants paid out



Voluntary Organisation budget (28 Groups)

£1,133,448.50

£32,658.97

Modernisation & Improvement Fund



£1,132,000

Place Based Investment Fund

£25,000

Community Choices Pilot Craigshill

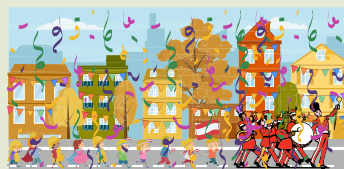
West Lothian Development Trust

20 groups

£379,923.29



Gala Grant Fund



25 Groups

£39,999.80

Pensioners Xmas Fund

£28,960.55

towards a meal or event 65 groups



Environmental

£201,500

supporting

£201,500

9

local environmental projects



Anti-Poverty Service

£596,998
paid out



£582,998

to support The Food Network and residents to access food in a dignified way.

£14,000

provided to Citizens Advice Bureau to support Universal Credit

Education

£3,923,468
paid out



£267,327

towards summer programmes in 2022/23 – supporting **13** groups

Supported **11** local Playgroups

£20,000



£30,000

towards **5** Community Based Youth Work providers

Sporting Grants Scheme 2022/23

£35,820 • **14** Sports Grants



£4,180 awarded to **4** groups for the development of referral schemes

£10,000

To improve equality, diversity and inclusion – **2** groups

2022/23 West Lothian Leisure awarded:

£3,560,169



Housing and Homelessness

£140,469
paid out



• **£38,469** paid to:

Action for Children

• **£50,000** paid to:

Rock Trust Night Stop

• **£52,000** paid to:

Rock Trust Housing First

Social Policy

££33,229,000
paid out



£29.9 million

on care and carer support for Adults and Older People.

Children & Families, £8.9m expenditure on external placements for children, care for children with disabilities, supported accommodation, and other support to families.



£8.9 Million

£731,000

Vulnerable due to young age Public Social Partnership



£187,000



Domestic and Sexual Assault Team

Mental Health Development



In 2022/23 **£511,000** was made available for community based mental health services for children, young people, their families and carers.

Public Health

£180,192
paid out

- **£49,519** paid to: Playbase Project
- **£29,686** paid to: Financial advice in GP surgeries project
- **£51,000** paid to: Nutritional inequalities for children and families
- **£49,987** paid to: Young People's Green Gym project



Investment

The following section give a broad overview of funding and partnership working across a range of services and provides an overview of the vital role the Third Sector plays in supporting delivery. The information also contains funding that is provided by Health Partners.

The Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian has managed and administered three separate grants schemes to support the work of the Third Sector locally in 2022/23:

Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund Year 2

The Scottish Government provided a **£15m** of funding to support the impacts of social isolation and mental health and wellbeing support in adults at community level. West Lothian was allocated **£469, 000** in 2022/2023 to support small grass roots community organisations. The funded was allocated via a grant application process. In total 1.4 million was requested from 72 applications, with 37 projects being awarded the **£467,000**.

Unpaid Carers Fund

In total **£70,000** was administered on behalf of Social Policy in West Lothian Council to assist with the promotion and rollout of the Carers Strategy in the Third Sector. Following two rounds of funding 20 organisations providing support for unpaid to engage in breaks, activities, eating out, supply of equipment etc. to support their health and wellbeing were allocated funding.

Rural Community Led Local Development (RCLLD) Fund

A total of **£21,500** was administered from the Rural Community Led Development Fund in January 2023. The capital funding was to support locally based community groups who are members of the newly established Third Sector Cost of Living Forum with the cost-of-living crisis. The funding supported 12 organisations.

Community Wealth Building

In 2022/23 **£2,771,991.11** was paid to community organisations through a number of application based programmes detailed below.

The Voluntary Organisations Budget was split between the Third Sector Community Support Fund, with some additional funding from other funding streams including the Modernisation and Improvement Fund, as well as organisations identified for commissioning or service agreements. This funding supported 28 West Lothian Third Sector Organisations with a total allocation of **£1,133,448.50**.

The Modernisation and Improvement Funding also allocated **£32,658.97** to 5 projects in 2022/23 to help them modernise and improve their organisation. This time limited funding is now fully committed.

Place Based Investment Fund Community Wealth Building 2022/23

West Lothian Council received **£1,132,000** for year two of a five-year funding stream from the Scottish Government to support place-based projects. The Council chose to focus this funding specifically on Community Wealth Building through two equal funding streams both application based. This saw **£566,000** awarded to four local organisations and **£566,000** awarded for 68 small town projects across 32 identified towns.

Community Choices Pilot

As part of a pilot project on Community Choices, **£25,000** was allocated to Craigshill. Local groups, organisations and clubs were invited to bid for funding (maximum of £5,000) to take forward their ideas on how they could improve health and wellbeing in Craigshill, focusing on one or more of the following areas: Mental Health and Wellbeing, Children Living in Poverty and Healthy Life Choices. In total seven local projects were awarded funding.

West Lothian Development Trust

The service also administers the wind farm community benefit funding through supporting the West Lothian Development Trust which awards funding to local community organisations in eligible areas. In 2022/23 awards were made to 20 local groups to the value of **£379,923.29**.

Pensioners Xmas Treat Fund

65 organisations were supported on 2022 through the annual Pensioners Groups Christmas Fund to a total of **£28,960.55**.

Gala Grants

25 organisations were supported on 2022 through the annual gala grants fund to a total of **£39,999.80**.



Economic Development

The Rural Communities Local Led Development Fund, administered by Economic Development, awarded **£115,128.12** to 21 local organisations in 2022/23, including **£50,000** to the Food Network to support services during the winter. Seven groups received equipment for Warm Hubs within the community.

In 2022/23 a total of 13 employability related training grants to Third Sector organisations were awarded to support a range of employability interventions totaling **£238,854**. In addition, **£140,000** of funding was provided to Colleges to deliver additional employability related activity and **£29,998** was awarded to the Third Sector to conduct a Third Sector employability review.

The Third Sector continued to support the creation of employment opportunities for unemployed clients in 2022/23 with 49 opportunities being created providing a further **£442,000** of funding to Organisations through employer recruitment incentives.

Support for Social Enterprise, from April 2022 to the end of March 2023 Business Gateway supported 79 social enterprises across West Lothian.

Education

Education Services work with Third Sector providers in a number of areas which includes a contribution to West Lothian Leisure to support the delivery of a programme of sports within West Lothian. In 2022/23 **£3,923,468** was committed in total, there is additional funding through for example PEF that goes to Third Sector organisations that is not included here. Below showcases how some of that funding was committed in 2022/23.

Active Schools and Community Sports

Community sports clubs, their members and volunteers are a fundamental, and often unacknowledged, part of the Third Sector landscape in West Lothian. Sports clubs and organisations were provided support via West Lothian Club Network across the year with a variety of groups attending workshops to help with the return to sport and to consider the impact of other sector wide challenges. These were themed following consultation with clubs.

A local partner network was also established within the last year that extended to include a wide range of Sporting Governing Bodies, local professional officers from community sports clubs, West Lothian Leisure, Sportscotland and West Lothian College. The network has so far focused on the development of inclusive practice and supporting the anti-poverty agenda.

Funding support is also currently provided through the Sporting Grants scheme and the service allocated a total of **£35,820** to 14 different community organisations via the Sporting Grants fund. These projects covered a variety of targeted projects aligned to the Active Scotland Outcomes Framework. In total **£4,180** was also awarded to 4 community sports clubs for the development of a referral scheme to allow for identified individual children and young people to access community sport activities where there is a known financial barrier.

Active Schools & Community Sport commissioned project delivery and support from two Third Sector Organisations in order to enhance opportunities for people with a disability. Funding of £10,000 was provided between the two organisations from additional investment awarded to the service from Sportscotland to improve equality, diversity and inclusion across the sporting landscape in West Lothian. Working in partnership with Community



Learning & Development, the service supported 10 Accredited sports clubs with their applications to the WLC holiday provision fund. Clubs used this funding to deliver activities targeted at children from low income families and those with additional support needs.

Third Sector Strategic/Consultative Group –The service works in partnership with ClubSport West Lothian; a committee made up of the member community sports clubs across West Lothian. ClubSport West Lothian is the voluntary voice of sports clubs, organisations and individuals within West Lothian. They provide support, information and funding to affiliated

members in an effort to enhance the provision of sport and increase the opportunities available to the ever-growing population of the sporting community. We award them funding to support their development and also to administer a smaller grants pot with different criteria from our own. We use ClubSport West Lothian as a consultative partner. There are 43-member clubs. ClubSport West Lothian are affiliated to Scottish ClubSport, previously the Scottish Association of Local Sports Councils (SALSC). The organisation is a National partner of sportscotland and is the umbrella organisation for Local Sports Councils and ClubSport networks across Scotland.

West Lothian Leisure

West Lothian council awarded West Lothian Leisure £3,560,169 in 2022/23. Under the terms of a Services Agreement and related annual Funding Agreements, West Lothian Leisure is responsible for the strategic and operational management of key sports, leisure and cultural facilities which it leases from the council



Youth Services

Community Learning and Development Youth Services funds activities and works in partnership with Third Sector community-based youth work providers to deliver bespoke provision in specific localities and, or with targeted groups. Partners include Bathgate FABB, Linlithgow Young People's Project, The Knightsridge Adventure Project, Community Action Blackburn and West Lothian Youth Action Project. In 2022/23 the total funding from WLC CLD Youth Services budget allocated to partnership agreements to these providers was £30,000.



CLD Youth Services co-ordinated the Get into Summer 2022 Programme. This involved a grant application process for Third Sector organisations to apply for external funding to support the summer programme offer to vulnerable children and young people in West Lothian. In total 31 sector organisations ranging from community sports clubs to community development trusts, arts organisations, youth groups and training providers, received a share of the £267,327 funding award.

Provision was targeted in the 20% most disadvantaged data zones across West Lothian. Entitlement to clothing grant and free school meals was used to support partners in targeting children and young people in low income households. A stronger partner approach was implemented working with regulated child care providers, Third Sector and council services. Information and support to enable families to access holiday provision appropriate to their needs was facilitated by key workers, schools, social policy, placed-based organisations and those working with specific targeted groups. West Lothian Food Network received free swimming vouchers to distribute to families throughout the school summer holidays.

There are two key strategic groups that bring together partners from across the sectors to

plan, implement, monitor and report impact as well as next steps. These groups include Third Sector partner representatives who represent a body of organisations. Developing the Young Workforce and CLD Steering Boards.

Playgroups

A Voluntary Organisations Budget of £20,000 is currently available each year to support Playgroups who can apply and receive an annual grant if they are registered with the Care Inspectorate.

In 2022/23 a total of 11 local playgroups across West Lothian benefitted from this funding.



Anti-Poverty Service

In 2022/23 West Lothian Council provided the West Lothian food network with **£582,998** to ensure that residents on a low income and due to various economic factors continued to have access to food in a dignified and respectful way. This funding was provided to the West Lothian Foodbank to co-ordinate on behalf of the network members though West Lothian Food Network are looking at a more sustainable model and governance structure going forward.

The Service has administered some additional Scottish Government funding that has come in in the last year. This included LACER funding on behalf of Scottish Government and the provision of support to the Citizens Advice Bureau with **£14,000** provided to support Universal Credit claimants with job search.

Strategic Bodies

The Anti-Poverty Services work with Third Sector partners strategically with representation on both the Anti-Poverty Task Force and Anti-Poverty Practitioners Network with a number of groups on the Networks and the Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian representing the Third Sector on the Task Force.

The partnership have worked to refresh the Community Planning Partnership's Anti-Poverty Strategy with the Third Sector and Community Planning Partnership working collaboratively to support communities with the Cost of Living Crisis through Warm Hubs and Community Connections Hubs

NETs, Land and Countryside Services

The Council continues to work closely several Trusts: with Green Action Trust (GAT) Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust (ELGT) and Forth Rivers Trust (FRT) in project development and delivery. Below sets out a number of projects delivered by Third Sector bodies on behalf of the Council utilising funding from external sources to deliver key Council projects:

The Council works closely with our Third Sector to support community gardens and supporting the West Lothian Growing Forum and leads, with Planning the Local Biodiversity Site steering group with five Third Sector organisations represented.

WLC Staff	Organisation Name	Name of project	Time period & Nature of work	Funding from WLC in 2022-23 (if any)	Where funding came from
Ecology and Biodiversity Team	The Wildlife Information Centre	Local Biodiversity Site condition surveys	Contracted by WLC to assess LBS sites, carry out Phase 1 surveys and write up site reports for LBS steering group	£10,000	Nature Restoration Fund
Ecology and Biodiversity Team	Green Action Trust	Black Moss bog restoration	Woodland management felling plan for bog restoration at Black Moss.	£20,000	WLC Climate Emergency Fund
Ecology and Biodiversity Team	Green Action Trust	Dechmont Law woodland	Woodland concept plan – design of new planting	£20,000	WLC Climate Emergency Fund
Ecology and Biodiversity Team	Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust	Greening of the Shale Trail	Contracted by WLC to manage and deliver project over 2-3 years.	£22,000	WLC Climate Emergency Fund and Nature Restoration Fund
Ecology and Biodiversity Team	Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust	Wee Forests	Delivery of 1 new wee forest (including prep and planting) and community engagement in Boghall in 2022	£20,000	
Ecology and Biodiversity Team	Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust	Tree Time	Delivery of scheme to encourage funding for additional tree planting via creation of targeted media and website creation.	£13,000	
Ecology and Biodiversity Team	Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust	Free trees	Planning, project management and delivery of scheme – 156 half-standard trees planted in open spaces.	£47,000	
Flood Risk Management	Forth Rivers Trust	Bathgate Meadows Nature Park	Assistance in the submission of National Lottery Heritage Fund bid	£32,500	Places for Everyone funding through Sustrans and CWSR grant funding from Transport Scotland
Ecology and Biodiversity Team	Forth Rivers Trust	Fish passage on the Almond	Funding for supply, installation and monitoring of fish counter	£17,000	Nature Restoration Fund and Climate Change Emergency Fund

Social Policy

In 2022/23 a total of £33,229 million was paid to Third Sector bodies through commissioned services, grants, spot purchase and block payments. This was broken down into:

- Adult and Older People – £22.9m
- Children and families – £8.9m
- Mental Healthy Development £511,000
- Vulnerable due to young age Public Social Partnership £731,000
- Domestic and Sexual Assault Team – £187,000

Strategic Governance

Strategic Governance arrangements for the planning and delivery of services for children, young people and their families were reviewed in 2015 in light of the implementation of The Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 and The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. Services for children, young people and families are planned and monitored at a West Lothian wide level by the Children and Families Strategic Planning Group along with other partnership groups. The arrangements provide clear linkages to:

- Community Planning Partnership
- West Lothian Council
- NHS Lothian
- The Chief Officer Group for Child Protection
- Community Safety
- Alcohol and Drug Partnership
- Community Justice Partnership

There are other strategic working groups all with 3rd sector representation, most represent their sector:

- Integration Joint Board and IJB Strategic Planning Group
- Carer Strategic Implementation Group – CoWL represent themselves
- Trauma Board
- Self Directed Support Board
- Alcohol and Drug Partnership Exec Board
- Mental Health Oversight Group

Housing

Housing Need Service has three working groups that sit under the Rapid Rehousing Transition Partnership Board which consist of a range of partner services including those who represent the wider Third Sector. As part of Rapid Rehousing Transition Partnership and Council funding the service has commissioned a number of Third Sector services to deliver services. In 2022/23 this included:

- Action for Children – Young Persons Emergency Prevention Service – £38,469
- Rock Trust – Nightstop Service – £50,000
- Rock Trust – housing first – £52,000

NHS Lothian, Public Health and Health Policy

The West Lothian Partnership and Place team is focused on improving population health and reducing health inequalities by acting on the wider determinants of health. The team works with community planning partners to achieve this long-term aim and makes a financial contribution to delivering outcomes through the Health Improvement Fund.

Health Improvement Funding

NHS Lothian had Service Level Agreements with Third Sector organisations in place until March 2023. The following table illustrates the spend in 2022/23:

Name of Project	Organisation Delivering	Resources Allocated
Playbase	Family and community development West Lothian	£49,519
Financial advice in GP surgeries	Citizens Advice Bureau	£29,686
Nutritional inequalities for children and families	Kidzeco	£51,000
Young People's Green Gym	The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)	£49,987

Strategic Partnership Working

The role of the West Lothian Partnership and Place Team is to work with partners and colleagues to deliver evidence-based actions to reduce health inequalities and improve population health. These include a range of Community Planning Partnership Groups and Forums, including the Community Planning Partnership Board and Community Planning Partnership Steering Group. Key areas of work include:

The Health and Wellbeing Partnership have revised the pillar of the revised Local Outcomes Improvement Plan. Delivery plans have been developed for each priority area – adult mental health and wellbeing, alcohol prevention and the food and physical activity environment – each focused on the social determinants of health and place-based working.

- Leading the Whole Systems Approach to prevention of Type2 Diabetes in Whitburn
- Leading the Child Poverty Reference Group which produces the Local Child Poverty Action Report and delivers partnership action to tackle the main drivers of child and family poverty. The team also supports the work of the Anti-Poverty Task Force.
- Leading work on capacity building in mental health and trauma informed practice and contributing to the Mental Health Oversight Group and Trauma Informed Practice Board.
- Supporting the Children and Families Strategic Group and leading the Health and Wellbeing priority. This includes work to improve community mental health and wellbeing support for children, young people and families.

These groups include representation from a range of Third Sector organisations including West Lothian Voluntary Sector Gateway, West Lothian Citizens Advice Bureau, Kidzeco, West Lothian Foodbank and West Lothian Leisure.

The team is working with partnership groups whose key aim is to act on the wider determinants of health, including, economic development, employment, and affordable, sustainable housing.

The team also supports the work of the following groups:

- Gender Based Violence Committee
- Community Justice Partnership
- Alcohol Drug Partnership Executive and Alcohol Licensing Forum
- Community Learning and Development Board

Conclusion

As evidenced by this report, the partnership work between West Lothian Council, Community Planning Partners and the Third Sector is well established. It will be vital to continue to consolidate and build on this partnership going forward in 2023/24.

There has been a huge range of different and complex challenges facing the Third Sector during the pandemic, the recovery period and now the cost of living crisis, especially in relation to mental health and wellbeing and the impacts on communities and individuals of the Cost of Living crisis. These are still present post pandemic and will shape the priorities for the coming years from the partnership.

The importance of Community Planning Partners, including West Lothian Council and the Third Sector, working as strategically as possible to deliver for West Lothian communities remains key. This will help make best use of constrained resources in future. For example, consortium or collaborative funding applications to be developed collectively, as some funding streams looking specifically at this approach now whilst clearly address strategic priorities. This approach has the ability to attract larger pots of external funding if the right mechanism to manage the approach can be developed. This has been seen in 2022/23 with some key Third Sector organisations securing significant funding and contracts as they have developed.

As part of moving forward there are developing frameworks and approaches that offer a way of empowering West Lothian communities and ensure the local economy works for all. The developing work around Community Wealth Building, along with community empowerment, asset transfer, community choices as well as developing further the strategic approach and partnership working set out here will provide the basis for making sure West Lothian communities needs are met.

In 2023/24, in addition to the continuation of the areas highlighted within the report, joint work will focus on the following key areas;

- gathering information and evidencing the additionality brought into West Lothian by the Third Sector with a focus on the externally funding levered in to the area and the creation of new partnerships
- the continued collective response to the Cost of Living crisis within Communities and on organisations
- responding to the issues that have been highlighted within the report in relation to volunteering and the provision of support for volunteers by the development of strategies to strengthen volunteering activities
- supporting the development of a package of support to help Social Enterprises with a focus on exploring opportunities to create wealth within them moving away from grant funding

By further strengthening the partnership activity, the focus in 2023/24 will be to develop a shared vision for the Sector, further capture additional income brought by the Third Sector and support the creation of Community Wealth in West Lothian .

CASE STUDIES

The report has provided a range of high level facts and figures to provide about the sector nationally, locally, funding and partnership working. However, what is ultimately important is what this actually looks like in practice.

Below are a number of cases studies provided by Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian members that help bring to life some of the work the sector does in West Lothian. A number of these organisations receive funding from the various funding streams covered throughout the report and external funding sources not yet reported:

The following organisations are covered:

1. NHS Lothian Public Health and Health Policy Directorate Health Improvement Fund;
2. Carers of West Lothian;
3. Nightstop (Rock Trust);
4. The Larder;
5. Whitburn Community Development Trust;
6. West Lothian Drug & Alcohol Service (WLDAS);
7. Citizens Advice Bureau West Lothian;
8. The School Bank West Lothian;
9. The Bridge Community Project;
10. West Lothian Youth Action Project;
11. Cyrenians OPAL;
12. EnvironMentalHealth CIC;
13. Play Works;
14. West Calder & Harburn Community Development Trust

NHS Lothian Public Health and Health Policy Directorate Health Improvement Fund Case Study

Health Improvement Fund funding has provided funding for community-based projects over a three year period to support delivery of services to address inequalities in health for: adults, early years, children, and young people.

In West Lothian, Kidzeco was successful in receiving health improvement fund funding with their overall aim to improve nutrition and reduce nutritional inequalities for children and young people in West Lothian.

The organisation undertook a broad range of activities to support the overall objective that included:

- Increasing the number of peer supporters around early years nutrition in identified communities by developing training for a weaning peer support programme, piloting food demo projects and supporting midwifery and community nursing teams with weaning resources.
- Increasing the number of families accessing information and advice on good family nutrition and cooking skills through practical cooking workshops for families, weaning groups and access to a weaning app.
- Reducing maternal obesity in identified communities by implementing walking groups, mum and baby yoga classes that also supported mental health and wellbeing.

By working with parents and carers Kidzeco were also able to listen to the needs of their client group and adapt all the time while meeting the overall aim of the Health Improvement Fund funding. This was especially important during the pandemic and now with the cost-of-living crisis, which is evident in the development of a food pantry and the continued need for this resource.

Kidzeco have managed to support a wide range of families with 90% of those attending coming from- community regeneration areas across West Lothian.



The strength of working in partnership through the Health Improvement Fund has supported Kidzeco to develop opportunities for working with families around a particular health and wellbeing area and then try to mainstream areas that have really had an impact. An example of this being the opportunity to be trained in a programme called HENRY that enables good conversations between practitioners and families on healthy eating that is proactive and solution focused.

This has helped build relationships and now two members of staff are going through the process to become trained as a trainer of HENRY to then cascade this across West Lothian.

The three-year cycle of Health Improvement Fund funding ended in March 2023. The opportunities that Health Improvement Fund funding provided was the opportunity to test out different activities and approaches to identify good practice which will then support the next phase of the Kidzeco growth as a Social Enterprise.



Carers of West Lothian

Case Study 1

Carer had been referred by Social Work Mental Health Team; she was distressed as hadn't been able to get through to Social Security Scotland to discuss benefits. Carer also explained that she had to cancel a recent health appointment as unable to find someone to sit with her husband when she attends appointments and the only service available was a paid service. She was upset as could not afford the payment.

Through our conversation, carer was supported with:



- Provided with a listening ear
- Referred for benefits check at Advice Shop
- Supported to complete our Short Breaks Time to Live application for funding to cover respite costs
- Referred to our Many Hands for respite/sitter service.

Outcome:

- Carer had a benefits check completed and now in receipt of all relevant benefits.
- Carer was awarded £400 Short Breaks funding which is being used to cover costs of Many Hands Sitter Service, providing much needed breaks, not only for appointments but just to have time for themselves.
- Carer said "You're (CoWL) a wee light in the middle of a difficult situation."

Case Study 2 – Disabled service user

A disabled person accessing our disability service was struggling to get out and about and access community groups due to their wheelchair being broken and no longer suitable for their needs. They were not in a position to purchase one privately so had to wait on a suitable power chair being allocated to them by statutory services.

Several months had passed and despite the wheelchair not being replaced, the person made some DIY repairs so they could use it. They were desperate to get out due to becoming increasingly isolated and feeling down. The chair was not fit for purpose and was putting the person at serious risk. Had a chat about it and agreed to make some calls:

- CoWL contacted appropriate services and spoke to Occupational Therapy expressing concerns about the safety of the person; explained they are involved in many groups within their community and the importance of being able to self-travel in their electric wheelchair.
- CoWL continues to support person in relation to reducing isolation through calls and support to join some online groups

Outcome:

Occupational Therapy became more aware of the circumstances and high level of risk to this person which they had not been aware of before. Through this support, they were measured and supplied with a wheelchair earlier than expected. This has had a massive effect on their life as they have been able to get out and about safely.

The person said, "If it hadn't been for CoWL, I really don't know when I would have received my chair."

Nightstop

The Nightstop service provides young people with emergency accommodation for up to two weeks in the homes of approved volunteers (although this can be extended, depending on circumstances).



The Nightstop service provides young people with emergency accommodation for up to two weeks in the homes of approved volunteers (although this can be extended, depending on circumstances).

The service is geared towards preventing young people entering the formal homeless system and staying in temporary bed and breakfast or adult hostel accommodation. It seeks to provide a bit of time out for the young person (and their family or carers) so that support can be put in place to help prevent the breakdown of their current accommodation arrangements, if possible, or identify and secure longer term accommodation most appropriate to the young person.

Here is James's Nightstop story...

Before he became homeless, James had suffered from neglect and domestic abuse for many years. Eventually, he and his sister were forced to flee his family home after a particularly violent incident. James's sister went to a woman's refuge, and James was referred to Rock Trust and our Nightstop project.

When our Nightstop Development Co-ordinator Moreen met James, she could see that he was pale and undernourished. She said 'he was constantly wringing his hands, and had his hat pulled down and his jacket collar pulled up so I could hardly see his face. He could barely give me eye contact and only spoke in a whisper, so it was difficult to make out what he said.'

James's sister told Moreen that James had been deprived of food and money and had been forced to drop out of his first year of University studying Accountancy because of his situation at home. At their first meeting, Moreen helped James complete all the necessary paperwork for Nightstop, and then drove him to meet Nightstop hosts Dave and Libby, a volunteer couple with a spare room in their home that they keep available for young people affected by homelessness. Dave is a physics teacher at a local high school and Libby is a nurse. They also have two young children.

Dave and Libby gave James the warmest of welcomes when he arrived, immediately making him feel more relaxed. They showed him to his room, which had a double bed and a TV and a big window overlooking their garden. It was very peaceful. He also had his own bathroom.

Moreen made arrangements to meet James the next day to check and discuss next steps, and she gave him a bus pass to help him reach the meeting place.

The next day Moreen spent helping James access emergency financial support and Universal Credit. She observed that James was still very quiet and was still avoiding eye-contact. At the end of the day she drove him back to Libby and Dave's house.

The following day James was meeting his sister, and Moreen received a phone call from her. Moreen said, 'she was crying and so I was worried and asked what was wrong. She replied that she was crying with happiness. She told me that she was sitting with her brother and that he was "actually talking" and "actually smiling". She said that James had played two games of chess with Dave the night before and won one of the games. He was smiling from ear to ear about it. She said, "I've got my brother back!" and asked if she could send a card to the hosts thanking them for everything they have done.'

James stayed with Dave and Libby for a week more before we were able to help him move on to a youth specific hostel where he would receive 24-hour support until long-term accommodation became available. Nightstop was not just a vital stopgap to prevent James from having to sleep rough or in other unsuitable and unsafe accommodation, it provided him with a positive, caring environment, and showed him what was possible. It gave both James and his sister hope.

The Larder

The Larder's Catalyst Kitchen service that delivers free, tasty, high quality cooked meals to vulnerable people in West Lothian has had another very busy year. We've prepared and delivered just over 59000 meals, including 3400 to people in West Lothian

Council's homeless accommodation and 2300 to students at West Lothian College. Over the year we've provided three meals a week for 251 adults and 104 children. We continue to be humbled by the gratitude of those we help, Mr F from Blackburn said 'The meals are a god send wouldn't be able to survive without them to be honest'.

The service continues to grow, in April 2022 we were delivering about 800 meals a week, but by March 2023 we were up to 1170 a week. On Christmas Eve we delivered 1539 Christmas meals, with gifts for each child, and a selection box. (Our individual supporters donated £9,000 to make this happen, so grateful to them).

Our recipients come from all over West Lothian, and are referred by a total of 33 services. West Lothian Council services are by far the biggest referrers, 51% of our recipients coming through this route, with 22% coming from Third Sector organisations, 7% from other public sector sources and 20% direct to The Larder.

Ms S from Livingston wrote to us 'Hi Thanks for your email and our referral to the Advice Shop, we are struggling with our finances we have a income of £12000 a year for us to survive on. We are down to 2 meals a day now as we cannot afford to get most of our shopping as the prices are very expensive. The Larder gives us 3 meals a week each, which helps us greatly. We do enjoy your food, especially when I don't have the energy to get things together. I am a disabled person and some days I cannot get a breath because I have COPD and chronic bronchitis so my movement is a problem. It's a great thing to get help from areas other than the government and the Larder gives us well being in this society. I must mention lxxx, the guy who delivers our food to us, he is a bonus to your company. He always asks us are we okay and with a smile.'

We ask our partners to give us the main reasons why they refer people to us. 47% of the responses relate to too little money and 25% are for mental health. Poor physical health (6%), social isolation (6%) and addiction (8%) feature as well. Ms G from Blackridge commented 'Thank you for your correspondence, we enjoy our weekly delivery of the food larder meals and are very grateful for them as they help us a lot during this most difficult cost of living crisis! Please keep up the good work thank you.'

THE LARDER

Training and employability

The Larder supported 196 school students in 2023/24 a 15% increase on the previous year.

We support children from the age of 5 to 18 to develop their confidence, health and wellbeing and skills for life. We worked with a total of 15 West Lothian schools and two secondary schools in other local authorities, delivering 23 different courses.

We also supported ninety seven unemployed young people between sixteen and twenty four to better prepare for the world of work through employability programmes and Individual Training Accounts. The average length of time spent on our programmes was 15 weeks with the longest being thirty four and the shortest two weeks.

Case study

Simon (name changed) has additional support needs and Started with The Larder whilst in his senior phase of secondary school. He attended our Cedarbank Get Ready for Work programme for two years where he built his confidence and developed his skills for life, including professional cookery. On leaving school, he progressed to our employability programmes and was supported for 26 weeks to develop his skills as set out in his personal development plan. In March 2023 he left The Larder to start supported volunteering at Braid Health. He volunteers two days per week where he supports staff in the kitchen to prepare lunches and entertains the clients with his range of musical talents.

Cameron told us that he was sad to move on from The Larder as he loved every day at The Larder. He gained confidence, and built new friendships but importantly developed his speech so that he could tell his gran about his days at The Larder.

His Gran is delighted that he now phones her after every session at The Larder and tells her about his day. She said that she now has an adult relationship with her grandson that she previously didn't think would be possible (story told via Mum who attended a session with SURF judges during the assessment of our youth employability programmes).

His Mum told us that they had watched him grow from a boy to a man whilst at The Larder and that for the first time they have hope for his future.

Cameron's story is only one of many where our approach, compassion and understanding has made a real difference to the life of the learners. The Larder is the only training provider in West Lothian offering supported pathways, with qualifications, from school to work. Every journey is different to meet the needs of the young people and Cameron is a perfect example.

Whitburn Community Development Trust

Whitburn Community Development Trust local charity run by volunteers, our vision is to relieve poverty, promote well-being and build a healthy, prosperous, and sustainable future for our town and its people. We strive to achieve this through the provision of our Community Support Hub, Community Fridge and Community Garden as well as through other community activities including, Friends of Polkemmet, a weekly park run and a walking football group. Through these activities we provide services and support to tackle and alleviate the significant economic challenges and pressures facing our community.



Whitburn Community Garden



We have installed the infrastructure of the Community Garden on an unused piece of land next to Whitburn Community Education Centre and with the help of volunteers we have planted over 250 trees including Willow, Rowan, Crab Apple, Silver Birch and Oak. We have also been busy planting wildflower seeds that should cover the small embankment to create a beautiful wildflower meadow in the garden which includes wildlife friendly plants. We have also installed a polytunnel and raised beds to grow our own fruit/veg and flowers for the Community, some of which will be available through our

Community Fridge. The community garden is a space where people can share and gain new knowledge, such as how to grow fresh tasty food, how to support wildlife, how to improve the local environment and more. The community garden has no shelf life or expiry date and will be an asset to the community for generations like many other community gardens across West Lothian and Scotland.

Our Community Garden:

- Offers a socially cohesive space for members of all generations to come together and share experiences and learn new skills.
- Allows the community to be involved in growing fresh fruit and veg to see the process of farm to fork.



- Produces locally grown fruit and veg which is made available to members of our Community Fridge.
- Provides the opportunity for the community to enjoy open green space which is proven to increase people's mental health and wellbeing.
- Provides volunteering opportunities.



One of our volunteers who has a history of alcohol abuse has enjoyed being able to be busy and being a part of the community garden and said "This is just the tonic I needed after isolating during Covid it's a real friendship here".

Follow us on Facebook to keep up to date with our progress.

Scan the QR code to our Facebook page.



Whitburn Community Fridge

Whitburn Community Fridge nearly is 3 years old. The purpose of our project is to prevent food waste and give our community the opportunity to access food with dignity. Over the past 3 years we have re-distributed over 100 tonnes of food into our community and prevented this fresh food going to landfill. This is the equivalent to 13 fully grown elephants in weight. Currently we have roughly 850 members signed up with us supporting around 1300 adults and 650 children. Its often referred to by members as a 'Life saver' in their time of need.



We are fortunate to have a team of dedicated volunteers that support us in the running of our project. It would not be possible to support as many people as we do without them.

We receive surplus food from supermarkets such Asda, Tesco, Lidl, Co-op and Fareshare. The help we have received for supermarkets has been invaluable. It is stomach wrenching to think this fresh surplus food would have ended up in landfill.

The Average household also throws away roughly £470 worth of food every year whilst others live in poverty. Most food waste is avoidable and could have been eaten had it been better managed.

We recently delivered a 6 week cook along at home course where the participants were given an Air fryer at the end of it to take home, this was well received by participants and one said “I have no words I thought I was doing another cooking course like the baking which I loved. I would never be able to afford one so I’m over the moon” and “It has helped so much as I have been struggling financially”



West Lothian Drug & Alcohol Service (WLDAS)

West Lothian Drug and Alcohol Service has had another extremely busy year across all the projects within the service.



The Therapeutic Support Service (TSS) was successful in its tender submission and was recommissioned by West Lothian Council to counselling/support and psychological therapies to those adults and young people of West Lothian experiencing substance issues. This new contract will be initially for 3 years with the option of a further 2-year extension. The Board of Management, Extended Management Team, staff, and volunteers are all delighted as this provides consistency and stability for the people of West Lothian who access WLDAS services. Also, no reduction in staff complement.

All WLDAS projects are intrinsically linked and provide a Whole Family Approach as well as a wealth of lived/living experience within these projects. Partnership working has always been at the forefront of WLDAS activity on a strategic and operational/frontline level. This will continue to be built upon with existing partners, but also new partnerships will be established as the service continues to develop and evolve over the coming years.

The Family Matters support group has delivered 2 Family Matters/Stigma Matters awareness evenings. The first evening was held at the Paul Taylor Lecture Theatre within St John's hospital and the second was held within Blackburn Partnership Centre – combined attendance was 39 people. These sessions were delivered by 2 WLDAS employees and 3 family members from the Family Matters support group who shared their own personal experiences of being at the receiving of stigma due to a loved one's substance issue. The latter having a very emotional and powerful impact on those in attendance. Feedback was extremely positive from the attendees with an increased awareness and learning being taken from this event. There will be further awareness evenings being delivered throughout West Lothian going forward.

Below is a selection of case studies from some of the projects available from WLDAS.

Case Study Family Matters

D has been attending the family matters support group due to her sons (G) addiction and the associated behaviours. D's son has had addiction issues for 17 years and was recently admitted into hospital due to an abscess caused by groin injecting. Due to this G was hospitalised, which lasted for 7 weeks. Through this time, G became abstinent and was stable on his prescription. It was agreed that on discharge from hospital G would engage in treatment for underlying trauma and a support for a ADHD diagnosis which was done during his time in hospital. Unfortunately, G did not engage with support when discharged from hospital. G continued to use and access needle exchange, things started to deteriorate quite quickly for G and through family support we agreed to have the assertive outreach service from CGL to attempt contact with G, this was unsuccessful. Supported by Family matters G sister took more of a hands-on approach with the situation and contacted services and we raised our concerns. G prescription was placed under the community addiction service and G attended several appointments with his sister who became his nominated spoke person. G is back on a daily prescription and is engaging with the assertive outreach service provided by CGL. G is looking to relocated out of his current area as he has experienced multiple traumas including fatal overdoses in his current address. G has become more motivated to change and stop his illicit substance use and his family is supporting him to do this while continuing to be supported by Family Matters.

Grief Matters – 12 to 18 years old affected by sudden or unexpected death.

Tom's dad died suddenly of a heart attack whilst playing with Tom in his room. Tom stopped attending school and the main emotion presented was anger causing issues at home and leaving Mum at a loss trying to hold the family together while grieving herself.

The worker contacted mum for a more detailed picture and made plans to start work with Tom in a way that would suit him best. Covid hit and adjustments were made so Tom opted for telephone sessions. A lot of time was spent establishing trust and building the relationship, ensuring Tom that things would only go at his pace.

Over time, Tom began to share more about his grief, how life had changed and what his world looks like now. This allowed Tom to grieve and understand there is no set pattern to grief, and it will always be with you, but you can move through it and would survive. In time they returned to face-to-face sessions which allowed him to communicate things he could not over the phone. He also established coping strategies and found his new normal.

Tom's mum was also supported by the worker, and this is a direct quote from her.

'When a child's parent dies suddenly it is hugely traumatic for everyone. There is no time to try and adapt. This service has kept us going in a positive direction and been invaluable to us both'.

Grief Matters – bereavement counselling and art therapy

LK was referred into the service as she was struggling to process the death of her grandmother, who had died during Covid. LK was unable to say goodbye to her grandmother, and this left her with no closure and a fear that her loved ones, especially her grandfather, might also die. LK had previously overdosed twice, resulting in hospital admissions and a referral being made to Grief Matters.

LK reported that she struggled to articulate how she was feeling and found it easier to hold everything inside. I suggested that LK use art materials to express herself. At the beginning of our sessions LK's artwork helped to identify that she felt very overwhelmed by her grief as there were a lot of unanswered questions, which was represented by grey paint. Her images contained a lot of black, which she stated was to represent the times she was in hospital, thoughts of self-harm and the anger she feels towards her grandmother's death, and the small areas of white were to represent memories of her grandmother. We used this image as a focal point for the sessions, referring to it to think about any changes occurring and how this might impact the colours in the image.

As the sessions continued, LK found it easier to verbally express herself. She reported that she found art making very relaxing and through the continuous use of art making and art therapy, she opened up more about her grief and the accompanying feelings, often leaving her feeling angry, overwhelmed or empty.

LK was soon ready to think about finding closure and thinking about the many different memories she had of her grandmother, good and bad. Halfway through the sessions LK stated that she was starting to accept her grandmother's death and knew that it would take some time for her to fully accept it. LK decided that she would make another image to represent where she was in her journey. Although the painting included grey, black, and white, there was less grey, as LK was accepting that she might never get answers, less black as she was accepting that her hospital admissions were part of her past, and more white as she was more able to think about her grandmother without feeling overwhelmed.

After 17 sessions with LK, she felt that she had finished her piece of work with the bereavement counselling, so we decided to bring the sessions to a close. LK reported that she no longer felt the need or want to self-harm as she had developed coping strategies. She felt more in control of her emotions and proud of what she had achieved.

Wraparound Service – Specialist Link Worker – 12- to 18-year-olds affected by substance use (lower tariff)

Jake – 17 – referred himself for support after stopping cannabis use cold turkey. He had been smoking at significant levels for a year and reported using 'study drugs' for a brief period last year. At point of referral Jake had been substance free for 6 weeks.

During initial sessions Jake expressed feelings of anxiety, low mood, suicidal ideation and

episodes of dissociation and paranoia. Counselling allowed him to explore these feelings and through discussion with the worker he was given psychoeducation around the effects of substance use on the body and mind and how long this can last. This allowed him to separate what was him and what were the after-effects of long-term substance use. This then allowed for exploration of why he used substances in the first place, and he went on to establish coping strategies to manage the anxiety and exam stress he was experiencing which led to him smoking cannabis.

By exploring his triggers Jake was able to identify issues within his relationship with his parents and how bullying had made him hyper vigilant. He was then able to find a way to express his thoughts and feelings to his mum and dad which had a significantly positive impact on these relationships and identify strategies to manage his anxiety in social situations. This increased self-awareness and confidence allowed him to be more open with school about his struggles and alongside his counsellor they supported him to put a balanced plan in place that allowed for study and self-care.

After a period of 3 months Jake remained substance free and reported improvements in relationships, sleep, and mood. His anxiety and paranoia had significantly reduced, and he was being more outwardly social and feeling more comfortable in his skin. He reported anxiety around exams and school but felt his study plan, supports and self-care strategies made this manageable.

Jake has also managed to secure a part time job which is helping to reduce his anxiety and increase his socialisation with others and is also feeling more positive about upcoming exams.

Below is a brief introduction to the services available from WLDAS.

Therapeutic Support Service: Providing counselling/support and psychological therapies for those adults aged 18 years and over who are experiencing substance misuse issues.

Young person's worker: Providing counselling/support and psychological therapies to young people aged 12 to 18 years who are within active addiction or are affected by a loved one's or significant other's substance misuse.

Family Matters: Providing 1:1 and group support to adult family members/friends 18 years and over, who are affected by a loved one's or significant other's substance misuse.

Grief Matters: Providing support to young people aged 12 to 18 years who have experienced the sudden death of a family member, friend or significant other. There is no substance use criteria to access this service – open to all.

Wraparound West Lothian: Providing support for young people aged 12 years and over and

impacting on: family life, education, risk taking behaviours and general health & wellbeing. Circle West Lothian and West Lothian Youth Action are active partners within this project.

Harm Reduction: Providing assertive outreach to injecting drug users through IEP (Injecting Equipment Provision) distribution, safer injecting advice, wound care, DBST (Dry Blood Spot Testing), THN (Take Home Naloxone), brief interventions and access to treatment/same day prescribing, where appropriate. In partnership with NHS HRT (Harm Reduction Team) every Wednesday.

Citizens Advice Bureau West Lothian

Citizens Advice Bureau West Lothian has been a leading advice provider for the local community since the 1940's. During this time the bureau has developed our service to ensure that client needs are met. The key to our success is the ability to adapt and to ensure that we maintain a strong team of advisers equipped to provide a quality, accurate, confidential and free service to our clients.



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Against this overall background there is a huge reliance on our volunteer force which form the backbone of our service. Traditionally our volunteers have provided our main generalist face to face advice service, however we have adapted to the changing needs of our community and now offer an additional range of communication channels such as phone, email, webchat and videocall ensuring that our services remain accessible to all in the community.

Our volunteers represent the range of our local community, from young people and students at the beginning of their working lives, to retired professionals and everyone in between. All of our volunteers bring their own life experience and skills to the Bureau which enhances our ability to relate to clients and understand their problems. All of our advisers, both paid and voluntary, have to complete an extensive "adviser training programme". This, coupled with our continued compliance in Quality of Advice audits ensures that each client receives the same professional standard of advice throughout our advice service.

In the year to March 2023 we dealt with:

- **18,700 Issues**
- **2,600 emails**
- **5,000 phone calls**
- **1600 face to face enquiries**
- **And secured £1.7 Million worth of client financial gain.**

In the coming months we expect our clients to be further affected by the cost of living crisis. As a bureau we will continue to support our clients through this, and through whatever other challenges the coming year will bring.

Here are some examples of clients we have assisted over the last year, and some client feedback.

CASE STUDY 1

Our client was an employed lone parent with a four-year old child, who was seen at a food larder outreach. Client had been struggling to support his child as his ex-partner was still in receipt of the child benefit, despite no longer caring for the child. This meant that the client was missing out on a range of benefits and entitlements.

Adviser helped client with his immediate crisis by applying for foodbank, fuelbank and referring him to Advice Shop for the energy grant and Data Allowance payment.

In order to provide the client with increased income in the longer term we supported him to apply for the Child Benefit, and Universal Credit. This additional income also opened up his eligibility for Scottish Child Payment and help with nursery fees. Client also decided to reduce his hours to 21 hours in order to spend more time with his child.

Client received one-off payments of £212.42 and increased annual income of £13,346.92 as a result of our adviser's intervention.

CASE STUDY 2

Client called in to the bureau in a state of distress.

She had moved into her late mother's house after inheriting the property.

She did not know who was supplying the gas or electricity, and had contacted her own previous energy supplier in order to switch over. She then received an email saying they could not switch over as her existing supplier would not allow them to do so.

All she knew was that she had a gas prepayment meter with £40 of credit, she did not know the supplier and she had no information about her electricity supplier or the state of the account. She was extremely concerned that her gas/electricity was going to be cut off in the next few days as she had no way of making payments to the accounts.

Our adviser supported client to contact her old supplier to obtain the information they held about the property's supply. After obtaining the appropriate permission, they allowed our adviser to speak on client's behalf. After some negotiation, the issue was resolved and they agreed to switch client's supply within 5 working days.

Client was delighted with this, and she called us back the following week to confirm the switch had taken place as arranged.

CASE STUDY 3

Client was a young single man living in homeless accommodation. Prior to becoming homeless he had worked full-time for the NHS, developed mental health issues which led to him becoming alcohol dependent and losing his home.

Our adviser first completed a benefit check to assess client's benefit entitlement, then supported client to claim Universal Credit by completing a 3 way call with DWP. On our adviser's request, DWP accepted client as a vulnerable person so that a case manager would be appointed to him more quickly in order to better support the client.

With client's UC claim in process our adviser explained that client may be entitled to Adult Disability Payment, and offered immediate assistance with a Crisis Grant claim. The adviser also signposted the client to other supporting agencies.

Lastly, when our adviser contacted client to ensure his claim was in payment client also advised he has accepted professional help and has been referred by his doctor and is currently waiting to attend rehabilitation and access Mental Health support services. The client advised he can now start to look forward to rebuilding his life, alongside starting his journey to recovery, with his goal of finding a new home.

CASE STUDY 4

Client, female aged 49, has been on ESA, housing benefit and council tax reductions for several years. Her health had deteriorated over the last couple of years due to covid restrictions, had been further exacerbated by worry over the cost of living crisis. This has led to client abusing alcohol again, after a period of abstinence. Was referred to CAB by a Community Development Trust as she was struggling financially and wanted to know if there were any other benefits/grants she might be entitled to.

Our adviser completed a holistic benefit check and identified some local authority funds, which she assisted client to apply for immediately. She also assessed client for entitlement to PIP, and at a subsequent appointment, assisted her to complete the application.

The client was awarded PIP, and as she lived alone and was already in receipt of ESA she became entitled to an extra premium on her existing benefit.

With the assistance of our adviser, our client gained a one-off payment of £150, and she also received increased benefits worth £6716 a year and a further lump sum payment of £3,669 in backdated benefits.

FEEDBACK FROM CLIENTS

"How good it is that your organisation exists. We have great support from you"

"Thank you very much again for your help in writing the appeal"

"It was a pleasure talking to you. Very helpful to us."

"Very helpful. Helped me fill in my benefit forms and helped me understand it."

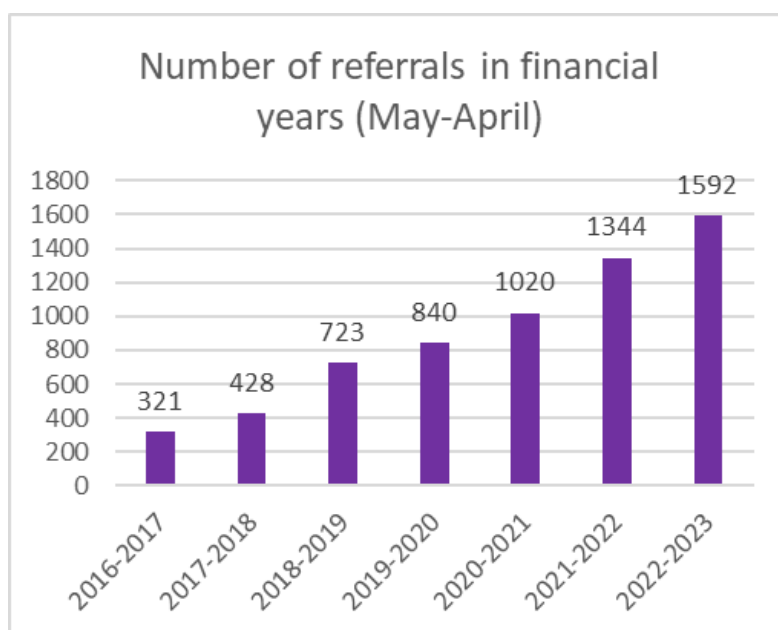
"Very helpful and understanding"

The School Bank West Lothian

The work of The School Bank West Lothian is driven by the need to address the immediate financial and material effects of poverty on children and their families who reside in West Lothian. We support struggling families with the cost of the school day by providing school supplies for both primary and secondary aged young people. Items include full school uniform, PE kit, footwear, jackets, school bags, stationery, and underwear. Packs contain mainly brand-new items as well as good quality second-hand items.



We operate on a referral basis (this includes self-referral) and pride ourselves in providing a straightforward, timely and confidential service that is accessible to any family in direct need. We believe we are fulfilling a need in our local community without which the children would undoubtedly suffer, having a detrimental effect on their educational attainment, and ultimately their life chances.



With 25% of children in West Lothian living in poverty, the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis have all resulted in many more people in our community suffering severe financial hardship, including many families who are working.

Working with our local partners is important to ensuring we adapt and support real needs in our local community. In consultation with Women's Aid West Lothian, we identified a need to support pre-school children with clothing. Some parents were embarrassed at the condition of their children's clothing and as a result were not taking their children to pre-school. By denying a child access to early learning they were missing out on important life lessons as well as socialisation, and this can lead to widening the attainment gap for this group of young children.

In the summer of 2022, we launched a pilot project supporting children aged 2–4 years old with casual clothing, jackets, and wellies to enable parents to send their children to preschool with their head held high. Referrals are restricted due to limited funds and can only be received from Women’s Aid, Home Start, and Bridgend Nursery. Referrers told us:

"It has helped save a little money getting the new nursery clothes, we can now go on some well needed family trips."

“A great help towards the costs of items as my child is growing up in size now. Perfect for nursery. They are doing a great thing helping families to provide this basic but so much needed items for children.”



In the autumn of 2022, as direct result of the escalating energy costs and cost-of-living crisis, we launched a project to provide warm clothing to young people from age 3-18 years old so they could stay warm at home and whilst they are out and about. Items included a "oodie" style fleece, cosy socks, winter jacket, hat/gloves, and wellies. Most of the funding for this project supported young people in the Craigshill area of Livingston. Referrers told us:



“Having seen the recent struggles that parents are having due to the cost-of-living crisis, this project came at the right time and fulfilled all needs. Having the most basic essential items enabled the parents to feel valued knowing that their child is safe, warm, and happy. This also relieved some stress and anxieties from the parents as it kept their child warm during the cold spells, without having another expense of heating bills.”

"Some of our families are in poverty and at Christmas time money is already tight so the relief of new jackets and warm clothing helped families budget a little easier. with the cost of fuel in the home as well the warm oodie style jumpers are amazing to help families keep warm at home. great idea."

"The help that was given to one child helped him to be able to socialise with their friends and play outside and it also helped this child's confidence as he felt so good in himself by feeling warm and looked the part as he did not have much in winter clothing, so he was not embarrassed. The smile on his face was priceless. Thank you."

In April 2023, our charity turned 7 years old; and as you can see from the chart about the demand has grown year on year, and in the last full year (12 months ending April 2023), we received 1,592 referrals.



There are many reasons why families are referred to us for support. Although West Lothian Council provides a school clothing grant, a significant percentage of children referred to us come from working families who are ineligible for the grant. In addition, there is no council grant provision to support families throughout the year as they out-grow/wear out clothes/shoes or help in crisis situations such as unexpected homelessness or fleeing domestic abuse or moving school due to bullying. We can help in these emergency situations and support any family at the point of need – our service is not means tested.

Additionally, the uniform grant covers basic costs but often does not enable parents to buy all the items required for school so for some families we supply necessary extras such as a warm jacket, shoes, and outdoor PE kit.

We receive feedback from our referrers about our impact on the children and families who receive assistance. We hear a very strong message that:

- Providing a school uniform pack gives an immediate boost for children and families who lead extremely difficult lives. Receiving new items is really valued by people who may rarely receive any new clothes or possessions.
- Being the same as their peers is really important to children, affecting their self-esteem and confidence. When children have the correct uniform and supplies the risk of bullying is reduced and school attendance improves.
- Knowing that your child is adequately clothed and not having to worry about them being unhappy, bullied or not wanting to go to school because of lack of uniform, greatly reduces anxiety for parents and carers.
- Providing uniform also relieves a burden for families who are struggling financially.

As a charity, we drive forward our ambition to work closely with local community groups, referrers, and key partners, while simultaneously building awareness of our profile in the community. Our Project Manager monitors the impact of societal changes and invents new methods of support e.g., helping schools to set up their own second-hand uniform hub to support families more directly; sourcing and redistributing re-furbished laptops to support digital inclusion; re-cycling once used clothing such as Halloween outfits and Christmas Jumpers; and sourced food vouchers. We continue to build relationships with community groups to reach more young people who need our services.



The Bridge Community Project



the bridge
CONNECTING HOME WITH HOPE

BRIDGE COMMUNITY PROJECT

IMPROVING EVERYDAY WELLBEING

302

PEOPLE SUPPORTED

3

WELLBEING SERVICES



the bridge
financial wellbeing service

“ Thank you all again for your support, me n the boys are just in a better place all round and really feel that we are getting back on our feet **”**

Our Financial Wellbeing team have been able to support 95 individuals in a person centred way during a very difficult last year to improve their financial Wellbeing. We worked predominately with those who live in rural areas and those who present with mental health conditions.

PERSON CENTRED PRACTICAL SUPPORT

✓ recipe bags delivered to all clients



✓ Budgeting packs
✓ 1 to 1 cooking sessions
✓ Energy top ups
✓ Christmas hampers delivered
✓ Aldi vouchers to all clients
✓ Small community grants
✓ Warm packs to all clients during the winter
✓ Signposting to other 3rd sector orgs

Our impact has ensured that clients:



are less stressed



have improved mental wellbeing



have budgets in place



are more connected to their community

Bridge Community Project - SC045049



Our Counselling team have been able to support 65 individuals to improve their emotional wellbeing while offering 721 counselling sessions. Our service provides affordable mental health support in a safe environment.

The most common presenting issues are

TRAUMA ANXIETY DEPRESSION BEREAVEMENT SUICIDAL IDEATION

These are some of the stories of improved emotional wellbeing:

“

Grief, anger and anxiety was destroying me. I never felt in control. I just couldn't accept my life without my Grandparents. I had so much anger in me and I just didn't know how I was supposed to move on in life with how I felt. The anxiety kept triggering health issues that made me so worried I was going to die.

I have now dealt with grief I carried with me for 14 years and blamed myself. I now accept that I wasn't to blame and I could never have changed what happened. I am still working on the grief I need to deal with from a death more recent but I am not angry anymore and I am so much stronger now and I will deal with it. I am in control of my anxiety and I am not going to die. I am smiling, laughing, having fun again. I am a stronger person now who deserves to be happy because I am better than anxiety and anger.

”

“

I am more confident, I am more calm, I am less anxious and depressed. I have learned ways of coping that I can now use to cope with future, low mood etc. I have more energy, More motivation, Am happier and more content, Feel at peace with things that used to trouble me.

”

“

I reached the bridge broken and willing to try anything to try to help improve my mental health. I was sceptical about how much counselling would actually be able to help me. It took me about 6-8 weeks to settle in and feel I could really open up which is when I really started to feel the benefit. I now feel like a different person, I am able to cope with situations that used to easily overwhelm me and enjoy my life again

”

Bridge Community Project - SC045049



Our Stepping Stones to Wellbeing team have been able to support **142** individuals to improve their financial and emotional wellbeing through offering **20** groups and courses across the past year.

“

I have a new found confidence in myself, good understanding of what I need to establish a good mental rapport within myself. I'm taking away a lot of knowledge and have been able to use this to my benefit

”



LOOKING AFTER YOUR MENTAL WELLBEING

5 groups completed



EMOTIONAL LIFEJACKET COURSE

5 groups completed



MONEY MANAGEMENT MASTERCLASS

2 courses completed



SHARING SKILLS FOR LIFE

3 groups completed



BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT COURSE, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH LIVINGSTON UNITED PARISH CHURCH AND COOP BEREAVEMENT CARE

9 groups completed

BRIDGE WELLBEING HUB



We completed the refurbishment of our **wellbeing hub**. The space now includes:

- 5, 1 to 1 client rooms
- training space
- kitchen for 1 to 1 cooking support
- Air source heating system
- Solar and battery system

West Lothian Youth Action Project

Case study – Early Intervention Support – why it is so important.



Our Early Intervention support creates space for young people to have one-to-one sessions, helping to address and tackle problems that a young person may be facing. I worked with one female who came from a stable home environment with encouraging and supportive parents. She was struggling with anxiety, which had left her feeling isolated socially and struggling at school. Academically she was managing quite well though she would often put herself down, she found studying and exams a very overwhelming experience. At times this would make her unwell to the point she would not attend school. When I met with her and her parents it was clear her anxiety was bringing her mood down and causing problems with her sleep. Talking more with the young person it became evident her anxiety came from a fear of failure. During Covid-19 being isolated socially at home had attributed to the anxiety she felt around going out of the house in a social context e.g. to spend time with friends. This anxiety had remained with Y as others were returning to their more normal patterns of socialising.

We held our sessions outside walking locally or driving somewhere to take a walk in new environments, we would sometimes go into a cafe and have a coffee, she felt quite anxious at first but then became more relaxed as time went on. This helped her get back out into other settings outside of her home and comfort zone. During our time working together we looked at coping strategies such as breathing techniques and relaxation to help wind down at night and improve her mental well-being. We discussed the importance sleep can have on our moods and our mental health. We worked on to-do lists and goal settings, breaking big goals into smaller manageable ones. Helping change thought patterns from negative to focus her mind on positives and achievements, even if they are just little ones like having a better sleep, finishing a chapter of a book or speaking online with a friend. We discussed different ways to study and what she thinks works for her, using study guides and practice tests. As she was making it into school more and socialising with friends in school, she wanted to get a part-time job as many of her friends had one. Mum helped her search and apply for jobs and very quickly she secured a part-time job working on a cash register in a shop. She expressed a great deal of dread and anxiety to me, however within a few weeks of working there she presented at our sessions far more chatty and bubbly.

Her parents had seen a huge improvement, she was being supported to do driving lessons and was learning to manage and save money. Having her own money allowed her more independence which made her feel proud of herself. She wanted to go to college when she finished school and I supported her to look through different college websites and review various courses she was interested in. Her attendance at school improved and she was doing less work at home. Within school she developed a good social group.

After working together in 1-1 sessions for a year during 2022 there have been huge improvements for Y. She had completed her exams and felt confident she had done all she could do and accepted she had put her all into it. She successfully applied for a new job working in sales in a shoe shop. She had begun speaking online with friends either through gaming or on the phone and making plans to meet up outside of school. With her parents support she passed her driving test which she was very happy about as this gave her even more independence, empowerment, and confidence. She was able to celebrate her successes and was ready to take on new challenges not only with the support of her parents but also with friends she was regularly in contact with. She still experienced worry and at times some anxiety though she was able to manage it better, using the tools we had discussed, she was able to take a step back rather than letting the feelings overwhelm and control her. After talking with her parents and my manager it was decided she no longer needed 1-1 support and had made great improvements, I discussed this with Y and she also agreed that it was time to conclude the 1-1 sessions.

My job was complete for this young person, her view was " I am in a good place now, I can see a positive future for myself, I am happy and excited for new experiences in my life."

Poor mental health can occur at any time to people of any age, being provided with the space, time and a trusted listening ear can make a huge difference.

Cyrenians OPAL

Cyrenians OPAL (Older People, Active Lives) operates across West Lothian and aims to support those age 60+ to maintain or increase their independence and well-being. The service is delivered by a team of dedicated dedicated, trained volunteers who offer encouragement, companionship and support to engage in social, leisure and community activities.



We have 13 groups, both in-person and online, offering people the opportunity to meet others in their community and take part in activities such as singing, quizzes, games, cooking, local walks, a book club and much more!

For people looking to improve their computer skills (whether on a tablet, smartphone or PC), we provide digital groups. For those unable to attend a group, we offer one-to-one digital support.

Through our one-to-one service, we support older people who may be experiencing one or more of the following:

- Bereavement
- Returning home after a recent stay in hospital
- Living distantly from family or friends
- A carer responsibility
- Depression and/or anxiety
- A recent/early dementia diagnosis

Our one-to-one support: short term (maximum service of 9 months) and telephone befriending – volunteers provide personalised support to achieve a goal such as improved confidence, walking or re-connecting with their local community. Introduction to local groups or social activities – A volunteer will help to identify groups or activities in the local area. They may also initially accompany a client to a group, until the client feels ready to attend alone.

OPAL's Community Capacity Building (CCB) initiative aims to enable and support older people in achieving the changes and improvements they want to see happen in their local community. We supported the initial set up of the Winchburgh Companions Group and Whitburn Lunch Club, these are now community led. We will be working in other areas across West Lothian over the upcoming months to encourage community development.

2023 marks OPAL's 10th Anniversary, to start off the celebrations we hosted a Big OPAL Par-Tea in Livingston Stadium with over 170 people in attendance. We will continue to mark the occasion throughout the year.



Gina uses both a smartphone and an iPad (the latter received from the Connecting Scotland scheme). Although G. has some experience in using both devices, she had lost confidence and trust after having one or more of her online accounts hacked. The digital support given to G. focussed initially on improving overall digital security, for example by setting up touch (fingerprint) log-in to the iPad, and reviewing and updating access to online accounts. During the 6 sessions, we also had time to practice using Google maps and bus service apps, and a had brief review of using online shopping apps such as Amazon. We achieved the overall goals, which were to increase G's ability to keep herself safe from potential hackers and scammers, and also to improve G's skills in using the iPad for some specific tasks such as journey planning.

After the final session, G. sent a text saying 'I feel so much better using the iPad. Thank you for persevering with me, it was such a help'.



Davina attends one of our OPAL groups by the support of a volunteer driver, D has moderate dementia and can be very forgetful at times. She lives in a remote area of West Lothian and has very little interactions with others. Since joining the group D has really thrived, she enjoys taking part in any activities that are taking place and has made friends. D has spoken to the group many times about how she is a pianist and although she forgets some things she hasn't forgotten 'how to play'. In December one of the group's volunteers who heard D's story brought in a musical instrument for D to play for the group. It was wonderful to see her come to life and play songs that the others could sing along to or dance too and for D to be included as a large part of the group.



@cyrenians1968



@OPALCyrenians

Cyrenians is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO), registered charity SC011052

EnvironMentalHealth CIC

We are a Lived Experience Led Mental Health and Well-being Social Enterprise responding to the National Mental Health crisis. We know Early Intervention and Prevention through First Aid For Mental Health is key to empowering communities to respond early to any member suffering mental ill-health and distress. We believe Mental Health is a collective responsibility within our communities which encompasses businesses, organisations, and educational institutions, and most importantly as individuals.



There are no simple answers to a complex issue, however, we must find ways of working together to achieve best practice across all sectors. To help facilitate this, thought must be given to the needs and resources of all organisations regardless of size. We must be proactive and willing to work organically towards the needs and limitations of each organisation.

Our Courses:

First Aid For Mental Health Training (SCQF)

Level 4 – Awareness of First Aid for Mental Health

Level 5 – First Aid for Mental Health

Level 6 – Leading/Supervising First Aid for Mental Health

First Aid For Youth Mental Health Training (SCQF)

Level 5 – First Aid for Youth Mental Health

ASIST- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training

2 day Workshop

Workshops

Enhanced Listening Skills

Peer Support Group Facilitation Skills



Statistics 2022 – 2023

No. of Courses delivered

36

No. of qualified First Aiders For Mental Health

343

No. of West Lothian delegates trained

257

Funding secured

£79,244

Partnerships

We have constructed strong partnerships within West Lothian and also Scotland wide. This has included Argyll and Bute HSCP, Volunteer Centre East Lothian, Hermitage Academy, Helensburgh.

We have formed very strong partnerships with St Margaret's Academy, Armadale Academy and West Calder High School. This has resulted in 53 First Aiders being trained in total within schools local to West Lothian.

We are also building strong relationships and partnerships with SMILE Counselling, Trust Project, West Lothian College, Kidzeco. We are delighted to have secured office space within our local Third Sector Interface, The Gateway in West Lothian.

Impact

My understanding of my own mental health and well-being is ...



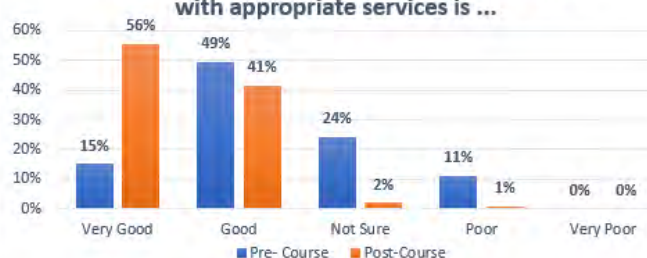
My confidence in approaching someone displaying mental health distress to offer support is..

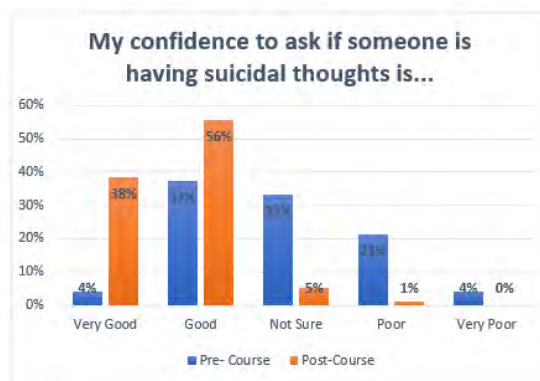


My confidence to challenge stigma is....



My confidence to support someone to engage with appropriate services is ...





Case Study

Community Kitchen Worker

I just want to say a huge thank you to VCEL for providing free spaces on the recent First Aid for Mental Health Zoom Course, The Trainer was fantastic as was the opportunity to hear from everyone who was on the course. The sessions were so informative and the skills I gained during the course have been invaluable over last couple of weeks.

I was able to use my new skills to help one of my friends through a period of crisis in her Mental health, the course taught me to be able to spot signs of crisis and when to pass on information to Emergency Services.

Your course helped me, help others who in turn helped my friend and, in this instance, together we saved a life.

Feedback

[Feedback Video](https://www.voluntarysectorgateway.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Feedback-Video.mp4) – <https://www.voluntarysectorgateway.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Feedback-Video.mp4>

Future

We were delighted to secure funding from both the West Lothian and East Lothian Mental Health and Well-being Funds for Year 2 (2023-24). This shall fund:

Course	No. of Courses Funded	No of delegates
Level 5 – First Aid For Mental Health	19	328
Level 6 – Supervising First Aid For Mental Health	4	48
	23	376

Additionally, we were approached by the Trust Project to deliver 2 First Aid For Mental Health Training Courses and 2 ASIST training courses which we shall be delivering in partnership with SMILE Counselling during May and June 2023.

We shall also be planning and delivering a Young Persons Wellbeing Event for Parents in partnership with West Calder High School, SMILE Counselling and The Scheme during June 2023.

Play Works

Family and Community Development West Lothian rebranded during the last year and adopted the operating name of Play Works, which everyone agreed, sums us up perfectly!



for children
for families
for communities

We continued to operate a range of play-based family support services across the County, including Broxburn Family Centre and the Dale Hub in Armadale, as well as an outreach programme in isolated communities and a childcare social enterprise called Simply Play.

We also refined our key messages:



The last year has been challenging for many families and like most of the Third Sector, we have been there to provide increased, rapid support for them.

Over this year we supported nearly 400 vulnerable children and over 200 parents, from well over 200 families, who attended our groups and activities. We provided more intensive, 1-1 support for nearly 50 children and parents.

Through our pantries, we helped to address the food insecurity of 92 adults, with 74 children. Our community events and community play sessions, throughout the year, were attended by over 700 local people.

We ran a total of 29 groups every week, across our services, which varied in focus but all centred on health, wellbeing and family learning.

Everything that we did was focussed on prevention: providing appropriate supports, at as early a stage as possible, to identify needs and strengths, and to prevent escalation and build resilience, all contributing to improving peoples' health and wellbeing.

People told us what a difference our support made to them. They told us that we reduced or prevented: deteriorating mental health; isolation and loneliness; play deprivation; malnourishment & food poverty; neglect; the repeating pattern of parents' ACEs; poverty; obesity; social exclusion; Social Work intervention; children being taken into care; domestic abuse; substance misuse; loss of tenancy; child safety issues.



One area of work that increased this year, was in response to the need for more intensive 1-1 supports for children, parents and (whole) families. This is the result of a number of factors, like the longer-term impacts of the pandemic lockdowns and associated family stresses, developmental delays, attachment issues and anxiety that have come from this, along with the stresses and anxieties from the cost of living crisis. We are seeing more families with children on the At Risk Register and many more people with poor mental health. Increasing the number of families that we supported more intensively and developed bespoke packages for, has definitely been more resource intensive and required greater flexibility and creativity from our staff.



West Calder & Harburn Community Development Trust



The Trust takes our local Community Action Plan as a guiding document to deliver activities and projects across a range of themes that aim to make West Calder & Harburn "A thriving family friendly, lively and enterprising community with its own unique rural identity."

Community Woods and Garden: Polbeth & West Calder:



- 24/7 accessible green space
- Stick Man Trail
- Veg & plant growing
- Crafts & upcycling
- Eco Refill Station
- Events and plant sales
- Wellbeing support



Good Connections – Community Wellbeing Project

- One-to-one support
- Social prescription
- Counselling
- Peer support groups
- Arts for wellbeing
- Walking group
- Wellbeing library





Brunch Club Community Café

This is in partnership with West Calder Hub. A welcoming café space open to all 5 days a week with a Seniors Set Menu and community shop



The Scottish Co-operative Discovery & Activity Centre

Scottish Co-operative Discovery & Activity Centre

- Redevelop a landmark local building
- Lever investment into our community
- Create Jobs and training
- Provide education
- Support excluded communities

Community Events

Community Events

- Heritage – Coop and Witches
- Christmas
- Fireworks
- Remembrance



Grants, projects and support

- Calder Witch Hunt Group
- Swim West Calder
- Easter Breich Woodland
- Christmas Gifts for disadvantaged families
- Event equipment for local groups

