

Connected Communities

Anthology



Foreword

by Sara Redmond, Chief Officer of Development

Scotland is making huge strides towards health and social care integration. However, progress would not be where it is today without the important and invaluable contribution that is consistently made by Scotland's third sector organisations working within health and social care.

Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE)'s Integration Support Team took forward the Connected Communities case study series to recognise, celebrate and learn from the achievements and successes of third sector organisations who support the development of health and social care integration.

Over the past year, our Integration Support Team conducted a series of Connected Communities case studies. Each one focuses on an organisation leading on an aspect of health and social care, as we explored and identified third sector organisations who exemplify the value of the third sector, whilst showcasing successful integration in practice.

The ALLIANCE would like to take the opportunity to thank each one of the hard working and inspiring contributors featured in the series.

Connected Communities is a welcome reminder that although working in health and social care can be an incredibly challenging, demanding, and at times onerous task, the rewards are rich when we pull together in the same direction to achieve long lasting, meaningful change.



Contents

Introduction	1
Overseeing culture shifts	2
Overcoming barriers	6
Innovative working	10
Fostering authentic relationships	16
Community involvement	20
Shared decision-making	26
Working in partnership	30
Strong and compassionate leadership	34
What next?	36
About Integration	37
About the ALLIANCE	38

Introduction

Health and social care integration is fundamentally about improving the lives of individuals and communities. It is defined by the Scottish Government as aiming to “improve care and support for people who use services, their carers and their families”, with a “greater emphasis on joining up services, and focusing on anticipatory and preventative care”.

To achieve this, the Scottish Government legislated to bring together health and social care within a single, integrated system, whilst encouraging local authorities, health boards, public bodies, and the third sector to work together more closely for the benefit of the communities they serve.

The Connected Communities series specifically shines a light on how the versatility of Scotland’s vast and vibrant third sector is crucial to the success of health and social care integration. The four key aims of the series are to identify areas of good practice within integration, demonstrate the progression of integration, highlight the challenges and barriers to achieving integration, and showcase the third sector’s role as a key partner.

The topics covered within this series are diverse and wide-ranging, and focus on organisations specialising in neurodivergence awareness, learning disabilities, diversity and inclusion, community football, self management, nature connection, mental health, chronic pain, art in healthcare, and more.

Each organisation portrays qualities and themes in line with the core objectives of health and social care integration, which is to work collaboratively across sectors, share knowledge, learning and expertise, and improve the quality of health and care support for the people of Scotland.

Included in the series are organisations overseeing of culture shifts, working in partnership, sharing decision-making, fostering authentic relationships, working innovatively, portraying strong and compassionate leadership qualities, and helping people to overcome barriers.

This anthology aims to showcase the invaluable contributions of third sector organisations to health and social care integration, whilst ensuring the sector is recognised as an essential and equal partner in achieving long-term, impactful and sustainable integration.



Overseeing culture shifts



The process of challenging basic beliefs and enacting new and innovative ways of doing things.

Procrastination Station CIC - "Integration at the forefront of transforming attitudes on ADHD in Scotland"

Procrastination Station exemplifies integrated ways of working. As the first and only adult Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) hub in Scotland, not only is their work innovative, but it fosters authentic relationships, emphasises collaborative working, and helps to instigate a culture shift from within the third sector, which are themes firmly rooted in integration.

Founded in 2019, Procrastination Station offers one-to-one coaching sessions for people diagnosed, self-diagnosed or awaiting diagnosis of ADHD. They also provide advice for adults, adolescents, and relatives of children with the condition, alongside providing educational packages for businesses and healthcare professionals across the country.

Three of Procrastination Station's four directors are certified ADHD life coaches, of which there are very few in Scotland. Research suggests that 2.8% of adults worldwide live with the condition, but founding director Clair Simpson, who was diagnosed with ADHD at age 44, said that until the creation of the organisation, there was a severe lack of support for adults with ADHD in Scotland.

"Basically there was nothing, there was no support for people", Clair says. "We get an influx of people from all walks of life, as well as people who say "I'm at the end of my tether, I don't know what to do". We did training and first aid for mental health, because actually, we were getting people who were at crisis point and feeling suicidal, which was really scary to begin with."

As a result, coaching sessions put the person at the centre, offering greater self-awareness alongside effective strategies, which are co-produced by both coach and the individual to manage bespoke symptoms of ADHD. Individuals are encouraged to participate in courses that can help them interact with others who have the condition, allowing them to develop authentic relationships and talk collaboratively about ADHD with those who have lived experience.

Clair continued: "A big part of what we do is connecting people within the ADHD community. We do a lot of reassuring people that they're not on their own, whilst encouraging them to join the courses. That is one of the most powerful things - getting people together with ADHD to normalise it and go "right, it's not just me"."

Procrastination Station now work closely across the sectors having identified gaps in knowledge about ADHD. As a result, the organisation promotes a joined-up approach by providing educational packages to healthcare professionals, such as psychiatrists and occupational therapists, as well as private sector businesses.

"We've done it with two companies so far who had no information about ADHD", Clair says. "We asked "how can we make your workplace more inclusive for people with ADHD?", and actually, it's not that difficult - a big part of it is communication and understanding how it affects people. The first step in being inclusive is offering support and talking about it."

Procrastination Station work closely with the Job Centre to support unemployed people living with ADHD. Clair says this is a challenge, given those with the condition are more likely to have difficulties staying in employment than a 'neurotypical' person, but government schemes, such as the Access To Work grant, may help to support a culture shift in the workplace.

"If the grant is used by one person to pay for a standing desk because they couldn't settle and wanted to stand up at work, then this is what a reasonable adjustment could look like. We can then take that into our training and say this is what will help a person with ADHD stay in employment."

Integrated approaches to sharing knowledge and understanding, such as partnership working, are allowing Procrastination Station to be at the forefront of a culture shift in Scotland. Clair hopes that these adjustments can be the catalyst in transforming attitudes on ADHD whilst empowering those with the condition to thrive, citing her own diagnosis as the reason she created Procrastination Station.

"Four years ago, there's no way I would have imagined I'd be doing this. But that was the difference between me getting my diagnosis, gaining medication, and receiving support. You then start seeing the amazing talents people with ADHD have when they're put in the right environments. It's a rethink of how society works, but it's totally achievable."

Cumnock Juniors Community Enterprise - "Sport at the heart of integrated community life in East Ayrshire"

Sport has always been a quintessential part of community life throughout Scotland. But in Cumnock, East Ayrshire, steps have been made to take community sport to a whole new level. Cumnock Juniors Community Enterprise (CJCE) is now the focal point of many aspects of town life, having embraced integration to champion partnership working across sectors, harness community involvement, target health and social determinants, and transform the lives of many in the community.

Since the charity were founded in 2013, the development of community sports facilities and programmes in Cumnock has been led by CJCE. The installation of an 'all-weather' pitch in 2015 was transformational for the town, given it created a community sports hub that could allow for sporting activity and community events to take place most days of the week. CJCE Facility Manager, Derek King, was recently invited into the East Ayrshire Council Chambers to deliver a presentation on the group's activities.

"They were blown away by all the stuff we now do", Derek says. "We started off with football primarily, and it just grew into so much more."

CJCE have 575 registered players, 70 Scottish Football Association (SFA) qualified coaches, with a further 100 children aged 2-12 involved in community football classes. Derek says that access to an integrated community sports hub has encouraged collaboration and community involvement, improved mental and physical wellbeing, combated anti-social behaviour, and transformed how people in the town engage with sport, highlighting the real power of integration.

"I would say we're the biggest community group in the area for all the different stuff we do - nobody does as many different things as us. When the schools let the kids out early on Fridays, we let them come and play football for free and it keeps them out of bother."

CJCE work in partnership with local schools and Community Links Workers to identify children living in poverty so they can attend school holiday camps for free, which showcases the focus put on community partnership working in order to achieve better outcomes. They also have a partnership with Ayr Eagles, who play in an amateur league for men with a high BMI or are struggling with their mental health.

"We have a lot of partnerships", Derek continued. "Most of our successful work is achieved by sharing skills with partners who have similar values and goals, with each contributing their own expertise."

The charity ensure that people, their needs, and their lived experience are at the centre of everything they do. This approach has allowed CJCE to become truly accommodating of all ages in the community, with programmes such as walking football helping to provide health and social benefits to over 50s, as well as those struggling with their mental health.

“Many have said that since coming along to walking football, they’ve got lower heart rate, lower blood pressure, less fat, and feel more mobile. The walking football itself was pretty slow at the start - now I can’t slow them down.”

In partnership with Vibrant Communities, CJCE created ‘All Ability Sport’, which supports those with learning differences, whilst the ‘Leadership Academy’ was also created, allowing young people to gain the skills and experience they need to enhance their employability. This again highlights the importance CJCE place on joining-up with others across sectors to champion a person-centred approach.

“We’ve got a lot of partnership working with schools, hospitals and the council”, Derek says. “We support PE lessons at local primary schools and we’re in a working group supporting dementia at the local hospital. A charity partner developed a diabetes awareness course which we piloted with our Leadership group - the SFA are now rolling it out as part of coach education nationwide.”

By championing integration, CJCE have been recognised for their achievements in transforming the community. They received the Ayrshire Sportsability ‘Activity in the Community’ award, the East Ayrshire Sports Council Club of the Year, and the Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service, whilst they are both a SFA Disability Club and SFA Quality Mark Platinum Legacy Club.

“Everything just ties together in this model”, Derek says. “It ticks all the boxes as being sociable, inclusive, and good for your physical and mental wellbeing, so it has huge health benefits.”



Overcoming barriers



By championing patience, partnership, and the value in one another, we can overcome barriers for everyone's benefit.

MySelf-Management - "Overcoming barriers to integrate self management across the Highlands"

The integration of self management into the community is one of the core values of MySelf-Management. Having overcome barriers to harness partnership working, champion the voice of lived experience and encourage innovative transformation, MySelf-Management connect communities across the Highlands by educating, informing and supporting people to reap the benefits of self management.

Known as Let's Get On With It Together (LGOWIT) until April 2023, MySelf-Management support people with long term health conditions by looking at the commonality of symptoms rather than specific conditions, highlighting that people are right at the centre. During the COVID-19 pandemic, MySelf-Management Highland introduced e-learning and transitioned towards online services, which Development Officer Kirsteen Campbell says has increased community involvement from across the Highlands.

"Our group members are at the centre of everything we do", Kirsteen says. "Our Highland self management forum, which previously ran in-person in Inverness, now has a good attendance from other areas thanks to it being online."

MySelf-Management run 'Living Better' groups across the Highlands, which provides group members with the space to get together, chat over a coffee and collaborate on activities both in-person and online, highlighting the emphasis on person centred services.

They also work in partnership across the sectors to ensure that communities become digitally literate, enabling them to access the support and services they need to maintain their self management online. This has seen the organisation run innovative Discover Digital drop-in sessions across the Highlands, whilst they have partnered with three youth organisations to provide education on preventative self management.

“We do a lot of partnership working, which is vital for networking”, Kirsteen says. “The young people decided it would be good to build a website for youths in Highland, and with changes to healthcare and the increase in services transitioning online, it’s important that everyone feels comfortable using technology and doesn’t get left behind.”

MySelf-Management have had to overcome many barriers since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, including funding constraints and difficulty in maintaining an effective and meaningful service across parts of Highland - the largest region in Scotland. But thanks to quick and decisive action in transitioning their services to an online format, the charity have shown they are adaptable and versatile for the benefit of their members, again showcasing the value placed on community and person centred practice.

“Feedback from group members told us that they could not have coped without our support”, Kirsteen added. “As a team we were incredibly proud of how quickly we were able to turn things around, having operated as a face-to-face only project. The pandemic pushed us to try new things in order to support our group members through some of the toughest times we’ve ever faced.”

Despite facing further challenges such as high staff turnover, the resilience of MySelf-Management in overcoming these barriers has seen the charity secure funding from partners, including NHS Highland, to continue this community work. As a result, the charity remains committed to working across sectors to harness youth work, progress into new areas and strengthen core services, highlighting the determination to champion integrated ways of working.

“If we can teach young people how to self manage, what a difference that will have in the future”, Kirsteen added. “Preventative work is vital as we move forward, especially with increasing constraints on health and social care.”



Affa Sair SCIO - "Living experience of chronic pain spotlights third sector value in Grampian"

Affa Sair are a third sector organisation championing innovative community involvement in the north-east of Scotland, with the key themes of integration being utilised to overcome barriers, incorporate the community, and spark desirable change. The Doric Scots name meaning "awfully sore" reflects the symptoms of chronic pain in the dialect of members based in and around the Grampian region, highlighting the strong community ties that allow the charity to spotlight lived and living experience whilst truly valuing the role of the third sector.

Just over one third (38%) of all adults in Scotland were found to be affected by chronic pain in 2022, with Affa Sair founder and chairman, Chris Bridgeford, utilising his own lived experience of the condition to connect individuals with chronic pain, whilst demonstrating the real power of the third sector in bringing about change.

"You do become so isolated, and the longer it goes on, the more reluctant you are to go out", Chris says. "But it was quite eye-opening when we set up and suddenly had this huge community coming forward, and what I like about it is that we're not lecturing people on how to live, we're just here to listen and give advice, which seems to be our strength."

Without professional accreditation akin to that of the NHS, gaining the respect of the healthcare sector was one of the main challenges the organisation had to overcome. However, steps have now been taken to provide a new social prescribing scheme, with nine self management activities now offered to individuals referred by three GP practices in the north-east, which recognises the impact and value of the third sector.

"The star of these nine activities is hydrotherapy sessions at the local hydrotherapy pool we have in Forres, which is an excellent one", Chris says. "That can be quite pricey for people because they need to undergo physiotherapy inductions, so with the funding we've got, we'll pay for that."

By putting people at the centre, Affa Sair have been able to effectively represent and reflect the needs of individuals across the chronic pain community, with collaborative working across sectors also playing a key role in this.

"The connection we have with the NHS is in its infancy, but it's been good", Chris says. "They came forward very quickly and said they wanted to get involved - they were looking for support in setting up social prescriptions, and so they can now refer people to us to provide chronic pain support."

As well as the NHS, the organisation work in partnership with local organisations, such as the Moray Arts Centre, who offer practices referred to as 'crafty art therapy', which includes rock painting, needle felting, and more, highlighting the innovative approach to overcoming barriers that champions community to achieve integration.

"We offer several activities involving crafts which have been really successful and get a lot of people involved", Chris says. "It's made a big difference by creating that wee community, and although Affa Sair is predominantly online, it really is pulling us together in person."

With the community right at the heart of their work, Affa Sair are keen to partner with local wellbeing groups to offer discounted acupuncture and reiki sessions to their members, whilst continuing to develop their integrated approach to harnessing community involvement when spotlighting lived and living experiences of chronic pain.

"I was always reluctant to move away from the online format, but I can now see the benefits of being together in person", Chris says. "As more and more people come forward, we're empowering them to run events and activities by themselves, so that's been a great thing and I can see that being the way forward."



Innovative working



Putting people at the centre to use and develop their skills, knowledge, experience and creativity to the fullest possible extent.

Eat Sleep Ride CIC - "Integration in nature forging compassionate relationships in the Borders"

Eat Sleep Ride is an innovative third sector organisation providing services and support on the principles of integration. By bringing people together across the Scottish Borders, the organisation highlight nature as having powerful therapeutic qualities that are not only beneficial for our health, but can reflect the importance of working collaboratively when overcoming barriers and creating strong and trusting relationships.

Based on the lived experience of founder Danielle McKinnon, Eat Sleep Ride demonstrate the health benefits of connecting with horses and nature, whilst addressing social needs through training, work experience, employment, volunteering, counselling, and peer support.

The main beneficiaries include isolated families, young people experiencing trauma, and adults struggling with their mental health, which led Danielle to promote therapy around horses and nature as an innovative approach to achieving better health and social outcomes.

"You can speak your true self to a horse, which is why our therapy is done with horses and around nature", Danielle says. "It's so authentic because horses don't care what you look like or what you have to say - they care about the inner being."

In line with this, the organisation utilise herd observation to analyse the fostering of relationships in horses, whilst highlighting the benefits of staying closely connected and working collaboratively in integrated ways.

"As a social herd animal, horses don't scatter in times of trouble", Danielle continued. "They trust their herd and navigate uncertainty together by moving with congruence, which is the biggest learning curve for the kids, given we have an education system in which we have to pass or fail."

Eat Sleep Ride are an organisation committed to securing better health and social outcomes for their community, with this including cultural change in the form of climate action, as well as putting people at the centre to showcase the benefits of integrated practices, such as partnership working and fostering authentic relationships.

“Generally, we only use ethical and sustainable resources so we can continue to highlight our stance on climate change”, Danielle says. “A lot of the community activities we do are centred around food, climate change, music, and bringing people together where they can socialise.”

With integration at the heart, one of these events was a ‘Be Yourself’ day, which was initiated by the young people involved and encouraged them to think creatively, be resilient in overcoming challenges, and forge strong relationships built on compassion and understanding.



“One girl focused on conversations around mental health by asking adults how they would help her if they saw her in a state of panic”, Danielle says. “This was a great way of breaking through a barrier by ensuring adults could provide examples of how they could help if she was struggling, so it was a great initiative.”

Eat Sleep Ride have supported around 300 young people to take positive steps towards further education or employment through therapeutic interventions, which Danielle attributes to the healing qualities of nature that have assisted them in overcoming barriers and building empathetic relationships in line with the themes of integration.

“I think that having to get up everyday and show your real self is really beneficial because you recognise what you can and can’t do”, Danielle says. “It’s powerful being in your own reflective state, and that’s where our horses come in as they’re consistently showing us how to behave - they’re the teachers in all of this.”

1000 Huts - "The 'hutting' project driving a national culture shift in line with integration"

The 1000 Huts project is an innovative initiative that is powered by integrated ways of working. Set up by Reforesting Scotland, a third sector organisation who campaign for a sustainable forest culture, the 1000 Huts project advocates a culture of recreational hut use in order to provide communities with the opportunity to gain respite from their busy urban lives, reconnect with nature, and reap the many health and social benefits that come with it.

By harnessing community involvement, fostering authentic relationships, championing the role of the third sector, and putting people at the centre, project co-ordinator Alan Carter says the 1000 Huts project supports hutting by connecting hutting communities across Scotland, whilst raising awareness of the health benefits associated.

"There's huge amounts of research into the health benefits of exposure to nature - that's really not in question now", Alan says. "What hutting does is it gives a deep and meaningful connection to a natural place, and the research shows that this deeper relationship is more beneficial for our health than something more superficial."

Due to Scotland's complex relationship with land ownership, the 1000 Huts project has had to overcome several barriers in order to ignite this cultural change. In championing themes of integration, such as collaborative working, the organisation has brought the hutting community together to showcase the benefits of the practice, whilst campaigning for legal change.

"When we started, there were two barriers to hutting - one was planning, and one was land", says Alan. "The first thing we achieved was getting the law changed to make this a feasible thing in Scotland, so hutting now has its own planning category, making huts easier and cheaper to build."

1000 Huts have hosted several seminars and workshops for planners and landowners and offer advice and support to prospective hutters, highlighting that people are at the centre. They also run a Facebook group, which allows hutters from across Scotland to collaborate and engage in hutting-related discussion on one integrated platform.

"For some people, the community aspect of hutting is crucial", Alan says. "The relationships between hutters are something that have been nurtured through things like Hutters Rallies, and long-established hutting communities, such as Carbeth, certainly grew out of that communal aspect."



The communal hutting site at Carbeth, East Dunbartonshire, was established over 100 years ago, and since the 1000 Huts project began in 2014, several new sites have been set up to emulate this, including Carnock in Fife. In line with this, 1000 Huts have enshrined integration at the heart of their work to ensure hutting sites allow the forging of healthy relationships, put people at the centre, and truly focus on the wellbeing of the community.

“Our ‘Hut of Wellbeing’ has just been built and is designed for respite stays for people in Fife who are either carers or suffering from ill-health”, Alan added. “To do that, we gained some grants and contributed some of our core funds, but we also launched a crowdfunder and many hutters contributed generously.”

As a result, hutting can provide individuals with the opportunity to engage with both nature and community simultaneously, making it highly beneficial for our health and wellbeing. By pushing this culture shift using integrated methods, the 1000 Huts project are demonstrating the value of the third sector in driving long-lasting change.

“It will take time for hutting to imbed into the culture, but I think a lot of people are now aware that hutting can be beneficial for our health”, Alan says. “There’s around 400 huts in Scotland at present, whereas in Finland, there are around 400,000, so there’s definitely room for growth, and the more huts there are, the more people will see the benefits.”

Bield Housing and Care - "Innovation in housing and care from within the third sector"

Health and social care integration encourages people to work together more closely across sectors and ensures everyone has access to the highest quality of health and care when they need it most. By providing a high-quality network of support around each resident's home environment, third sector organisation **Bield Housing and Care** is exemplary in championing integration, which involves collaborative working, building strong and trusting relationships, and promoting innovative working to ensure everyone can live well at home.

As one of Scotland's leading providers of housing and care services for older adults, the charity use new and innovative technology to intervene early and prevent illnesses from happening, whilst coordinating a network of support around every home to put people at the centre. Gary Baillie, Head of Bield Response 24 (BR24) and Assistive Technology Development, says that this approach is making a significant difference to the lives of many.

"Our integrated approach has delivered significant value with 70% of Bield residents living independently until the end of life thanks to the tailored blend of housing, care, and community support services", Gary says. "Through early interventions and preventative steps enabled by multi-agency coordination, we have reduced unnecessary hospital admissions, as well as boosting social resilience through our community hubs and local activities."

The organisation work in partnership with the NHS, local councils, and community groups to develop tailored care plans for every person within their housing developments. This is enhanced by their award-winning BR24 alarm service, which ensures greater safety and security for residents with disabilities and long-term conditions by providing them with direct contact to their operators, as well as Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs), to support them when they are in need.

"We recently received three prestigious awards for our work to digitally connect communities", Gary says. "As a result, we're leading innovative efforts to enhance technology use in housing and care, whilst being the only Scottish provider involved in this UK-wide initiative."



Bield undertake research to gain a better understanding of their resident's digital literacy skills, before going on to identify the barriers to digital inclusion among their staff and residents. They launched the 'Bield Tech Hub' in Linlithgow, which is an interactive space where residents can provide feedback about newly implemented digital tools that support independent living. This involves championing co-production and co-design approaches to ensure decision making is shared and collaborative working is at the heart of their work.

"We co-design solutions with people by working alongside tenants using a co-production approach to shape a new digital design brief and strategy promoting technology-enabled care", Gary adds. "The champions of our 'Technology for our Aging Population: Panel for Innovation' project, Alice and Peter, both work with project managers to test applications and provide feedback, as well as acting as advocates within their communities."

Moving forward, Bield Housing and Care aims to build on the success of their housing and care support networks by placing a greater emphasis on preventative measures across all of the organisation's work, whilst advocating for a more integrated approach across all sectors to ensure a truly holistic offering of care and support at home.

"At its core, Bield highlights the vital role that the third sector plays in connecting communities", Gary says. "By integrating fragmented services around what matters most, we can enable people to live life to the fullest right from the comfort of home."

Fostering authentic relationships



Genuine connections founded on the willingness to be vulnerable, open, and sincere in sharing experiences, feelings, and thoughts with one another.

Bikes for Refugees - "Third sector at the forefront of supporting New Scots to create connections"

Integration is about connecting people to their communities more efficiently and effectively, with the third sector playing a vital role in this. Third sector organisation, Bikes for Refugees (Scotland), are exemplary in this, given they champion the themes of integration to break down societal barriers, foster authentic relationships, work in partnership across sectors, and showcase the real power of the third sector in bringing about long-term change for minority groups in Scotland.

Steven McCluskey, founder and Chief Executive of the organisation, says that Bikes for Refugees utilise integrated ways of working to improve the lives of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants who have recently moved to Scotland by simply providing them with bicycles, enabling them to integrate more easily into society.

"We give bikes to people who are isolated, marginalised, and disadvantaged both socially and economically", Steven says. "Bikes are a means to an end, and provide people with a way of exploring their new surroundings, linking with essential meetings and essential services, and act as a way of addressing isolation and loneliness through meeting new people."

The success of the initiative has seen a huge rise in the number of people waiting to receive a bike from the organisation. In the UK, an asylum seeker living in full-board accommodation has an allowance of just £8 a week, which motivates Bikes for Refugees to harness the themes of integration to ensure that more and more people can break down these societal and economic barriers by having access to a bike.

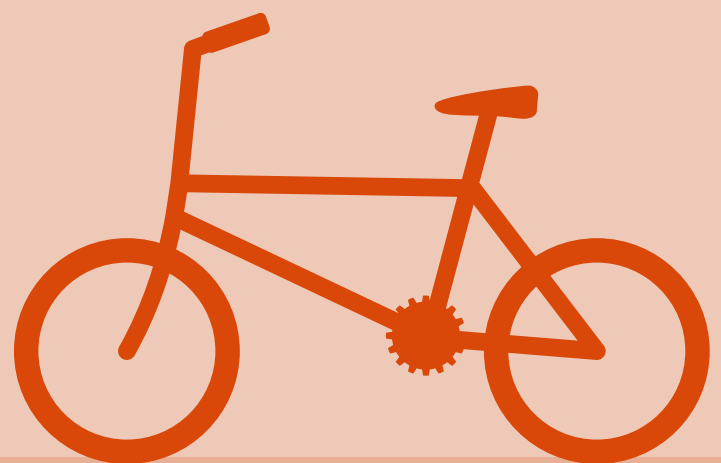
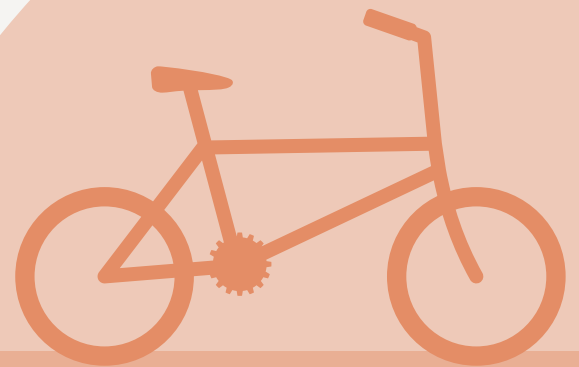
“If you’re living in terrible poverty, like most asylum seekers are, then a simple thing like a bicycle can really have a massive impact on their lives”, Steven says. “At the moment we have a massive waiting list, so there’s massive demand, and that’s the challenge, with people having to wait to gain access to bikes.”

The organisation receives funding from the Scottish Refugee Council to support people’s resettlement and social inclusion, as well as funding to support their mental health in both Glasgow and Edinburgh, highlighting the importance of both the third sector and partnership working in bringing about meaningful change.

“I bumped into someone we gave a bike to in Glasgow Central recently and he was going up north on a bike trip for a fortnight!”, Steven adds. “Some people really embrace it, and for others, it’s a means to an end that helps them get around when they don’t have any money.”

In December 2023, the organisation reached a new milestone when they handed out their 2,500th bike. In achieving this, the organisation has shown the invaluable contribution of the third sector in being at the forefront of caring and compassionate change that allows for barriers to be overcome, valuable relationships to be forged, and people to be at the centre of their own lives.

“That’s 2,500 bikes that’ve been donated by communities and fixed up and refurbished by our hardworking and dedicated volunteers”, Steven says. “But more importantly, that’s 2,500 people who now have mobility and freedom of movement to make these important connections, meet new people, and hopefully, help to protect people’s mental health and wellbeing as well.”



Forres Friends of Woods and Fields - “Nurturing both healthy relationships and the environment in Moray”

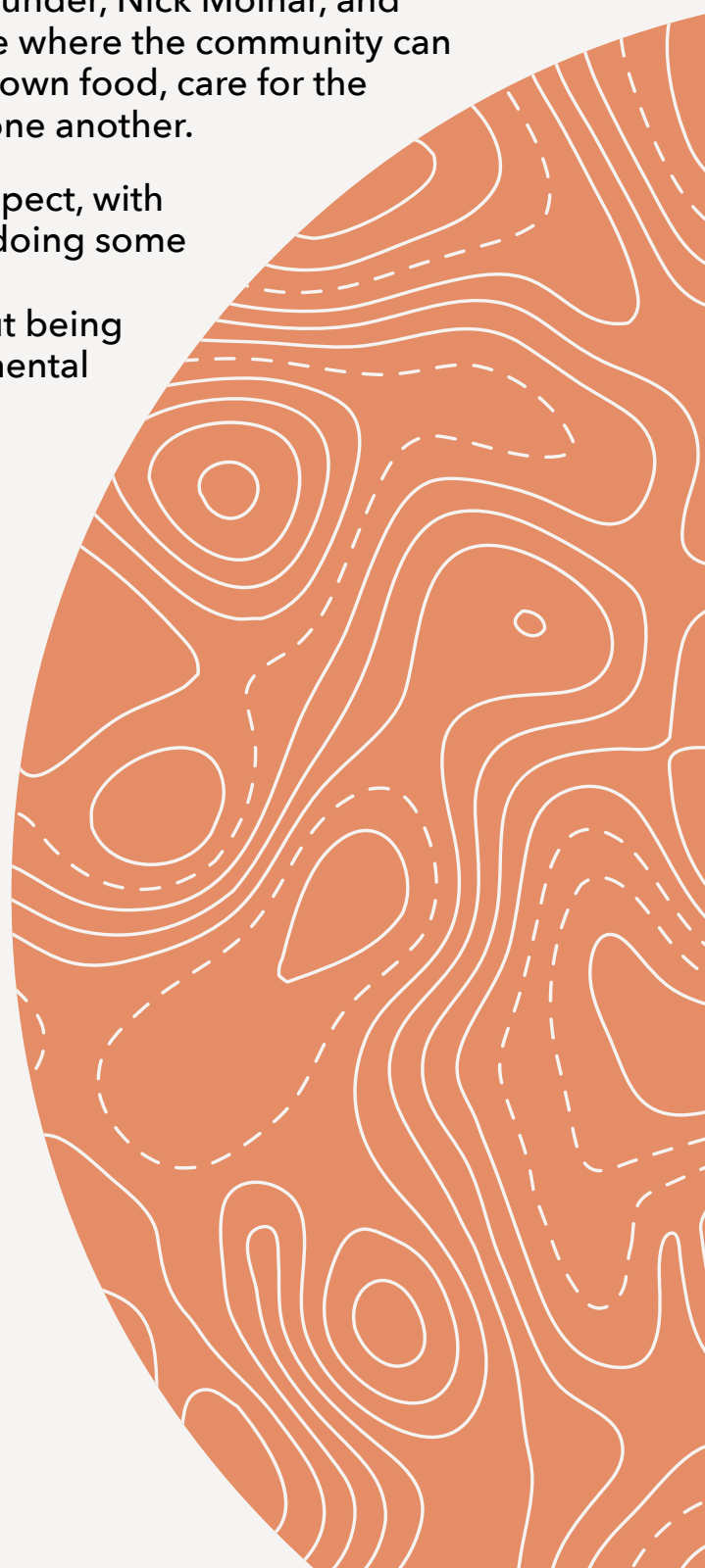
Forres Friends of Woods and Fields’ main aim is to conserve and regenerate the land for the benefit of both the community and the local wildlife, with the charity dedicated to working collaboratively across sectors to transform local knowledge of the land, foster authentic relationships, and enhance the wellbeing of the community.

The organisation’s twenty six-acre area of land in Forres, Moray, consists of both a community garden and a children’s garden, which are used for both recreational and educational purposes. Founder, Nick Molnar, and secretary, Kerry McInnes, say this is a place where the community can come together to learn how to grow their own food, care for the environment, and find a connection with one another.

“I think a big part of it is the community aspect, with people able to come and socialise whilst doing some gardening”, Kerry says. “Quite a lot of our volunteers are elderly, and I think it’s about being part of something, so it really helps with mental and physical health”.

By working in partnership with organisations such as Wild Things - a local environment education charity - as well as with local schools, the organisation ensure that children can learn to grow their own food whilst learning about the environment they live in. They also work with students from the nearby Glasgow School of Art campus, who have used the community garden as a source for innovative inspiration.

“Some students visit us and begin developing innovative projects in connection to activities throughout the area”, Nick says. “They come and do some gardening, ask some questions, and sometimes develop a project around that - for example, one student went away and developed a high-tech electronic game that aims to educate people on red squirrel conservation”.

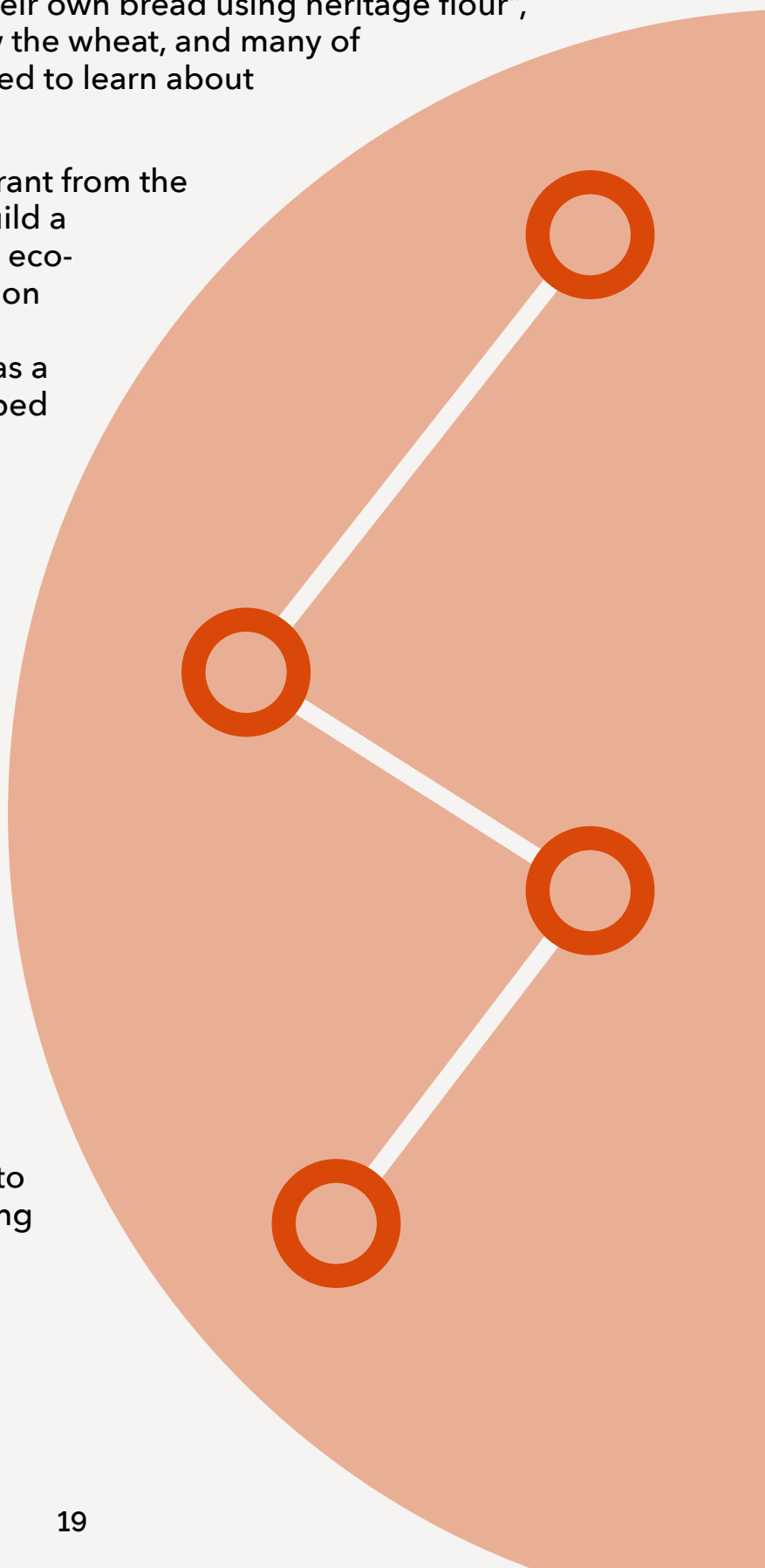


In line with this commitment to working in integrated ways, the organisation has collaborated on the 'Scotland The Bread' project, which encourages communities to bake healthier bread using heritage wheat - a variety of wheat that contains a lower gluten content, making it healthier to digest.

"We contributed to an outdoor class for students from the local academy by showing them how to bake their own bread using heritage flour", Kerry adds. "We got them to sow the wheat, and many of them commented on being thrilled to learn about 'proper bread'".

The charity recently received a grant from the Just Transition Commission to build a community hub, which will be an eco-friendly centre providing classes on conservation gardening and environmental activities, as well as a base for their volunteers. It is hoped that by continuing to champion integrated ways of working, the charity will further strengthen their collaborative and transformational relationship with the community.

"We have big hopes going forward, but most importantly, we hope we can liven the land for the people of Forres and the Moray community more widely", Nick says. Kerry added: "I think in this area, a lot of people say that there's not an awful lot for young people to do, and so by offering this community space, we hope it will encourage more young people to come and learn how to grow their own food, whilst caring for the environment too".



Community involvement



The power of bringing positive, sustainable change to our communities by listening to one another, and ensuring everyone is treated with dignity, fairness and respect.

Inverness Foodstuff - "Serving the community "more than just a meal" in Inverness"

As an organisation with a mission to support the homeless, tackle social isolation, challenge food poverty, and enable people to improve their health and wellbeing, Inverness Foodstuff is a charity who utilise integrated practices to champion the community, break down barriers across society, and demonstrate the value of the third sector.

Established in 2014 with the motto "more than just a meal", the organisation are based in Inverness city centre and provide over 1100 lunches a month to around 500 people. By serving nutritious vegetarian meals using surplus food that has been donated, prepared and served by their volunteers, Operations Manager Pam Urquhart says that Inverness Foodstuff is all about community.

"Demand from the local community has really exceeded our expectations", Pam says. "It's been heartwarming to see people relaxing, enjoying lunch, and friendships being formed, as highlighted by one of our regular participants who said "it's a life saver as I've made good friends"."

Since September 2023, Inverness Foodstuff have been working with Highlife Highland, who deliver a similar service in the Hilton area of Inverness - an area with high levels of deprivation - highlighting partnership working across the city. This service seeks to reduce social isolation and loneliness, as well as address food insecurity, which showcases the value of the third sector in contributing to health and social care integration.

"We welcome people of all ethnicities and ages, and current participants include a 94 year old and a three month old baby!", Pam adds. "We offer safe spaces without judgement where everyone is welcomed, accepted and listened to. No one is means tested and no one has to register."

Many of the charity's participants live in temporary accommodation, whilst also managing additional challenges such as substance abuse, poor mental and physical health, and loneliness. Inverness Foodstuff use a holistic approach, and by working in integrated ways, the charity have harnessed the value of the third sector by breaking down barriers across sectors for the benefit of the community.

"It's through our partnership work with organisations like the Highland Council, NHS Highland, and Highlife Highland that we can help participants access the support and assistance they require", Pam says. "We know some life experiences can make people reluctant to engage with mainstream services, and so we bring the services to them and break down these barriers."



With integration being at the forefront of their work, participants benefited from financial gains of £33k in unclaimed benefits and successful appeals in 2023, thanks to the charity organising for Citizen's Advice Bureau to attend their cafe every two weeks.

Inverness Foodstuff are aware of the challenges and barriers ahead. But Pam remains optimistic that the impact of the third sector in putting people and communities at the centre of their own lives will strengthen the charity moving forward.

"There will be challenges this year, not least ensuring we are able to attract funding", Pam says. "However, there will also be opportunities, yet unexplored, to develop new and exciting initiatives with our partners, which will enable us to provide so much more than just a meal for our participants."

Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society (SABS) - "Championing the Scottish Shia Muslim community in line with integration"

In championing Scotland's rich and diverse cultural landscape, the Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society (SABS) are an exemplary Muslim charity working in integrated ways. By initiating culture shifts, harnessing community involvement, and overcoming barriers, SABS have utilised integration to become a major stakeholder within Scottish society.

The organisation is involved in a variety of activities across Scotland, including with the third sector, academic institutions, governmental bodies, and interfaith groups. Former chairman, Shabir Beg OBE, says that SABS was founded to represent the Scottish Shia community, whilst ensuring that they could play an influential role in Scottish society going forward.

"I've always considered myself to be a proud Glaswegian, but in recent times, we really did have to figure out how we could be part of Scotland's success", Shabir says. "So we began to engage, and any barriers we had were taken down really easily, because everyone was so receptive to us chapping the door."

SABS have worked on a diverse range of projects over the years, highlighting their commitment to partnership working for the benefit of the community. The organisation were the template used by the Scottish Professional Football League Trust in ensuring the inclusion of ethnic minorities in footballing activities, whilst they have worked with the Church of Scotland, the Bishop's Conference of Scotland, and many other churches and traditions.

"We felt as Scots with a Shia identity, we had to get more involved in outreach work to highlight the diversity, inclusion and equality of all segments of Scottish society", Shabir says. "In doing so, we're able to showcase the humanitarian work we do, as well as the values we carry that are good for all practices within global and national citizenship."

The charity have a strong relationship with the Scottish National Blood Transfusion and organise a blood donation campaign every year, allowing them to bring their community together, give blood, and save lives. They have also influenced policy developments in relation to organ donation, whilst working with the Scottish Government to push cultural shifts that can help meet the health needs of their community.

"From a faith perspective, we've been able to discuss the requirements of our community", Shabir adds. "For example, in the case of males having circumcision, we were able to make arrangements there, so it's been good for us and the recognition of being able to discuss these things in a robust manner has been very helpful to our community."



In championing the specific needs of the Scottish Shia Muslim community and working collaboratively to make shared decisions, SABS have a strong partnership with Diabetes Scotland and regularly put forward recommendations for policy developments going forward.

“A lot of our community from the Indian subcontinent are liable to have diabetes”, Shabir says. “So we were able to engage with Diabetes Scotland and have a more robust conversation about how to have a partnership with them, which we do now, and we often put forward suggestions and recommendations on how to live a healthier life.”

In SABS commitment to building bridges and working collaboratively across Scottish society, Shabir says that the charity will always champion the key themes of integration by breaking down barriers, bringing the community together, and working in partnership.

“I think going forward is to have a legacy of our commitment to our country and our communities”, Shabir says. “This will always be irrespective of race, colour or creed, and looking at what’s best for us on a humanitarian front as a collective.”

Art in Healthcare - "Using visual arts to place lived experience and community wellbeing at the centre"

Health and social care integration encourages us to work together, share knowledge, learning and expertise, and find new and innovative ways of doing things for the benefit of our health. In line with this, Art in Healthcare is a third sector organisation with a unique approach to promoting the voice of lived experience, which involves using visual art to support people's health and wellbeing.

Based in Edinburgh, the charity supports people with disabilities, long term conditions and unpaid carers, as well as those who face mental health challenges and social isolation. By exhibiting their collection in health and social care settings and across their four main programmes, the organisation work with people in their communities, care homes, hospital wards and online with people who find it difficult to leave their homes. Iona McCann, Associate Director (Communities), says that the use of art has been hugely beneficial for people across the community.

"It's very much about being playful and experimental, but it's also allowing people to express themselves and feel heard, because a lot of people we work with feel quite hidden and not listened to", Iona says. "We've seen people develop many coping strategies using art, such as mindfulness, using art instead of self harming, and helping people pace their pain management, so it's all about improving health and wellbeing."

The organisation's 'Caring Spaces' project, in partnership with local charity VOCAL (Voice of Carers across Lothian) and Carers of East Lothian (CoEL), supports unpaid carers to express themselves artistically, whilst the 'Taking Art Home' project ensures that people with long COVID or other long term conditions can participate in online art workshops. The charity also runs the 'Room for Art' social prescribing project in five different parts of Edinburgh, with referrals from Community Links Practitioners (CLPs), social care providers and other third sector organisations ensuring the community is supported to manage their health and wellbeing through art.

"We get referrals to support people who have long term conditions, to curb social isolation and loneliness, and to help people get out of the house", Iona says. "There's all sorts of different ages and conditions, but despite this, there's a commonality in that it's all about curbing mental health challenges more generally through the use of art."

In line with this, the charity hosts exhibitions throughout the year to showcase the artwork people have made, as well as to ensure the community can come together, express their ideas and have their voices heard. By promoting the voice of lived experience within all of their art programmes, the charity put people at the centre by ensuring they gain a sense of purpose and belonging within the community, whilst being empowered to share their experiences openly and freely.

“It’s that routine of getting out of the house that really benefits people, which is what we hear quite a lot”, Iona adds. “Because we’ve been working with many people long term, we’re really starting to see changes in other areas of their lives, so we’re seeing people with confidence to go to college, or volunteer, or improve their relationships outside the workshop, so it’s really having that long term impact.”



Going forward, Art in Healthcare is looking to build on the success of their programmes by advocating for a more integrated and joined up approach to services across sectors, which would ensure that the people they work with, as well as their families and carers, are provided with a truly holistic offering of care and support whenever they require it.

“To connect our communities, our services need to be really well integrated, and sometimes there are broken links due to cuts and capacity”, Iona says. “There’s no specific fund for social prescribing in Scotland at present, and so a shift in focus to community health would be great, because it really can make a huge difference to people’s lives.”

Shared decision-making



By sharing decision-making, we can ensure that the voices of lived and living experience influence the decisions and developments that affect them.

LGBT Health and Wellbeing - “The importance of shared decision-making for the LGBTQ+ community”

At its heart, health and social care integration is about ensuring that everyone can enjoy their right to live well with dignity and respect. In line with this, third sector organisation LGBT Health and Wellbeing is exemplary in championing the key principles of integration, such as shared decision-making and collaborative working, for the benefit of the communities they represent.

The charity delivers a range of services and events designed to meet the needs of LGBTQ+ adults across Scotland, including providing mental health services, 1:1 advice and support, counselling, therapeutic groupwork, inclusive spaces, as well as running Scotland’s LGBT Helpline. CEO Mark Kelvin says that working closely and collaborating with others across sectors, the charity can offer the best-possible support to Scotland’s LGBTQ+ community.

“The LGBT sector in Scotland is incredibly collegiate”, Mark says. “We work closely with each other as well as with statutory partners, which includes producing joint applications in competitive tender processes. Whilst there is sometimes a reality that forces us to be ‘competitors’ with each other, our shared ambition to improve the lives of LGBT people in Scotland enables us to collaborate far more than to compete.”

The organisation offers tailored services that are designed to meet the needs of LGBTQ+ refugee and asylum seekers, transgender people, ‘older’ people (50+), LGBT families, and LGBT carers. They also support the delivery of volunteer-led social programmes, including various sports, crafting, outdoor activities, music, and more. Natalie Summers, Head of Income Generation and Engagement, adds that because of this, the charity has been able to make a difference to the lives of many across Scotland.

"77% of people attending our programs and events have shared that they feel less isolated", Natalie says. "As well as delivering LGBTQ+ specific services, the charity aims to support 'mainstream' services to become inclusive, which includes offering training, as well as our National Policy Lead facilitating the community's response to consultations with the Scottish Government, the NHS and other bodies."

By sharing decision-making and collaborating with the LGBTQ+ community to ensure their experiences can truly shape policy, LGBT Health and Wellbeing work in partnership across sectors to make key connections, overcome barriers, and transform the lives of LGBTQ+ people in Scotland.

"Working in partnership has been key to our expansion", Natalie says. "We've gone through many challenges as a community, and by uniting and working together, we have fought for and won the rights we have today. But the work continues to ensure we keep making progress towards a fair, inclusive and progressive Scotland where all LGBTQ+ people can thrive."

Despite a working relationship with the statutory sector, Mark adds that "funding is increasingly scarce and the cost of delivering services is rising", meaning that the charity is required to effectively subsidise statutory service delivery in order to mitigate the impact of health inequalities experienced by the community.

"The organisation has a proud history of working with local councils, IJBs, and HSCPs, but we are living in challenging times", Mark says. "Just this month we received notification of a 10% reduction to committed funding two weeks short of the new financial year. Whilst the wider economic situation means that these decisions are understandable, what is more difficult to understand is the lack of communication and consultation that can occur around such decisions, so we welcome more communication between statutory funding bodies and the third sector to allow for better planning and service provision."

In line with this, LGBT Health and Wellbeing are committed to working with the community and across the sectors to ensure that LGBTQ+ people can collaborate on decisions that affect them, whilst striving for an equal Scotland where sexuality or gender expression does not negatively impact on a person's health and wellbeing.

Autism & Neurodiversity (A-ND) - "Working collaboratively to improve neurodiversity awareness in the north of Scotland"

The key principles of health and social care integration teach us that working collaboratively and sharing decision-making can have a positive impact on everyone in society. As the only autism and neurodiversity-specific play scheme in the north of Scotland, Autism and Neurodiversity (A-ND) are exemplary in working in this way.

The charity offers an innovative sensory environment that has been designed in collaboration with the children and families they support, which is crucial to creating a safe and welcoming space that caters to their needs. Billy Alexander, CEO of A-ND, says that the organisation not only aims to support individuals and families in need, but ensures that society as a whole is better educated on neurodiverse requirements.

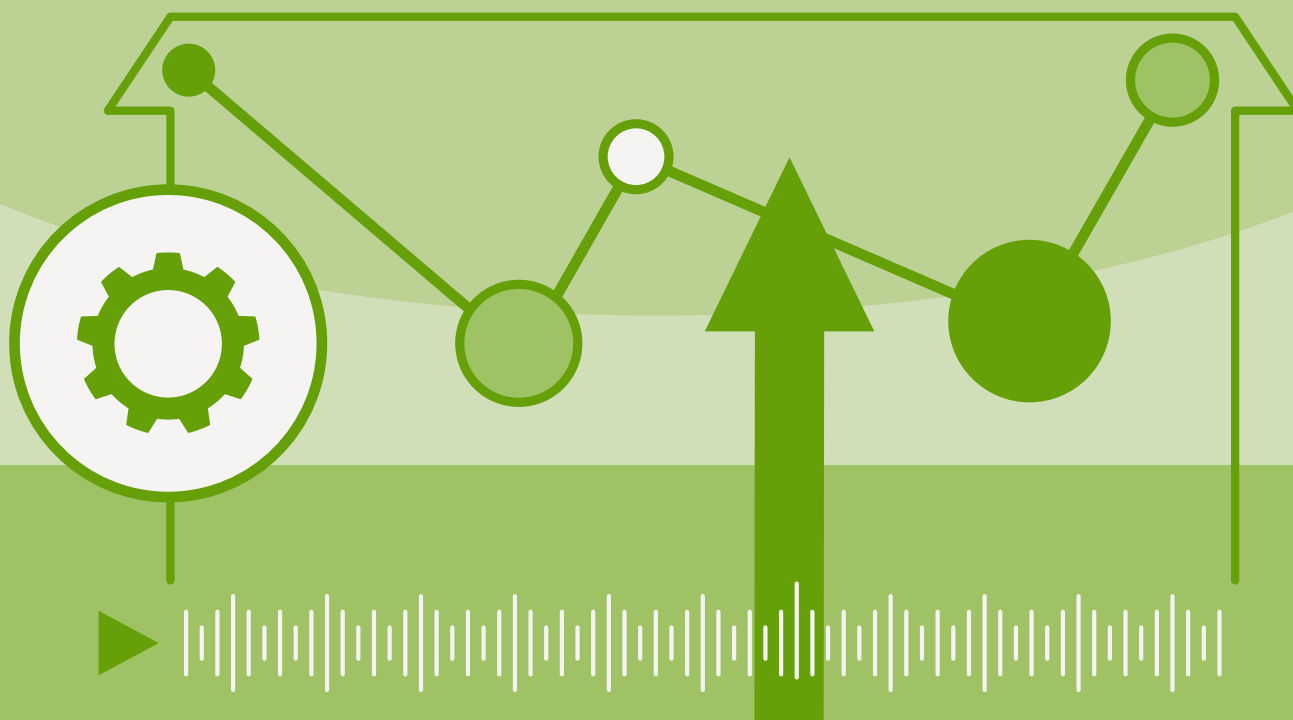
"We provide an outreach service where we support any age, because autism and neurodiversity is a lifelong condition and it doesn't go away, nor should it", Billy says. "So our team are trained to work with individuals, their families, and their wider networks within their homes and communities to provide that unique tailored support."

By ensuring families can influence how services and initiatives are designed, A-ND champion the key principles of integration by putting people at the centre and enabling decision-making to be shared with the families and individuals they support.

"We try to work as inclusive and integrated as possible", Billy says. "We've got direct experience of the voices of those who support individuals being missed, so from the very start of any support we give, we use our 'Outcome Stars' framework, which makes it clear what it is someone's looking to achieve, and what outcomes they want to achieve with us."

By using the knowledge obtained through 'Outcomes Stars', A-ND integrate the support of their partners from across sectors, including organisations such as Skills Development Scotland, social services, and other charities specialising in disability, to ensure that individuals and families receive exceptional comprehensive care and support that is bespoke to them.

"An example of this is the Big Care Sensory Bus, in partnership with local charity Sensational", Billy says. "They come along and work with us closely on making the bus with some of the other areas that we are okay at, but not the experts on, so if you put two areas of expertise together, you've got a beautiful holistic offering of support to individuals and families."



A-ND also work with neurotypical people who are already in employment to ensure that employers understand neurotypical approaches and requirements. This has seen the organisation provide training to senior professionals across the UK looking to develop their diversity inclusion approaches, which can enable neurotypical people to become more productive and thrive at work.

"I'm working with some big organisations in Aberdeen just now, and some individuals have had some really great successes as a result", Billy adds. "We've seen up to 50% more productivity, but we're also seeing individuals very happy at work and not requiring sick leave without the high levels of anxiety they were experiencing before."

Going forward, the charity are committed to ensuring early intervention and prevention methods for neurodiversity are championed, whilst continuing to expand their services to meet the growing demand for training and support throughout the north of Scotland.

"I've worked with a young boy who's been taken out of class every single day, which means that child has been denied the right to education because a teacher thinks it's too hard to change the way they work", Billy says. "But does that child not deserve to be fought for? They absolutely do, which is what drives our ambition to make sure that we continue to grow what we do, because we know the difference it makes."

Working in partnership



People co-operating and collaborating in partnership to achieve meaningful, valuable and impactful common goals.

Scottish Men's Sheds Association (SMSA) - "Partnership working in Men's Sheds the key to positive change"

Community involvement, building meaningful relationships, and working together collaboratively are integral parts of integration, and in turn are integral to our mental health and wellbeing. The Scottish Men's Sheds Association (SMSA) is leading the way in pushing a culture shift that reflects this from within the third sector, whereby men of all ages across Scotland have a place to come together, socialise more healthily, share ideas, create in partnership shoulder to shoulder, and have a better quality of life.

Spaces where men come together with activities focused around alcohol have been linked to declining mental and physical health in men. The concept of a Men's Shed first came about in Australia and has been gaining global popularity as a possible solution to this. Sheds have a 'no alcohol, no drugs' policy, encouraging men to create a healthy social life for themselves.

"Drinking alcohol is one of our biggest health issues", says Chief Executive Jason Schroeder, who founded the Association in Scotland. "According to our patron, Sir Harry Burns, who was Scotland's Chief Medical Officer, that's still one of our biggest issues as a country. And so, now there's a place where men aren't tempted into risky behaviour while socialising, which men generally are by our natures and how we're hardwired."

Since becoming a charity in September 2014, the Scottish Men's Sheds Association have supported the movement of now over 10,000 men of all ages, have over 3,500 members, and continues to guide the development and sustainability of over 200 Shed groups across Scotland. Sheds usually consist of both social spaces and workshops, with the interests of their members influencing how individual Sheds operate, putting people right at the centre. Men's Sheds are set up by volunteers throughout the country, with the association acting as a national support hub to assist communities in making sure their Sheds are developed and maintained to a purposeful and sustainable standard in line with Scottish legislation.

“Sheds are purposely not run by us”, Jason says. “It’s not a top-down movement, it’s a grassroots movement - for the men, by the men - so we’re empowering people and communities to take charge of their lives again. For the Shed to survive, they have to work with their community.”

The Association has been able to offer Shed members discounts on things like tools, insurance and electricity due to their partnerships with different businesses, highlighting the importance of partnership working across the sectors. As well as this, the Association place an emphasis on the health benefits of Men’s Sheds, which has involved collaboration with Macmillan Cancer Support, Prostate Scotland and MenSelf+ in various projects to highlight how social and cultural determinants can affect a wide range of poor health outcomes.

Jason continued: “Understanding male engagement psychology sets us apart and therefore, we’re getting such amazing results.”

Thanks to this innovative and transformational focus on male psychology, Jason feels that in line with advances made in technological communication, Men’s Sheds will become even more necessary as venues for community collaboration, given the science suggests it is essential for humans to engage in frequent physical face-to-face interaction.

“When we look into human psychology, if we don’t have physical interaction, it can have detrimental effects on our wellbeing. So, as technology can often be a solitary experience, you’re not actually getting that eye-to-eye human connection. I realised due to mens hard wiring for internalising, Men’s Sheds, where men can meet in a healthy way, are more needed than ever now.”

By listening to the views of members and those across the sectors, the Scottish Men’s Sheds Association have heard that Men’s Sheds can be influential in reducing suicide rates, as well as domestic violence, due to the correlation between testosterone, purposelessness and single focused outcomes which can lead to aggression and depression.

“For me, we had to create a change”, Jason says. “We had to bring something brand new to the model of health for our culture, for our country, for our kids, and for all our lives. Going to a Men’s Shed and having camaraderie amongst men, which isn’t competitive, isn’t aggressive and doesn’t involve money, allows men a whole different way of being empathetic, compassionate, vocal and kind. Ten years on in Scotland after the first Men’s Shed opened in Westhill, Aberdeenshire, we start seeing a completely different male engagement culture organically forming, which has become a global health phenomena.”

SPFL Trust - "The power of football in tackling health inequalities and bringing communities together"

At its core, health and social care integration aims to foster a culture of people working together to improve people's lives. As the charity partner of the Scottish Professional Football League (SPFL), the SPFL Trust is a third sector organisation that uses football to influence change and alleviate health and social inequalities.

Research suggests that those living closest to stadiums of SPFL clubs are three times more likely to be living in poverty. As a result, the SPFL Trust work with 39 community trusts to develop and deliver programmes that improve the lives of people impacted by poverty, with Chief Officer, Nicky Reid, saying that the health and social benefits of football are massive in Scotland.

"Often, we're so busy focusing on the professional game itself that we don't get the chance to fully appreciate the potential that exists within football to help improve lives", Nicky says. "So we work hard to make sure that we're talking about that as often as we can."

The organisation work with key partners to ensure that there is a diverse range of knowledge and expertise across all of their programmes. For example, the organisation's Football Fans in Training (FFIT) scheme, which provides football fans with an opportunity to become fitter, healthier, and happier at the same time, recently began running a prostate pilot in collaboration with Prostate Scotland.

"I think one of the key things to connecting communities and organisations is understanding what your strengths are and bringing in the expertise from others", Nicky says. "That actually creates something quite powerful that affects change, and by working with Prostate Scotland who brought the knowhow, we had the clubs with the



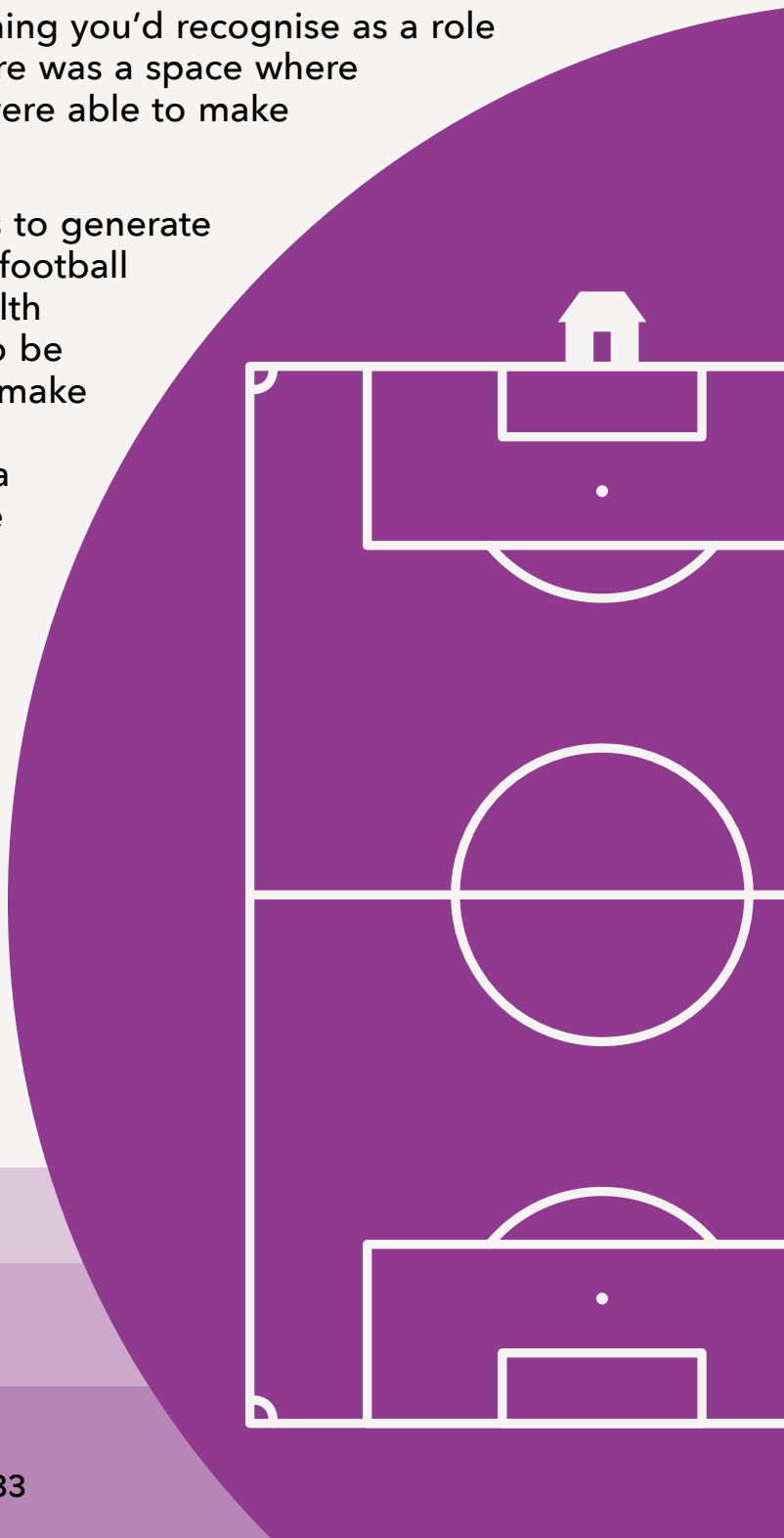
skills to deliver it, whilst we had the background knowledge and understanding through FFIT to be able to do it.”

During the cost of living crisis in the winter of 2022, the organisation ensured that people were at the centre of decisions about their local communities by transforming their approach to how programmes were funded and created. This involved running a grant fund project that allowed the community trusts to have the ultimate say over what would work best in their communities.

“A great example of this was at Aberdeen FC Community Trust where they ran a hub for families and communities, and six of the families involved moved from homeless accommodation into sustainable housing”, Nicky says. “It’s not something you’d recognise as a role football might play, but because there was a space where they felt comfortable to talk in, we were able to make those things happen.”

Going forward, the SPFL Trust hopes to generate a national discussion about the role football can play in tackling poverty and health inequalities, with the hope for this to be reflected in policy. By continuing to make sure that communities can share decision-making and collaborate in a way that best serves their needs, the organisation want to build on football’s potential to ensure people can live well with dignity and respect.

“I’m of the firm belief that our communities have never needed us more - they need alternative opportunities to grow and succeed as individuals”, Nicky says. “So with football, there’s an opportunity that exists unlike any other that can help them to do that, so I would like to see that grow.”



Strong and compassionate leadership



A strong and compassionate leader places value in empowering others and works towards a shared purpose based on relationships and trust.

Macaulay College - "Empowering students with additional support needs in the Outer Hebrides"

Health and social care integration requires a collective leadership culture that emphasises collaboration, human rights, and shared power when working towards a shared goal. In line with this, **Macaulay College CIC** are an exemplary third sector organisation championing a culture of shared decision-making, trusting relationships, transformations, and empowerment.

With students from both Lewis and Harris, Macaulay College empowers adults and young people with additional support needs by offering an innovative educational service that ensures students can become leaders in their own lives, with collaborative working and community involvement key to the learning of social skills and key life skills.

"The service meets a vital community need", says Jo-Ann McConnachie, Development Worker at Macaulay College. "It provides a positive long-term destination for students with additional support needs, relieves pressure on public services, and provides jobs."

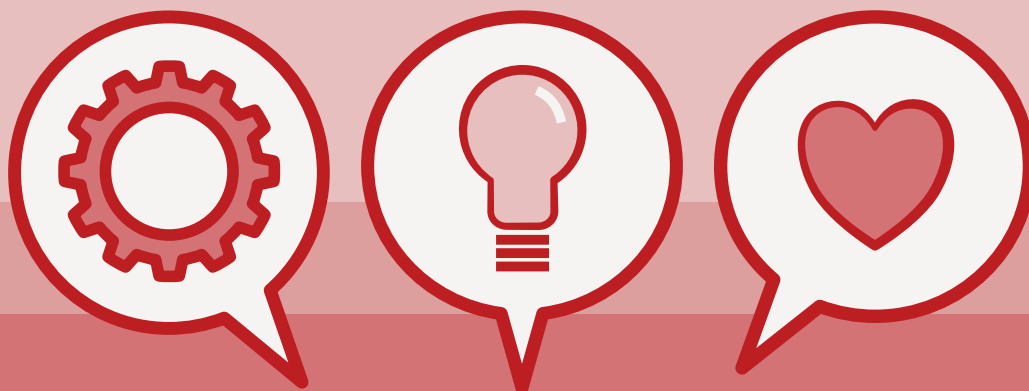
Findings from a social impact project in October 2023 found that students at Macaulay College feel active, happy, appreciated, and part of the team, whilst learning new skills, engaging in community activities, and increasing levels of physical activity.

"Our students engage in a variety of activities, such as animal care, horticulture, creating jams and chutney, selling our eggs and engaging in craft and artwork", Jo-Ann says. "Alongside our daily programme, those who receive funding for one-to-one support complete activities and attend events they are interested in away from the farm, with a focus on health, wellbeing, and being part of the community."

Macaulay College work in partnership with a variety of key stakeholders on the island to ensure the best possible service provision for their students, including Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, and local businesses such as Breedon's, who donate materials to projects and activities.

"Closely connected communities are integral and essential to operations in order to meet student needs", Jo-Ann adds. "One-to-one sessions are organised directly between staff members and parents, whilst we also support students to access their community and be seen as a valued, contributing individual - for example, every year we help to set up, and tidy up elements of the Stramash Music Festival."

Macaulay College has a strong working relationship with the community learning disability nurses on the island, which has also proved invaluable for the wellbeing of the students. As a result, the fostering of strong and authentic relationships is truly at the heart of the organisation.



"Relationships with the students, their parents, and carers when we started were crucial", Jo-Ann says. "They believed in what we were aiming to achieve, and the volunteer who worked with us for two years gave such valuable moral and hands on support, which was the springboard and key to get us going, to expand before we were generating enough income to do it ourselves."

Going forward, Macaulay College are working hard to secure funding to extend their current building, including a planned funding drive through Crowdfunder, which will allow them to double student capacity, secure existing jobs, create more jobs, and meet more diverse needs by establishing the organisation as a wider community resource.

"It takes a long time to be accepted when you do something different from the norm", Jo-Ann says. "But determination and a lot of hard work, along with the invaluable support of the parents, carers and the community, has ensured the long term sustainability of Macaulay College."

What next?

The case studies in this anthology have shown that inspirational and meaningful work is taking place throughout Scotland's communities, with dedicated and determined third sector organisations playing a crucial role in supporting the progression of health and social care integration in Scotland.

From Stornoway to Stonehaven, and from Dornoch to Dumfries, the Connected Communities series continues to cover the length and breadth of Scotland, highlighting the invaluable and irreplaceable contributions of the third sector in supporting individuals and families to live well.

So, what have we learned? And what are we trying to achieve?

The series shares that we can overcome barriers by working collaboratively across sectors, sharing decision-making with others, and striving to empower others when we lead with courage and compassion. By working innovatively, organisations can spark culture shifts, transformations, and meaningful, long term change within our communities.

The series demonstrates how the third sector is an unequivocally equal partner in progressing health and social care integration, and therefore, should be treated as such going forward.

As the national intermediary for third sector organisations working within health and social care, the ALLIANCE are committed to the progression of health and social care integration in Scotland. But in order for integration to live up to its full potential in addressing health inequalities, ensuring we work collegiately and collaboratively, and maintaining a high standard of health and care services across the board, we believe that the third sector is an essential partner in supporting us to achieve our long term goals, with the evidence highlighted in the Connected Communities case study series putting this belief beyond doubt.

Without our third sector organisations working in partnership across sectors, thinking out of the box, and supporting our communities to share decisions and overcome barriers, health and social care integration would not have progressed to the stage it's at today.

In showcasing the contributions of our third sector organisations to health and social care integration, the Connected Communities case study series makes it clear that when the third sector is valued as an equal partner across all sectors, Scotland is becoming a healthier, happier nation, where everyone can enjoy their right to live well with dignity, fairness, and respect.

About Integration

The ALLIANCE's Integration Support team uses a variety of methods to support the third sector's ability to influence the direction of health and social care integration in Scotland. As a team, we use our platform to promote and champion the role of the third sector. We also play a role in ensuring that the voice of lived experience is able to influence the design and delivery of integrated services.

As well as this, we collate intelligence around the successful implementation in Scotland, identifying and sharing examples of good practice.

Some recent highlights of the Integration Support team's activities include our review of Integration Authority strategic priorities and our Connected Communities case studies series, which highlights how organisations are supporting health and social care integration in their communities across Scotland. Our team also supports the IJB Lived Experience Representatives Network, the Community of Practice - Lived Experience and Knowledge Hub.

In addition to this, we support the Humans of Scotland project and ALLIANCE Live outputs, such as case study films, that align to integration.

If you would like to read more about the work that we are doing have a look at our news section and Twitter page. If you have any questions about any of our work, you can get in touch with the Integration Support team at integration@alliance-scotland.org.uk

About the ALLIANCE

The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE) is the national third sector intermediary for health and social care, bringing together a diverse range of people and organisations who share our vision, which is a Scotland where everyone has a strong voice and enjoys their right to live well with dignity and respect.

We are a strategic partner of the Scottish Government and have close working relationships with many NHS Boards, academic institutions and key organisations spanning health, social care, housing and digital technology.

Our purpose is to improve the wellbeing of people and communities across Scotland. We bring together the expertise of people with lived experience, the third sector, and organisations across health and social care to inform policy, practice and service delivery. Together our voice is stronger and we use it to make meaningful change at the local and national level.

The ALLIANCE has a strong and diverse membership of over 3,600 organisations and individuals. Our broad range of programmes and activities deliver support, research and policy development, digital innovation and knowledge sharing. We manage funding and spotlight innovative projects; working with our members and partners to ensure lived experience and third sector expertise is listened to and acted upon by informing national policy and campaigns, and putting people at the centre of designing support and services.

We aim to:

- Ensure disabled people, people with long term conditions and unpaid carers voices, expertise and rights drive policy and sit at the heart of design, delivery and improvement of support and services.
- Support transformational change that works with individual and community assets, helping people to live well, supporting human rights, self management, co-production and independent living.
- Champion and support the third sector as a vital strategic and delivery partner, and foster cross-sector understanding and partnership.





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