



Open Door Scotland

Annual Report

2023-2024

Serving West Lothian's Youth



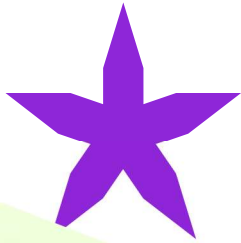
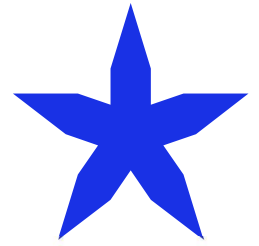
Table of Contents



ODS Objectives & Values.....	5
Chairperson’s Comments.....	6
CEO’s Report.....	7
Service Manager’s Report.....	9
Fundraising 2023-2024.....	10
Team Leader’s Report.....	11
Craigshill Supported Accommodation.....	13
Supported Flats Service.....	22
Community Outreach Service.....	30
Our Outcomes.....	36
What’s New?.....	37
Young People’s Journeys.....	38
Staff Team Building Day.....	41



Comments from Young People



Hostel life at OpenDoor has taught me there is beauty in chaos and I will forever take the lessons and guidance with me wherever I go.
Lucy



I've been in OpenDoor for 8 months and I've had ups & downs but I've had a lot of support from budgeting to supported shops and I've learnt to cook ~~meat~~
- Bronwen

Thank you for everything you have done to help me for the time I've been in the hostile and for giving me a place to stay when I had nowhere and no one by my side to help me



Open Door Scotland (ODS) exists to support young people who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless for a variety of reasons, e.g. family breakdown, social, practical, behavioural and emotional problems.

Open Door Scotland aims to support young people in the short term, working towards longer-term, sustainable independent living and improved life chances.

Open Door Scotland aims to provide a flexible and innovative service to the population of youth homelessness; actively promote, encourage and highlight the needs of young homeless people and work in partnership with our funders and community towards addressing any need identified; provide an environment that supports and encourages freedom of choice and promotes the learning process towards sustainable, independent living.

Values

- ❖ **A person centred approach:** To place the primary focus on the welfare, development and aspirations of the young person.
- ❖ **Respect:** To pay full regard to the individuality, integrity, humanity and right to privacy of the young person and to their wishes at any time. To apply Open Doors policy on confidentiality.
- ❖ **Self Determination:** As far as possible, to encourage the young person to exercise choice, to make or participate in decisions, which affect them, and to contribute to decisions about the running of the organisation.
- ❖ **Participation:** As far as their capacity and wishes allow, to encourage the young person to become involved in all activities in which they are engaged.
- ❖ **Openness:** In relation to young people, to be honest and truthful, to allow them full access to information and ensure that the organisation processes are transparent.
- ❖ **Personal Development:** To promote the social confidence and self awareness of residents and to encourage and to help them to achieve their potential.
- ❖ **Inclusiveness:** To avoid discrimination on any grounds, to ensure that the young persons' views are fully represented.
- ❖ **Rights and Responsibilities:** To encourage young people to exercise their rights and to achieve proper balance between rights and responsibilities.



Chairperson's Comments



It has been another busy year for ODS with an increase in referrals and demand across our range of services. Our accommodation services have remained at capacity with the duration of each stay typically being longer than in previous years. The complexity of the young people's needs and lack of suitable available accommodation for the young people to transition into, has all contributed to this demand.

Inflationary pressures have continued to stretch our restricted income during the year but through additional fundraising efforts and engagement with stakeholders, we have been able to develop and diversify our services to meet the needs of more young people.

Staffing costs have seen a noticeable increase this year as ODS continue to invest and retain its staff. This has been more important than ever in a constrained labour market. Nevertheless, our staff team have continued to work incredibly hard exceeding expectations as they support the young people to meet their aspirations. Their continued dedication and compassion is truly inspiring.

During the year West Lothian Council and other local authorities throughout Scotland (Argyll and Bute, City of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Fife and West Dunbartonshire) declared housing emergencies. A national housing emergency was also declared by the Scottish Government. These political declarations mark the desperate state of housing and homelessness throughout Scotland. It remains to be seen what (if any) action and additional resources will be made available by local and national governments to respond to this critical situation.

For our part, ODS continue to champion the fight against youth homelessness and remain committed to working with stakeholders to find new ways to eradicate homelessness. ODS worked with the Scottish Qualification Authority and partners to become an accredited qualification centre. By supporting young people to meet their educational needs and access further education and employment opportunities we hope that this will improve outcomes. Moreover, following engagement with young people and stakeholders ODS are actively exploring ways to invest in our community by increasing the supply of suitable, quality accommodation for young people.

Tony Holloran, Chair



This Annual Report gives me the opportunity to reflect on an exceptional year and the outstanding work we have achieved. This would not be possible without the dedication, skill and commitment of the fantastic team of people that we have here at Open Door Scotland.

This year we become an SQA Assessment Centre, we'll aspire to grow and provide further opportunities for education, learning, training and employment to our young people and staff. Our enthusiastic staff team across all our services will be key in steering them through the process.

We have continued with our much-needed Outreach Service, where support is offered to the hardest to reach young people, who may be sofa surfing, living in Bed and Breakfast or need guidance on how to navigate the way through their homeless journey. Funding from The Robertson Trust, Royal Bank of Scotland, Corra Funding and Crisis Funding made this service possible. With the dedicated work of our Fundraiser Claire, we will reach out to funders to keep this innovative service running.

Given the uncertain world we live in and the need to maintain a great deal of our information in digital form, we applied and succeeded in obtaining Cyber Essentials Certificate for Open Door Scotland. This allows us to keep our organisation's and our customers' data safe from cyber-attacks.

We know from our current work that there is need for increased living accommodation in West Lothian. At Open Door Scotland we have put a focus on the need for additional accommodation as part of our strategic plan. After successfully presenting our business case to the board of trustees, we have purchased a property and completed its refurbishment, so that its ready for use, we also applied and succeeded in becoming a registered Landlord, this means our strategic goals and once this property has been in use and reviewed, we'll embark on further purchases.

We also renewed our contracted services with West Lothian Council through the tender process and secured two further services including Unaccompanied Young People and Care Experienced Young People, this means that Open Door Scotland provide a wide range of services across West Lothian, these are indeed exciting times.

Looking Ahead

Homelessness can lead to isolation, poor physical and mental health. Homelessness can also lead to substance misuse and create barriers to accessing healthcare.

One of our main priorities will be to ensure that everyone receives the support that they need to have a safe place to live. We will work alongside our partner agencies, for increased investment in preventative services. Proactively identifying young people at risk and supporting them to access these vital services through integrated partnership working.

Reflecting on our learning during the last year, we will continue to build on our digital capacity and invest in our people, systems, services, fundraising and our communications.



CEO's Report

It recognised that there is a housing crisis, you don't need to be on the streets to be homeless, and too many people in Scotland have no permanent home. "What is the housing emergency in Scotland, 1.5 million people are denied a safe and stable home" (Shelter Scotland).

Our aim is to work together with West Lothian Council and our partners, to provide a coordinated approach to delivering services and housing within safe communities and to assist the most vulnerable through increased learning, training and employment opportunities.

Thank You

A big thank you to our funders and all who donate to Open Door Scotland. Your donations are appreciated and contributing towards our goal of helping and supporting vulnerable young people.

I would like to give a massive thanks to the staff teams of Open Door Scotland, who go above and beyond in meeting the needs of the young people, I look forward to seeing what's next on our journey.

I would like to give thanks to our ever-committed Trustee's whose time and expertise is given so freely and generously to guide the organisation and support its work. I'd also like to thank our Chair, Tony Holloran, who has provided consistent support and steadfast leadership through challenging times.

Aileen Willmott, CEO



2023-2024 has been a positive year for Open Door Scotland, all services are fully staffed with our dedicated, resourceful teams who continue to provide excellent support to all our young people.

As we all know there was the increase in fuel costs last year which brought a lot of worry and concerns to our young people of how they were going to manage to heat their homes and be able to eat a healthy diet or just eat a hot meal. We did our best to support the young people through the winter by offering energy saving information, fuel top ups and

tips on how to stay warm. We increased the amount of food that we bought from Fareshare so that we provide more hot cooked meals for all the young people. Staff continued to pick up food donations from our local supermarkets which we topped up with extra food that we bought to ensure that food parcel were enough to provide three days supply of food.

Edinburgh was the first city council in Scotland to formally declare a housing emergency in November 2023 with other local authorities following closely behind them. We are now in a housing crisis and with the cuts that are soon to be announced by Government in the coming months things are not going to approve much for the young people. We will continue to work hard looking for funding to ensure that we can continue to support all our young people in these troubling times.

None of this work would be possible without our dedicated staff team, our committed board and our supportive partners.

Whatever challenges may arise, we are confident that there is no problem that cannot be solved through effective collaboration.

I want to say thank you to all our staff for caring about the good work that they do and all the young people that we have supported throughout the year. Seen young people achieving their potential makes all the hard work worth while

Avril Mooney, Service Manager



Fundraising Report

This has been a good year for Open Door in our fundraising efforts. We were awarded funding from a range of sources, including a mixture of large multi-year grants and smaller donations from various trust funds.

Fund	Money Awarded
Big Lottery Scotland	£67,000
The Robertson Trust	£30,000
West Lothian Community Mental Health Fund	£36,000
West Lothian Development Trust	£25,000
Garfield Weston Foundation	£20,000
The Stafford Trust	£5,000
The Pumphouse Trust	£5,000
Neighbourly/ RBS Foundation	£3,000
Neighbourly/ Sainsbury's	£1,500
James Wood Bequest Fund	£1,000
Neighbourly/ Lidl	£500
Total	£194,000

In addition to monetary awards, we applied to Connected Scotland for assistance with setting up a computer lending library and were awarded ten new laptops with Wi-Fi capability which will be of great use to our young people and will assist in their completion of our new SQA accredited training.

We also receive much needed food donations on a weekly basis from a range of businesses such as Sainsbury's, Marks and Spencer, Aldi, Lidl and Greggs.

The Board and ODS staff team would like to acknowledge and offer their sincere thanks to all our supporters, without whom our work would not be possible.

Claire Neill, Fundraising Officer



It has been an incredible year for Open Door Scotland, as an organisation we have continued to go above and beyond supporting the most vulnerable young people through their homelessness journey. Our Community Outreach Team continues to support the hardest to reach young people that may require guidance and support to first present as homeless, or young people who may be sofa surfing or residing in hotels. Our Community Outreach Team also provides tenancy support to young people who have been offered their first tenancy and thanks to the funding donation from The



Children's Lottery Trust, we are able to provide a starter pack. This allows our young people to get a head start on

setting up their first home.

This year has been a particularly difficult year with the cost-of-living crisis for our young people. Our dedicated staff team have been working in collaboration with each other and to provide much needed guidance and support with managing finances, budgeting, supported shopping and meal preparations. Open Door have been able to provide our young people with 926 food packages, we wouldn't be able to do this without much needed food donations from Tesco, Aldi, Lidl, M&S,



Sainsburys, Fareshare and generous funding donations. The Craigshill Supported Accommodation and Outreach Flats Service have continued to support young people in food preparation and successfully cooked 410 meals with young people, giving them the life skills they need when moving on to independent living. Open Door was also able to assist with 358 gas and electricity top ups for young people.



Training and Education for staff has been a focus point for Open Door, working in partnership with Cyrenians, Self Harm Network Scotland, LAYC and Shelter, staff undertook training in Conflict Resolution, Self Harm Reduction, Adult and Child Protection, Housing Law and Mediation. This is pivotal training for our staff to further their knowledge and skills to ensure our young people receive the best support and guidance we can provide. Wendy and Marc gained their qualification in Mediation with Cyrenians. Breakdown in relationships is the leading cause in youth homelessness within Scotland, with early interventions like mediation, we could possibly prevent the worst from happening.



Team Leaders Report

Staff enjoyed a communication training exercise, they were able to display effective communication and listening skills with each other, and more importantly, work as a team. Six members of staff have recently undertaken their SVQ3 in Health and Social Care. Rosemary recently gained her SVQ3, and I successfully gained my qualification SVQ4 in Leadership in Management. This learning opportunity has been advantageous for staff development.



I would like to take this opportunity to thank the dedicated staff team of all three services within Open Door for their continued hard work, this past year has been progressive in tackling the issues faced by our young people whilst experiencing homelessness.

Claire Nimmo, Team, Leader

"Jacqueline is fantastic at what she does and always has a bright attitude. She approaches her work with enthusiasm and is always willing to help out whenever needed. Her positive energy is contagious, and she really knows how to make things easier for everyone. It's great to have her support, and she makes a real difference with her friendly and approachable nature." BS

"I've been in open door for 8 months and I've had ups and downs, but I've had a lot of support from budgeting to supported shops and I've learnt to cook." - Branden Hay





Here at ODS the team not only provide support in relation to housing and benefits, we in addition, without realising it offer emotional, financial and safeguarding support, food donations, as well as always being there to offer advice on sexual health matters or alcohol and substance use.

Young people whilst they reside here are also offered additional support with domestic chores such as cleaning, cooking, using washing machines/tumble dryers and in some cases even ironing, all young people have access to donations such as clothing, food, toiletries etc.

All young people are treated with respect and dignity whilst they are residing here at the Craigshill Supported Accommodation.



Our young people at the supported accommodation getting in the festive spirit decorating our trees.

Craigshill

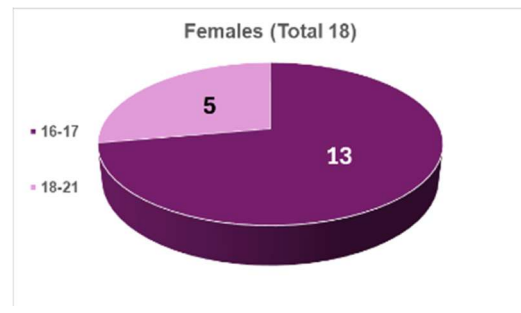
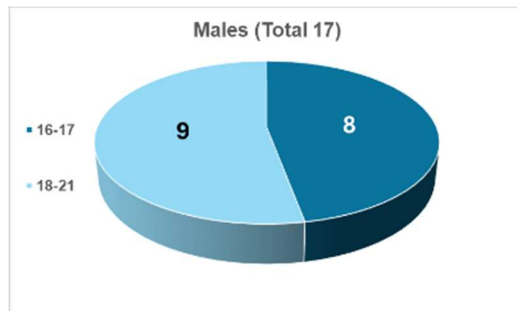
Supported Accommodation

Service



Craigshill Supported Accommodation

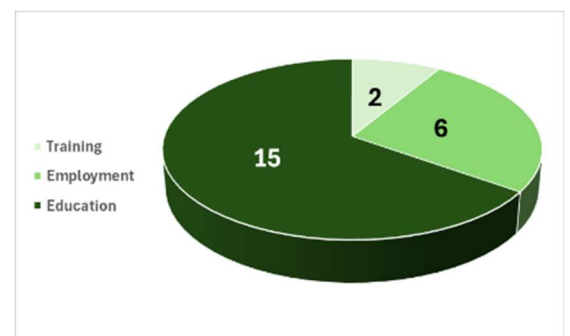
Throughout the last year, our supported accommodation has continued to excel in giving support to the young people who reside here. We have improved our facilities within the accommodation, so that young people have different ways to cook in the kitchen with new appliances. We have had a total of 35 new young people come into our service, with 17 of these young people moving into our supported flats. Some young people decided to return home with friends and family. However, it is exciting to pass over that some of the young people from the supported accommodation have moved on to their own permanent tenancies with support from our community outreach team. We have had a positive development within regards to permanent tenancies being offered this year as there was a great increase in this happening, especially at the beginning of 2024.



The above charts show the age breakdown of young people within the Accommodation. No people aged between 22 and 26 were resident during 2023-24.

This has been great, as it has given the young people we have worked with purpose and is motivating the young people to continually develop the skills they learned when they lived within the supported accommodation.

We also have been supporting young people to create CV's to help them apply for jobs. Staff also spend a lot of time with young people explaining what is required to sustain a permanent tenancy, so that they know what to expect when moving on to supported flats/permanent tenancies.



Working beside other agencies has also been beneficial to the young people residing here also. We work alongside agencies such as WLDAS and CAHMS. These have both been greatly beneficial to the young people, as they can receive the support that they need, which makes their stay with us easier for them. Working alongside them have also been beneficial to staff, as it increases our knowledge that we can pass on to young people residing here.

The cost-of-living crisis has impacted young people massively within the community today. We spend more time with young people helping them to manage financially with the money they receive.

We receive food donations for young people throughout our three services to help young people as much as possible when they may be struggling. Drug misuse is also an issue that we face with young people, however we work alongside the young people we support to help face these issues and to overcome them. We continue to work together at Open Door Scotland to give the young people we work with a good start to independent living.

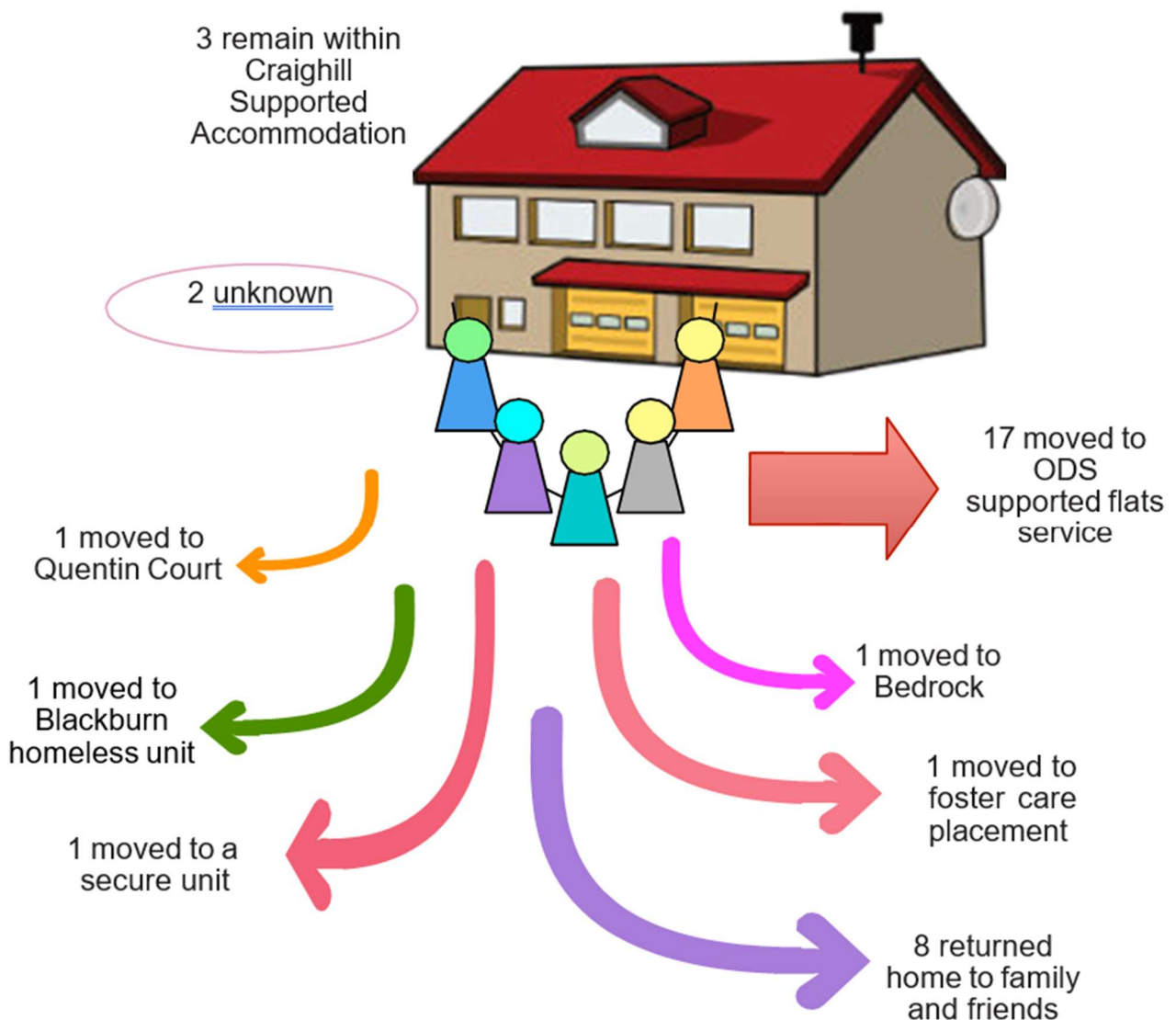


Our young people making the most of our new bikes at the Supported accommodation which were recently purchased thanks to a donation from The Royal Bank of Scotland.



Resident Departure Statistics (2023 – 2024) (35 young people)

The aim is to move young people into their own “forever home” as soon as they are able to live independently. The following gives a break down of departures over the year.





Another Year of Cooking



Ex Project worker Debbie showing young people how to make candy floss.



Young person preparing veg



Prepared meal of chilli con carne.



Young person adding their new seasonings.



Final Result.



Young people cooking their mince for Spaghetti Bolognese

We continue to give cooking classes to our young people, to help them learn new independent living skills, so that they can excel at this in their own permanent tenancies when that time comes for them. Young people have also been given the opportunity to join in with different workshops, including a financial workshop and a breath-work workshop. They also attended a trip to the Irn Bru Carnival at the beginning of the year, which they thoroughly enjoyed. Staff have also been encouraging young people to go for walks, and bike rides with the new bikes that we received from funding. We also support our young people to carry out cleaning when it comes to their rooms. This gives them ideas on how to keep their safe space to a standard that they want. We also help our young people when they need assistance with supported shops and budgeting.



Craigshill Supported Accommodation



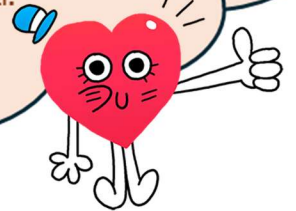
'Open door has helped me with my stay by supporting me with cooking and basic life skills. It helped me to see what independent living is like and has given me an opportunity to meet new people. Overall the support from the hostel is good and helpful. Staying in the hostel has helped me to reach my goal of getting my own individual tenancy/house to myself.' – **Kelsie McEwan**



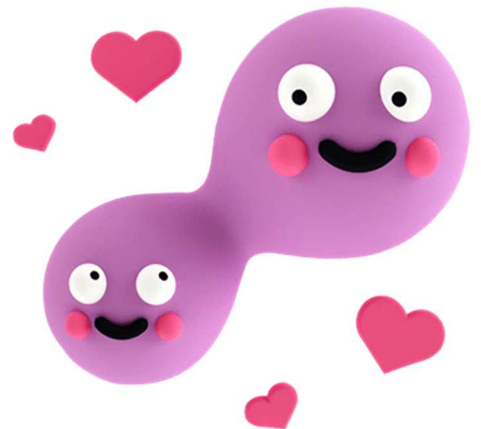
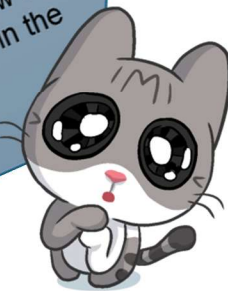
'Hostel life at Open Door has taught me there is beauty in chaos and I will forever take the lessons and guidance with me wherever I go'
Lucy Nevin



'You and Open door have supported me so much the last few months, thank you for helping me to increase my English. My English is so much better, and I feel settled here. Thank you for everything.' – **Himran Pirotti.**



Open door really helped me learn how to manage to be by myself and it helped me grow with a support system behind me if I looked at myself when I first went into the flat to now it's two completely different people they helped me grow my confidence and helped me learn in my own way how to look after a house and myself I've just recently got my own tenancy and I felt excited to sign the tenant agreement rather than scared how I know I would feel if I didn't take part in the project
Caitlin Nelson





Craigshill Supported Accommodation Service Case Studies

Craigshill Case Study 1

KK came to the hostel in September last year. When he arrived, he appeared quite confident and politely vocal. KK had a broken relationship with his stepmother and was not on talking terms with his birth mother. He was also commuting from Glasgow to Livingston for college and was very excited when he was offered a place at Open-door as it was just minutes away from his college.

KK was not in employment when he come here and was attending college twice a week. KK was assisted with applying for his housing benefit and young Scots card and we also set up his Universal Credit account with him. And although that was a challenge initially since he was an EU citizen and needed a bit of paperwork to prove his right to universal credit.

When KK was in the hostel, I was his Project worker and we engaged on a weekly basis to find out how he was settling in and if he had any challenges. KK made friends with another young person immediately and bonded with him over video games and cooking within a week of being in the hostel.

KK and I created a support plan using the outcome stars forms. We do this to identify the needs of our young people, so that we can put the correct support in place for them if necessary. We did some cooking and games sessions, and he took part and enjoyed them. KK is very independent and a good communicator.

KK expressed his disinterest in his course in college and dropped out wanting to start something new. I encourage KK to look for a job while he was deciding what he wanted to do in college next. KK found himself a job at burger king with little assistance and was quite excited about earning his own income.

During our weekly meetings we talked about getting life and work experience, learned how to prepare for interviews and how to sustain motivation while working on tasks or a job.



"Working with support has helped me meet the requirements of other organisations."



"I would recommend Open Door to other Young People. I feel it was the staff at Open Door that helped me a lot including getting my own tenancy" - SM



Craigshill Supported Accommodation

Craigshill Case Study 2

I am currently working with a young girl who came from a care background. She came to our supported accommodation on the 28.03.2024. She has settled in well. Upon her arrival, we completed an outcome stars support plan. We discussed different areas of her life; to identify any areas she may need support with. I realised doing this, that she was very independent for being seventeen years old. Her sister also resides in the same supported accommodation, so she has family support when necessary. She has a dog that stays with her friend, and she cares for this daily in her spare time. Before arriving to stay with us, she worked in a pet groomer's and helped her carer's look after animals and learned skills working with animals. I explained to her this would be beneficial to her having her own dog and being able to look after her.

We identified that she is also very good at budgeting, she has some savings that she has managed to save from her college bursary. She enjoys playing football in her spare time, as this keeps her busy, and disciplined.

She attends 2 meetings weekly with her project worker. She is doing her driving lessons. Very seldomly does she ask for support from staff, as she managed to support herself well.

Craigshill Case Study 3

I am working with a Young Person (17 years old) now who has come to the UK to seek asylum. He didn't speak a lot of English when he arrived at the supported accommodation. However, since working together his English has become more advanced, and he is also now speaking basic English.

He has stayed here since the middle of April, and since being here has made a lot of positive steps. For example, we worked together to help him apply for an English course at the city of Glasgow college. He is awaiting to hear about whether he has been accepted.

He also spends a lot of time in Glasgow, as he attends mosque there and has some friends. He goes most weekends. He doesn't have his right to remain status yet but has permission to stay here while this is being assessed. He is very cooperative with meetings, and I have built a good relationship with him, and his social worker.

He has also opened a bank account and has now got a gym membership. I helped him to apply for his bus pass so he can travel for free on transport. Since arriving here, he hasn't required support for budgeting. He has been very independent. He maintains his surroundings well and is always respectful of staff. He feels he can speak to us or let staff know when there are any issues.

It is now approaching 2 months since he moved in and is now being considered for one of our supported flats. This gives him an opportunity to live more independently and work on the skills he has already learned.



Craigshill Case Study 4

I am currently keyworker to a young male who has resided within Open Door since May 2024. BH receives support with housing, budgeting, cooking, health, benefits, and domestic and life skills within Open Door daily/weekly.

BH has come back to Open Door as his placement within the supported flats didn't work out for him. A few days after BH's arrival we sat and completed his support plan and outcome stars. I have built a good relationship with BH since his arrival, and he has stated that he feels comfortable discussing his mental health and wellbeing with me as he feels that I offer the support and advice he needs.

BH initially did not appear to settle into the accommodation and often would state in the first few weeks that he did not want to reside here, that he would be better off homeless and living under a bridge. A lot of 1-2-1 work has been carried out by me surrounding these feelings, regular weekly contact with BH social worker continues for her to be updated on how he is doing.

BH doesn't have contact with family members, and it is not a topic he likes to discuss. He does however have a good strong relationship with a female friend from Bathgate he refers to her as his sister as that's how he feels about her. BH stated that she supports him when he needs to talk about issues he doesn't want to disclose to staff. BH stated that he is focusing on getting a flat and moving on as Open Door is not the place for him. BH is on the waiting list for Rock Trust hoping that a flat will become available soon.

"There is an improvement in my physical health."

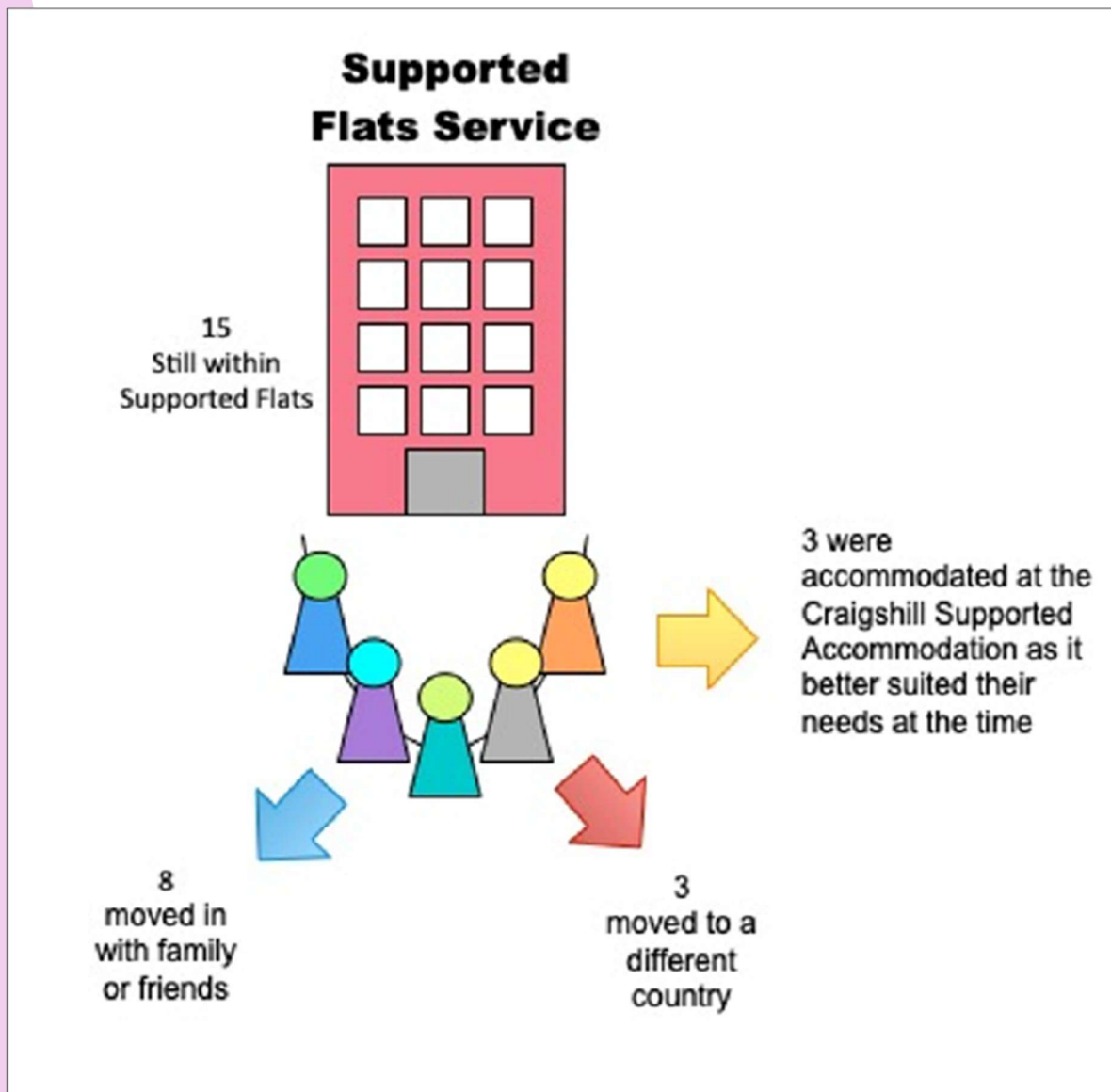
"Support has helped me obtain Travel Pass."

"Engaging with support has increased my employment opportunities."

"Support has helped prepare me to sustain my own tenancy."

Supported Flats Service

The Supported Flats Service has continued to provide outstanding support to young people, accommodating up to 16 individuals at any one time. Over the year the service supported 49 young people, including 32 males and 17 females. Out of the 34 young people who transitioned to new accommodation, 20 secured permanent tenancies, 8 moved in with family or friends, 3 relocated to other countries and 3 were moved to our supported accommodation which better suited their needs. Notably, there was an increase in the number of permanent tenancies offered, particularly in early 2024, which was a positive development for the young people. Staff at Open Door have worked alongside young people to increase their chances of permanent offers of housing by completing housing applications for all housing associations in West Lothian.



Supported Flats Service

Supported Flats Service



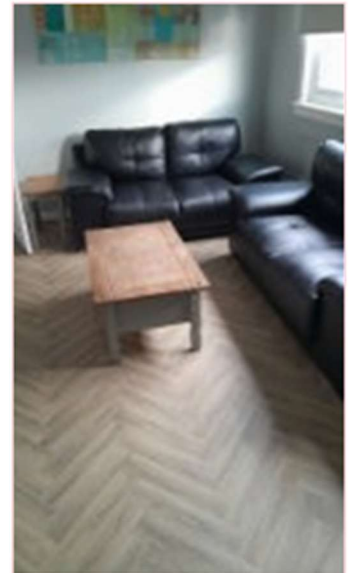
In early 2024 we undertook refurbishments, updating the supported flats with new carpets and flooring, some new furniture, and fresh paint to enhance the living conditions for both new and current residents.

Throughout the 2023/2024 period, we organised various workshops and outings including walks in local country parks, a breathwork group which focussed on trauma and mental health, a beach trip with a BBQ, and a



Breath work group work, focussing on improving mental health and realising

trip to the Inn Bru Carnival. The young people thoroughly enjoyed getting out into the community and the opportunity to socialise. We continued with great support within the flats, including a push on supported deep cleans, cooking classes, budgeting and supported shops.



Refurbished flats with brand new flooring



Collaboration with other agencies remains crucial for the supported flats, as the young people we support often face challenges such as poor mental health and financial difficulties due to the cost-of-living crisis. Strong partnership working with Smile Counselling, CAHMS and WLDAS continues to be an essential part of our support.

We found the key challenges this past year have been the cost-of-living crisis and our young people requiring more support with managing their finances, budgeting and access to our food packages. Our staff have been dedicated to face these challenges



A Young Person being supported by staff to deep clean their kitchen

head on with our young people and is a pivotal part of their support. Some other challenges, like previous years, has been drug misuse, anti-social behaviour and overall resistance to engage with support. ODS staff have worked in collaboration with other agencies to support the young people to tackle the issues that they are facing to better support them in their homeless journey.



A Young Person completing their sign up for their permanent tenancy

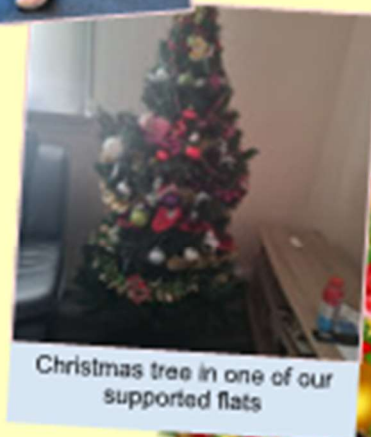


Fun and Games

Halloween
2023



Young People in the supported accommodation playing VR games



Christmas tree in one of our supported flats




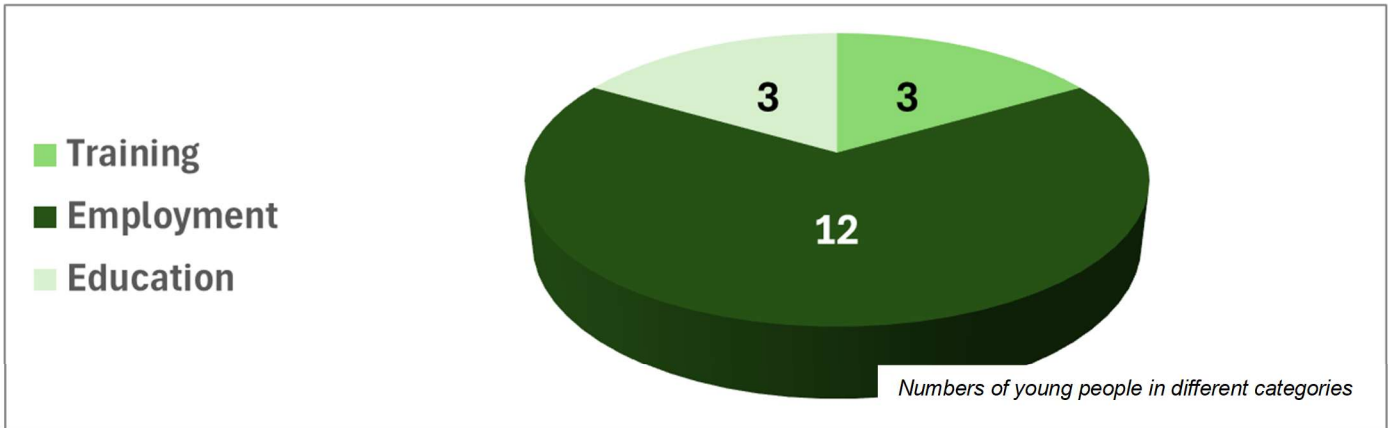
Europe's largest indoor funfair!





Supported Flats Service


Activities and examples of support being delivered through the Supported Flats Service



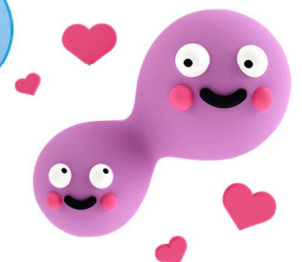
"Maya and Darren have been fantastic support workers and have exceeded my expectations with how attentive and caring support workers can be, I wish them and all the rest of the Open Door team that has helped me in the past year or so all the best" – EG



"The staff in Open Door are great, they are extremely helpful and kind" – BH



"I would recommend Open Door to other Young People. I feel it was the staff at Open Door that helped me a lot including getting my own tenancy" – SM





Flats Case Study 1

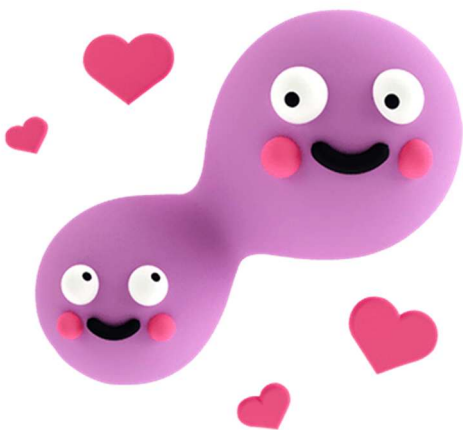
A began her journey with Open Door in the Supported Accommodation, where she stayed for a few months before being offered a place in the supported flats. When A moved into the flat, she quickly learned independent living skills and was managing the flat, along with her flat mate, sufficiently.

The flat is always very clean and tidy when I visit, and A prides herself on this. A also cooks for herself and manages her food shopping independently. A does struggle with her budgeting and therefore together we created a budget plan, and I encourage her to stick to this the best that she can.

When I began working with A, she struggled with making phone calls and would often ask me to take the call for her due to her anxiety, however, we have slowly been building her confidence with this to the point where she now takes the calls herself with very little input or support from me.

A struggle with her mental health from time to time and therefore I have supported her to make and attend doctors' appointments for this, A was put on anti-depressants and always attends her monthly checkups for this.

During A's 3 month review we discussed how far she had come along in such a short space of time, and A decided she would like her housing points unsuspended. I agreed completely with her decision as I feel she will continue to thrive in her own place.





Supported Flats Service

Flats Case Study 2

PD is a 17-year-old female who moved into the supported flats from our supported accommodation service. She has had history of incidents in the service and was hopeful that a move would remove her from the teenage drama. She was also a heavy cannabis user. At the time of moving PD had no active UC claim and was not receiving any benefits as she was unable to get it sorted. Because of this she was relying on her flat mate for energy and food parcels from the food bank.

Now in the flat for 2 months PD has been receiving her benefits and managing her tenancy well. She has engaged with support and keeps in regular contact with staff. She has also found out she is pregnant and has been attending midwife appointments regularly. She has also given up the use of cannabis as well as having her housing points unfrozen.

Flats Case Study 3

AC started at Open Door in October and spend first couple of weeks shadowing and meeting young people. Through this I met AC, a young man on the autism spectrum. On my first week alone, I met AC again sleeping in another flat. He was in a fragile state and had clearly had a night of drink and drug use.

In the car taking him home I quizzed him, and he opened up about his continued drug use and how he believed he needed support. I was still new so passed this on to his worker and AC opened further with him while maintaining contact with me.

I've now started working with AC and after dropping WLDAS support, relapsing over the Christmas and having a fall out with friends AC has reengaged with WLDAS and has opened up much more about how he has been feeling and has been sober for a month with a view to starting a 12 week employability course and finding a bit of structure to his days

Update

AC's mood has fluctuated heavily since Christmas and has on occasion considered drug use. However, has continued to engage with WLDAS and has been living without a flat mate for a while. Recently we moved in DS, a friend of his from the hostel. AC was happy about this, and it lifted his mood a good bit, however he was then offered his own tenancy in Fauldhouse which stressed him out a lot. He looked to decline the offer but had to be made aware of how the homeless offers work. After some thinking and discussion, he accepted the property and was referred to our Outreach team. He now seems to be settling into the flat while still engaging with WLDAS.



Flats Case Study 4

E is a 19-year-old male who moved into one of our supported flats from our supported accommodation. E cares for his gran, and therefore receives care allowance, along with his universal credit. When setting up his UC and housing benefit claim there was a mix-up as E had been using a different last name to his legal one. This issue has now been resolved, and E is correctly receiving his benefits. E always engages with staff and attends regular meetings with his keyworker.

E has recently gained full time employment and is now financially self-sufficient. E is excited for the future and for when he gains his own permanent tenancy.

Flats Case Study 5

I have been working with K since she moved into Open Door on the 25th of August 2023

K was in care before coming over to Open Door and had issues with Trust and anxiety.

I supported the K with the help of her social work to make arrangement for transport to school, but this did not help much as K felt she was being looked down on by her peers for picking a taxi and not joining a bus. Gradually K built here resilience through encouragement and started going about with a bus.

Initially K had a bit of a problem settling in with other young persons at the Hostel as she felt her items were being used without her permission and being trusting. With interventions and more then 2 weekly meetings, these initial issues were resolved, and K finally found her feet.

K Keeps a very busy schedule between her larder and meeting up with friends during the day and taking her driving lessons. We had a few discussions and was assisted in preparing a CV to help find a job.

K is yet to start college in August and is looking forward to it as she feels she would make a whole now circle of friends.

In terms of how far K had come with regards to responsibility and maturity, K is doing extremely well with her time management, people skills and handling of conflict.

K was offered a chance to move on to the supported flats, but she feel she will not get on too well with the young person she was matched with and declined the offer. K will be offered another chance to move to the supported flats the next time a match becomes available with the hope it fits well.

In the meantime, K is enjoying the time in the hostel with her sister.

Community Outreach Service

Introduction to the Service

During the year the Community Outreach Team expanded, and new members came onboard bringing the team number back to five. Their work takes them across West Lothian and occasionally beyond. They work with young homeless people between the ages of 16th and 26th birthdays.

The key areas addressed by the Outreach team are:

- Homelessness and resettlement
- Financial Inclusion
- Employability
- Health and Wellbeing
- Partnerships and Referrals.

They support the young people through one to one meetings, text and phone calls, workshops and multiagency meetings.

Furthermore, they work closely with partners and other agencies across West Lothian to collectively support specific young people, for example, Housing, Social Work, Justice, Action for Children, Guardianship Scotland, Police, West Lothian College/Compass, CAB, Money Advice Scotland WELDAS, doctors, opticians, dentists, banks, families and friends. As well as, having a system of cross referrals.

Partnership Working

The Outreach Service continues to work with West Lothian College/ Compass project by having a regular presence on campus. The Outreach Service staff member's role is raising awareness between young homeless students and college staff about Open Door Scotland in general and the Outreach Service specifically.

Community
Outreach Service

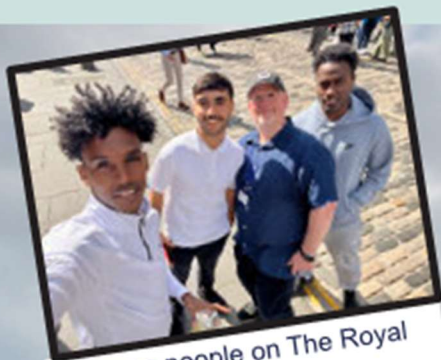


This was done through students being referred to them on campus, or via email when staff not on campus. At the start of the academic year the Outreach team attended induction events, school events and classroom-based induction.

Three HND Business students from West Lothian College were supported to complete a week's work experience within the main office. They completed a small research project as part of their week which contributed to course work, as well as providing Open Door Scotland with information. One of the students attended a team building and communication training day which was in the form of solving a murder mystery.

Work with newcomers commenced as a multidiscipline activity enabling the outreach team staff to support newcomers within accommodation across West Lothian.

Young people's trip to Edinburgh Castle



Young people on The Royal Mile



Mizghin and Marc on Royal Mile



Young people with the King and Queen of Scotland in Edinburgh Castle



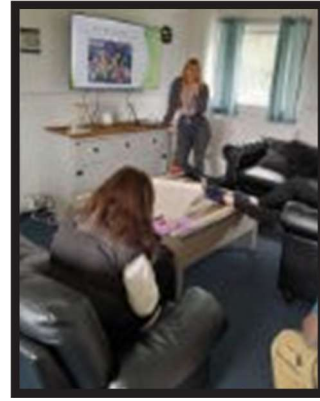
Young people and Tracy at Edinburgh Castle



Community Outreach Service



Exploring routes to employment.



Learning about Budgeting

The Community Outreach Service support workers, like colleagues across ODS come into contact with young people who have a cross-section of needs which required in person one to one support, referrals to external agencies for specialist input or cross agency working.

The young people being supported are on a 12 week programme which is reviewed during that period and can be extended accordingly.

Each young person has an Action Plan which is underpinned by their initial assessment meeting and the completion of Outcome Stars: Home Stars. Each young person is guided through the Action Plan on a weekly basis by the support worker.

The data from each one to one is captured and monthly statistics are gathered across the year, which are indicators of needs and reoccurring themes, as shown in the statistics below. There are often multiple instances of the same need linked to each service user.



Young people and guests with a meal which we made together.



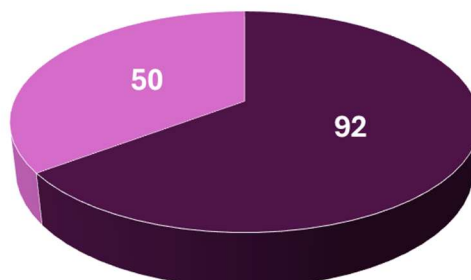
Young people at Eid Prayer Glasgow.



Young people at Celtic Park as guests of the Celtic Foundation.

Supported Young People (Total 142)

- Caseloads
- College Contacts





Outreach Service Case Study 1

AP has been supported by Open Door through the supported accommodation, the flats team and now community outreach. AP was offered his permanent tenancy by the council a couple of weeks after I began supporting him. Since then, he has come a long way. I supported him to move out of his temporary tenancy, apply for housing costs on time, apply for his community care grant, and set up his utilities in his new home. Although AP applied for the CCG to furnish his house, he was rejected and is waiting to hear from his appeal, in the meantime I have been helping look into alternative such as Riverkids and the West Lothian Foodbank who can offer donations when someone is rejected.

I have also been accompanying AP to his Jobcentre appointments until recently but have taken a step back now that he feels he can attend on his own. Along with this I have worked with him to write a CV and apply for jobs. AP is restricted on the jobs that he can apply for as he is in an area with low employment options, and he lost his driving license recently. This was a challenge, but I discussed extensively with AP what his options were and other sites he could search on other than indeed, and we have found jobs since that fit his criteria. He has decided that the best job type for him is nightshift as he would struggle to be consistent with day shift work due to his sleeping pattern.

AP struggles with money management and has accrued a significant amount of debt, until recently he had been hiding these debts and ignoring them. Now that he feels more comfortable to disclose these, I have been encouraging him to reach out to the Advice Shop to discuss his situation with their debt team. With engaging with this and continuing to apply for jobs, he will hopefully be on the right track to regain financial stability.



Community Outreach Service

Outreach Service Case Study 2

I got a referral through from an aftercare social worker to support a young man moving into his permanent tenancy. This young man is care experienced and had been placed in multiple homes over the years, separated from his siblings. He had been homeless for several months and had been placed in a hotel. This is something that he said he struggled with a lot, being around so many people all the time.

I supported him to set up his utilities as he had never done this before and moved his belongings to his new home. Once he was settled in, we made a development plan together to identify the areas that he wanted to work on and that I could support him with. We worked on a budget together so he could have a copy to keep track of things more easily, something that will be updated any time his financial situation changes. We also discussed what this young man wanted for his future. He was really happy and relieved to have his own home and told me about how he took pride in keeping the place clean and tidy. He has plans to go to college to do cooking but has said he is not ready yet. He has asked for support applying when the time comes.

In the meantime, we have been working on getting him settled in his new community, figuring out where to shop and getting registered with the GP. Although he is fairly independent, he has said he needs more support due to his anxiety. He has said he struggles with mental health issues but does not trust health care professionals due to witnessing the treatment his family experiences growing up, this perception is something we are also working on, and he has said he would be reaching out for support once he is registered at his GP.

Even in the short time supporting this young man, he has opened up so much, he talks a lot more now and seems happier being settled in his own home. He takes pride in taking care of his new home and he is looking forward to starting gardening as the weather gets better.

Outreach Service Case Study 3

P is a seventeen-year-old young man. I have been working with P for the past four months following a referral from Social Services. P is a newcomer to the country and does not speak any English. Due to this, and as a result of the experiences he has faced on his journey to Scotland, he can be closed off and mistrustful of those supporting him. It has taken time to build up his confidence, but he does appear to be more comfortable in his surroundings and is enjoying his independence.

We have spent time working on daily living skills such as cleaning, shopping and travel and P was delighted to have received his bus pass recently. An assessment was arranged to allow P to be placed in an English language class with other learners, although this may take some months to be put in place. Going forward I will continue to work on helping P to gain as much independence as possible, he will be supported to access services he requires such as healthcare and social and leisure opportunities, with an agreed goal that P will in time live independently in the community with a young man from a similar background.



Outreach Service Case Study 4

I have been supporting AN for three months now, he was supported by another outreach worker before myself. When I started working with him, he had recently been given his own tenancy and was starting to have things set up. AN is care experienced and also receives support from social work.

As he had already been receiving support from Open Door and was still receiving support from social work, we had a conversation that included his social worker to discuss what his current needs were, what he wanted support with and how we could all work together. Due to AN's substance use, meetings can be inconsistent. It has been challenging to set up AN's utilities as his gas and electric were on credit mode when he moved in, but he had not set up an account so was not paying for this. It took several discussions for AN to understand why he needed to set up an account with his utility provider and what the consequences would be if he did not. It took several more attempts to meet with AN and make this call. This was a big step for AN to sort this.

AN also struggles with budgeting due to his substance use and often does not have money left for food. I have helped AN access food donations and have taken him on a supported shop with the voucher provided in the Open Door new tenancy starter pack. We made a shopping list before going and then we discussed batch cooking and basic nutrition. AN was very surprised at the amount of food he could buy for £25 if he went to a supermarket instead of a convenience store and looked for deals. I have offered to teach AN how to cook different meals which he has said he would be interested in in the future but does not want to do yet.

AN also had his bank account shut down and has been struggling to open another one, this is something I have researched with him and met with banks and Citizen's Advice to find a solution to. Not having a bank account is a common barrier for AN accessing benefits and gaining employment. Although he does not have an account set up yet, I have found a researched and found different banks that people in AN's position have previously had success opening an account with. We have arranged to go with his social worker who has written a letter of recommendation, to a meeting with Virgin Money, so hopefully AN will have an account soon.

AN has made a lot of progress over the past few months, when I began working with him I asked him what he wanted to do with his life and where he saw himself in the future. He told me that he was just happy to have a home and wanted to get Wifi. He told me he had not thought about work or education and didn't really care about it. After having a similar conversation again recently, AN told me he would consider going to college and that he would want to do something hands on. He has also talked about wanting a family when he is older and getting a job. This was great to hear as is it not something AN had considered for himself before.



Our Outcomes

Homelessness & Resettlement

- 11 Completed Universal Credit Claims
- 60 Maintain UC/Attend appointments
- 18 Completed Scottish Welfare claim – Community Care Grant
- 18 Completed Welfare claim – Crisis Grant
- 30 Completed Housing Applications
- 23 Supported with rent arrears
- 42 Supported with Housing Benefits/Costs
- 13 Supported with Council Tax
- 32 Repair Relationships/Mediation
- 100 Assisted with Gas & Electricity
- 296 Supported with Independent living skills
- 50 Safety & Security/Gatekeeping support
- 116 Access to Food donations/Food bank
- 20 Settled in Temporary Tenancy
- 28 Settled in Permanent Tenancy
- 6 Received other types of assistance

Financial Inclusion

- 169 Received budgeting support
- 24 Opened Bank/Saving accounts
- 70 Attended job centre appointments
- 1 Set up Home & Contents insurance
- 2 Applied for ILF Funds
- 4 Completed a PIP claim
- 31 Supported to access other benefits
- 12 Supported to apply for Bus Pass (NEC)
- 11 Supported to apply for Grant/Funding
- 15 Received other finance assistance

Employability

- 36 Completed job applications
- 21 Completed CVs
- 5 Supported to engage in training
- 13 Completed College/University applications
- 18 Gained places in full-time education
- 29 Attended job interviews
- 223 Supported whilst working/studying/training
- 28 Applied for student funding (Bursary, SAAS, EMA)
- 11 Other types of assistance

Health & Wellbeing

- 66 Supported to attend/make medical appointments
- 364 Received Mental Health support
- 63 Engaged in Group work
- 572 Received Health & Wellbeing support
- 6 Received Sexual health advice & support
- 158 Received Drug & Alcohol advice
- 102 Social networking & relationship building
- 31 Received other Wellbeing services

Partnership & Referrals

- 20 Referred to External Agencies
- 147 Partnership working with external agencies
- 4 Referred to Outreach Service
- 24 Other: Referral to Flats Service



During the year we started the journey to becoming an SQA Approved Centre. This will be part of the Community Outreach Service going forward.

The good news is we were successful.

We applied to offer The Adult Learning and Transition Qualification which will enable young homeless people to gain recognition for their continued personal development during times of crisis.

In addition, we will be supporting them to achieve The Adult Learning and Transition Awards.

Which are:

- Gold Award (3 Mandatory Units and 3 optional Units)
- Silver Award (2 Mandatory Units and 2 optional Units)
- Bronze Award (1 Mandatory Unit and 1 optional Unit).

We plan to expand our qualification programme to capture other key aspects of development and learning to enable future young, homeless people to gain confidence, “paper keys” to open doors into the world of work and personal development.





Young People's Journeys

"Before I moved into open door Scotland, I resided in Kingship Care and then moved into night stop due to a breakdown of relationship. I had a few interviews for the live work flats in Dedridge, however, the job I had with my Kingship carer fell through so my housing officer applied for Open Door Accommodation.

I stayed in Open Door Accommodation for roughly 3 months, I think as long as you keep yourself to yourself and stay out of bother it helps you to get moved out a lot faster. The staff are always a good support if you need someone to talk to or advice on anything. Open Door is a good source for learning life skills as it teaches you teamwork, independence, and gives you a little experience of what it's going be like when you eventually move out. I think staying with other people that are in the same situation as you helps as well as I found sharing experiences to bring me and my friend closer as we've both stuck by each other through the time we spent in homeless accommodation.

Transitioning from the hostel to the flats was a good change for me as you have your own space, it's easier to avoid drama and it provides more freedom in the sense of not having a curfew but its still supported. Overall I prefer living in the flats although I do miss my little chats at the bottom of the stairs with Debbie and the staff team.

Even if the hostel wasn't the most ideal situation it was still one of the best options that I could have got and it helped a lot when it came to applying for colleges, jobs etc."

NMcE

"I stayed in Open Door back when I was 16, that was 17 years ago and absolutely loved it, so much support from staff to prepare me for getting my own place, best memories was definitely the macaroni cheese made by Malky (I'm sure that's his name) I am now 33 and have 2 amazing kids but will never forget my time at Open Door." xx

Hayley Sinclair



"Back in 2007 when I was 18 years old I became homeless twice in the space of a few months. May 2007 I was kicked out of my family home and I moved to the Wirral to stay with my step dad's family. I was there for a few months and then moved back Scotland. I wasn't welcome back in my family home so I stayed with my grandparents in a one bed bungalow for 2 weeks. I sat one day with the yellow pages phone book searching for homeless hostels. I came across Open Door. I gave them a phone and explained my circumstances, and they asked me to go down and see them and have a wee chat. I was so scared as homeless hostels have such a bad reputation, I actually took my granny with me. I had a chat with two workers Lynne and Mhairi. I will always remember their names as they pretty much saved my life. I was suffering with my mental health and the fact that both my family homes had rejected me. The rejection, abandonment, anxiety and depression was bad. I was giving a room in Open Door that day and was assigned Gerry as my worker. My first night I lay in bed crying. Literally cried myself to sleep. Gerry, the guy was amazing! He always made sure I was alright and had everything I needed. There was always compliments made during room inspections as my room was always spotless. Lynne use to always watch movies with me in the living room. If it wasn't for Gerry and Lynne in particular I don't think I would be here today. After I left Open Door I went into a house share through Cyrenians, so had to say goodbye to Gerry, but through Cyrenians I got a new support worker called Julie. She was amazing!!!! She went above and beyond for me especially when I had to go back into Open Door in 2009 due to fleeing SA from my flatmate. Julie phoned Open Door after I was on the phone crying to her. I then got a room in Open Door and Julie came and picked me up and took me to Open Door. I was a state when I walked in, and again the staff were amazing. My worker at that time was Towera. What a woman she was. Absolutely hilarious to say the least. She made my stay! So yeah it's safe to say I owe Open Door my life, I have turned out to be the person I am today because of their help. I will be forever grateful."

Claire Fotheringham Wilson



Young People's Journeys

Wendy (permission to use name given) first encountered Open Door Scotland (ODS) back in 2007. Having been brought up by her brother and sister from the age of 13 following the passing of their mum. In time she became a rebellious 18 year old. At this point she was asked to leave the family home by her brother, her sofa surfing life began until she came to ODS.

As an anxious youngster she entered the hostel in Craigshill full of apprehension and as the days went by she became more comfortable with the staff and other young people in the building. She was designated a support worker who helped her settle in, get benefits sorted, and general help to get her life on track.

Reflective advice: “Chat to people from day one” and “Don’t get in with the wrong people.”

Six weeks later she was moved into one of the supported flats and remained there for 8-9 months. She was now sharing with one other person and began to focus on getting her future “forever home”. ODS staff helped her with independent living skills and helped her get ready for having her own tenancy.

Reflective advice: “Make a rota and split tasks evenly”.

In January 2009 she was offered her first tenancy by Almond Housing. The ODS Outreach Team took over her support and worked with her for a few months until she felt confident enough to maintain her tenancy on her own going forward.

Reflective advice: “Take support given to you” and “Keep it for a while till you find your feet.”

She went onto have a relationship and two children but this family relationship fell apart, and she ended up being on her own. Eight years of upheaval and change followed. Eventually she decided she needed goals to work towards and went onto study Photography achieving:

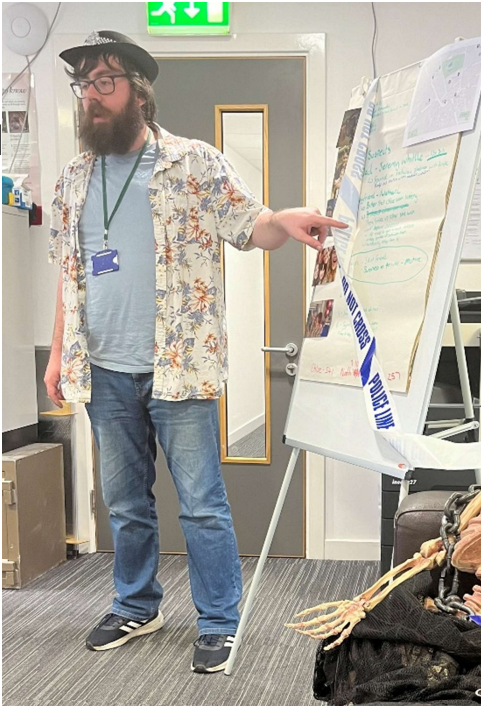
- West Lothian College NC/HNC Photography
- Fife College 2nd year HND Photography
- Napier University Direct entry into 2nd year BA Honours in Photography and did her placement at ODS; running photography sessions for young people experiencing the journey she had been on before (“giving back”)
- Became an Ambassador for ODS
- Graduated with BA Hours (2:1)
- Photography business established
- Opening own studio in Edinburgh
- Providing Digital Photography sessions for ODS young people in 2024.

Wendy’s final reflective advice:

“There is only so far you can fall, but you can rise as high as you want.”

Little did she know that the connection with ODS would expand and develop over the coming two decades.

Staff Team Building



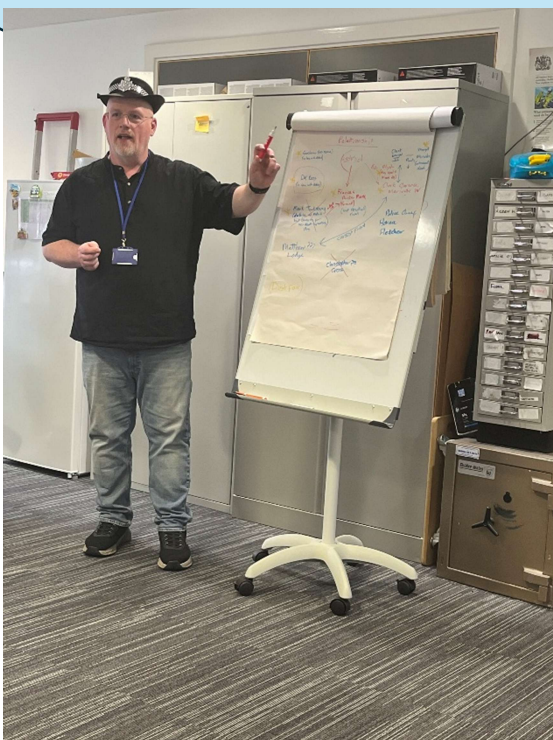
Darren presenting his teams case



Group Photo from Communications Workshop

The ODS Staff Communication building “Murder Mystery” day was informative, fun and engaging. One of the West Lothian College’s HND Business Study course students was on her office environment placement week and was able to take part in the training.

The Staff involved were from the Supported Flats and Outreach teams. Each team had a different old murder case to solve. As the photographs show everyone was having a good laugh and enjoying the training.



Marc presenting his teams case



Teams trying to solve their cases



**BANK OF SCOTLAND
Foundation**



Sainsbury's



M&S



**Open Door
Scotland**
Accommodation, Support &
Advice for Young People



Copies of this report are available on our website or on request

<https://odap.org.uk/>

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Registered Charity: SCO08533