



**Neighbourhood Networks
Unit F11, Festival Business Centre
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Who are we?

We are an innovative voluntary organisation, registered as a Scottish charity. Our work is person-centred with our values firmly rooted in enhancing diversity, creating greater social justice and ensuring that every person is able to lead the life of their choice in order to become all that they can and want to be. We were officially launched in May 2001. We have seen significant growth since then, developing support networks throughout Scotland in Argyll and Bute, North Lanarkshire and Glasgow.

Neighbourhood Networks is modelled on the principles and practices of KeyRing, who pioneered the model of Living Support Networks to enable people labelled with a learning disability to live in their own homes.

Our aims and objectives are to work with local communities to support and empower even more people who may be described as having a learning disability or other people that could benefit from this flexible model of support. We are looking to work in partnership with people and agencies from other areas in Scotland to develop and create new networks which respond to local community needs.

What do we do?

A Living Support Network consists of nine network members and a Community Living Worker. We recruit Community Living Workers from the area of the networks to support nine individuals who live in their own homes within walking distance of each other. The Community Living Workers are supported by a Network Manager who also knows and works with the network members. The Community Living Workers are local people who are well connected in their community having local knowledge to develop support for network members. Support is provided individually or in groups. The networks provide four main levels of support: -

1. **Flexible Housing Support** – Support with practical tasks to maintain tenancies. This might be something like where to get good value shopping, how to fill in forms, budgeting and advice on bills, home repairs, mediation, writing letters or keeping safe.

Within routine contact, the Community Living Worker or Network Manager go through the Housing Association tenant's folder and tenancy agreement with individuals, so they know their rights and responsibilities, how contact can be made, and what to do in an emergency. This preparation work with members has ensured that they have often known what to do in an emergency and who to contact independently.

2. **Mutual Support** – We build on the strengths, gifts and skills of the members. Although members are not expected to be friends our experience is that strong friendships and relationships are developing for people who otherwise may never experienced this important element of ordinary life.

Harry

Harry was seriously ill in hospital and sadly died. The only people who visited him in hospital were Network members; he had no family. Members were very involved with arrangements for a funeral party afterwards and grieved together in a member's house, sharing memories and tears. Tom decided to fundraise for a memorial cup in James' memory, which he achieved, and is now planning how to get members from all Networks together in a tournament - the winner gets the cup for a spell. The aim is to get people to visit each other and get to know each other through tournament activities.

Andrew

Andrew was very shy and lacked confidence when he first joined the Network. He had no real friends of his own. Anne decided to 'bring him out of his shell'. She now visits him regularly and has introduced him to a couple of her friends. In return, Andrew makes meals for her. Anne makes sure he keeps to a sugar-free diet for his diabetes.

3. **Community Connecting** – By linking into local neighbourhood activities and facilities to ensure that members feel that they are integrated within their local communities.

David

Before joining Neighbourhood Networks David was isolated, had depression and suffered from low self esteem. We realised David's gifts and skills and that he enjoyed playing games and meeting people. David was a really skilled pool player. He was supported to host a tournament in the local pub. He put up posters inviting both network members and the community at large. It was a huge success and is now hosted as a monthly event.

4. **A quick response** – We provide a quick response to any needs for additional or specialist support. The proximity of the Community Living Worker means that we are able to intervene prior to a crisis, which may take hours or days to resolve.

Fiona

Fiona fell down the stairs outside her house on Saturday. She called an external support agency on her mobile phone but there was no reply. She phoned Emma, her Community Living Worker who arrived, checked her and took her to hospital. She had a sprained ankle. Emma took her home and ensured that Fiona had provisions over the weekend and visited her several times.

People have various facets with different talents, resources, gifts, skills and strengths and the networks recognise that people can offer support, as well as receive support.

A couple of network members enjoyed cooking and teaching others how to cook. As some members were less experienced, the network decided to arrange communal cooking nights which encouraged recipe swapping and the learning of new skills. This started by them showing everyone how to make mince and tatties. The support provided involved information on food and hygiene, good value shopping, diet and nutrition, safe use of the kitchen, food preparation and identifying damaged or missing kitchen appliances.

This kind of responsive and flexible support illustrates the commitment that we have to meet the needs of individual network members and to support individuals in an innovative, responsive and inclusive approach. A recent network evaluation shows how the support provides practical advice that helps individuals establish a life in which they are safe, self-sufficient and also part of the network and community at large. Indeed this evaluation highlighted how being a member of a network goes far beyond the support element with members experiencing a real sense of belonging and involvement in network life.

Who do we currently support?

Neighbourhood Networks is currently providing a service for people who: -

- ❖ Have moved from group homes
- ❖ Are living with carers, particularly older parents
- ❖ Are isolated in their current accommodation
- ❖ Are homeless
- ❖ Are at risk of long term admission to hospital or institutions

What can we do for you?

We provide services that are high quality, strategically planned and cost-effective for people who may otherwise require residential care. We have shown that the living support networks are sustainable, offer continuity and long term commitment to people who may not have experienced this before. Individuals who use our service are less likely to be isolated than people using other types of low level supports and are less vulnerable in a crisis situation because of the strength of the network, the flexible support of the Community Living Worker and the connections they have made within their local community.

Some of the things that members have said about Neighbourhood Networks

Neighbourhood Networks is great because its introduced me to people who will always be there and able to help.

Kirsty

It means you can live independently.... Do things for yourself with support.

Marion

Bob

Since joining Neighbourhood Networks, Bob says he is “not shy now” and has “the confidence to speak out and say what I need to say”. Bob has really enjoyed attending and speaking at conferences, being on the interview panel for Neighbourhood Networks and the members’ meeting in his house.

... the network helps me to see the light. Before I joined the network I was at the end of the dark tunnel; now I’m maybe a third of the way along it.

Rosemary

Going to college has made a big change in my life (and I go to a night class in creative writing). Before I’d just be sitting in the house. I don’t think I’d be at college now if it wasn’t for Neighbourhood Networks

Looking to the future

We hope to progress with the groundbreaking work that we have undertaken during this journey and to work with local communities to set up new networks throughout Scotland, supporting and empowering even more people. We are looking for new partnerships with statutory and voluntary organisations, housing agencies and funding providers in order to continue to support people to become more self-reliant, more connected and to support individuals to maintain their tenancies.

If you feel this model of housing support could benefit the people in your area or for more information then please contact Neighbourhood Networks, Unit F11, Festival Business Centre, 150 Brand Street, Glasgow, G51 1DH or telephone 0141 314 0027.

We are a member of Altrum which is a federation of human service organisations in Scotland who are committed to diverse communities and active citizenship for all

Registered charity number SC028984

