



# Annual Report

2020/21



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# Annual Report

April 2020 - March 2021



## Foreword

“Deep human connection is...the purpose and the result of a meaningful life – and it will inspire the most amazing acts of love, generosity, and humanity.”

- **Melinda Gates**

The last year was an extraordinary time that will live on in history books. Generations to come will share stories about the great COVID Pandemic that has swept across the globe.

While we are all still living through a period of tumultuous living history, we wanted to capture some of the stories of resilience and adaptability in Neighbourhood Networks Annual Report this year. It's been a steep COVID learning curve for everyone but at the end of a dramatic 12- month period there is much to acknowledge that has made Neighbourhood Networks stronger and more connected despite the challenges and loss experienced across our communities.

We hope that the stories we share in this report celebrate the potential for the human spirit of connectedness to prevail. In this year's report we will share stories and experiences of connection through:

- Digital Inclusion
- Sharing our skills with one another
- Spreading our Networks and connections
- Supporting Wellbeing
- Asking for views and feedback about what we do
- How our connections to each other have kept people safe during the pandemic
- Looking ahead to the future together.

**Foreword - Heather Calvo, Chief Executive Officer, Neighbourhood Networks**

# Digital Focus

“Over the past year voluntary sector organisations have been forced to contend with months of uncertainty and challenges, with new expectations, processes, and ways of working. Meanwhile, technology has been thrust front-and-centre as a lifeline that has allowed organisations to continue to operate.

Organisations that adapt and thrive in this new environment will be the ones that truly understand the problems people face, put user needs first and look at how new technology might contribute to a solution.” - SCVO

## DIGITAL CHAMPIONS

Our 2019 Annual Report highlighted that we had started a Digital Champions programme with the support of SCVO and The Mhor Collective to upskill our staff and a group of our members.

The Digital Champions training aims to give people the confidence to be able to support other people to get connected digitally and this group of trained individuals of both staff and members were ideal to help up support the wider membership over the last year.

Those who had completed the Digital Champion training agreed that they would like to continue to meet as a group regularly to keep their skills updated. We covered a range of topics including:

- How to stay safe online – looking at the importance of passwords, spotting scams.
- Using social media sites safely – in particular looking at the security settings.
- Members experiences of using digital in lockdown.
- How we could support other members within networks who are not confident using technology.
- Further training opportunities for digital skills.



With many services all moving online during the last 2 years, including many health and benefits services, we felt it was necessary to equip our members with the knowledge of how to use the new technology available.

We linked up with Money Advice Scotland to provide specific training and awareness sessions on how to use internet banking. This included the use of their bespoke trial online banking site to allow members to actually trial how to access their bank accounts this way, what to expect and what skills or support they might need to allow this.

The Digital Champions were a consistent group of members who requested that they continued to come together to learn new digital skills. An added benefit to this initiative was the friendships they built online through coming along to the digital champions sessions.

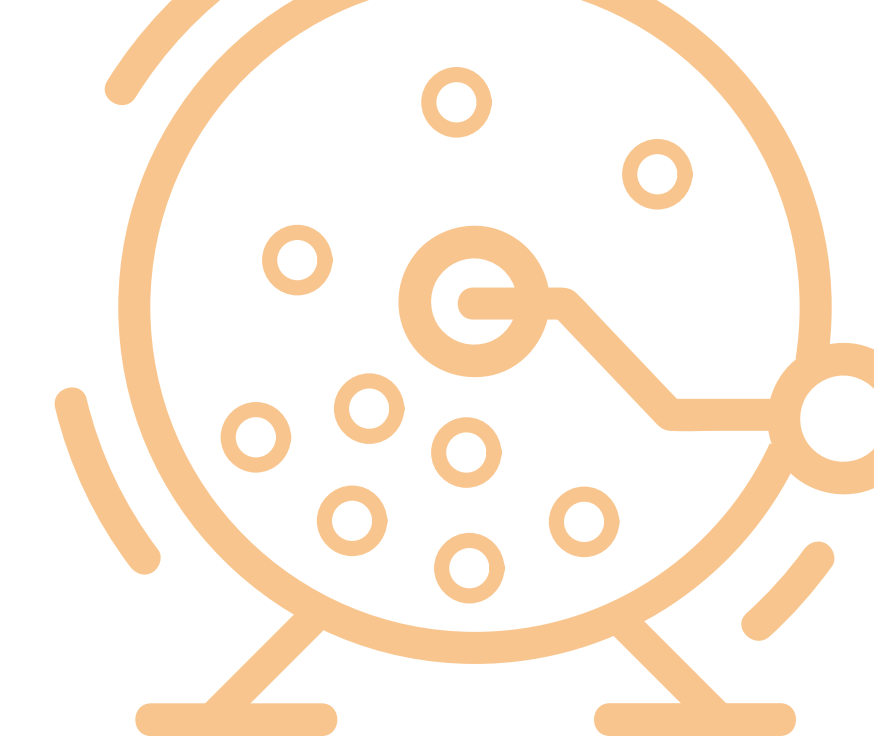
## DIGITAL PROGRAMME

The aim of our digital programme was to mainly keep people occupied while we were confined to our homes during the first lockdown of Spring 2020. However, we also wanted to keep people connected to their friends and peers as much as possible and allow members to continue to develop new skills and interests.

Having carried out some initial discussions with our staff team and members we agreed that with digital activities being new to everyone the key was to grab peoples interest and encourage as many people as possible to get involved. We decided to produce a digital programme that was wide and varied so that there would be something that would appeal to everyone.

The digital programme has evolved over the last 18 months however initially we went big as that was when the strictest ‘Stay At Home’ guidance was in place. Our initial programme included:

- **Yoga**
- **Mindfulness**
- **Exercise with Jo**
- **Photography group**
- **Cartoon drawing with Decco Comics**
- **Creative writing**
- **Cooking lessons**
- **Friday party with Christeen**



We also had specific yoga and mindfulness sessions just for the staff team.

Our programme changed depending on lockdown restrictions at the time and also developed to include:

- **Weight management**
- **Womans group**
- **Mens group**
- **Wellbeing group**
- **Quiz nights**

We also linked into other organisations online activities such as VSO with their Virtual Village Hall programme, C-Change and the Stay Up Late Campaign.

## What is Mindfulness?

1. Directing our attention to our experience as it unfolds.
2. Trains us to respond skillfully to whatever is happening; good or bad.
3. Improves our thought process, feelings and concerns for others.
4. Helps us perform better, feel calmer and less depressed.





## PARENT AND CARER SESSIONS

April / May 2020

Back in April 2020, when we were experiencing our first period of lockdown due to the pandemic, it quickly became clear that we needed to expand our digital activities to support our members to stay connected, keep busy and continue to develop new skills.

However, we knew that for many of our younger members their parents and carers had serious concerns about them being online at all. This was something they hadn't done before, often the parent or carers own skills in this area needed support and there were concerns about how we would keep people safe online.

We had already teamed up with The Mhor Collective who had been supporting our Digital Champions members training programme, so we asked if they could facilitate parent and carer sessions for us.

The aim was to listen to any concerns they might have, highlight the steps we have in place to keep our online presence safe and secure, look at any equipment needs families might have and highlight the digital programme for members and their families over the coming months.

Parent and carer key concerns included:

- The family all sharing the one piece of equipment.
- Lack of knowledge about using the equipment and getting online.
- Lack of knowledge of how to keep safe and not get hacked, etc.
- Activities being interrupted by unknown people.
- Would the activities be engaging?
- The lack of social connection.

## The session allowed us to highlight the following steps to ensure we kept people safe and secure:

### 1 DIGITAL CODE OF CONDUCT

We developed our existing Neighbourhood Networks Code of Conduct to also have a Digital Code of Conduct for all staff and members. This ensured that we all knew how to interact with each other in this new online environment which many people were using for the first time. This included guidance such as being kind, not interrupting, preventing background noise for TVs, use of language, being on time, no bullying, etc.

### 2 DIGITAL PROTECTON

Ensuring all of our digital activities were either hosted in our private Facebook group or if on Zoom, that the access link and password was not shared on a public forum and that a 'waiting room' facility was used to ensure that only Neighbourhood Networks members and staff could access the events.

All events would also be hosted by Neighbourhood Networks staff.

### 3 STAYING CONNECTED

Sourcing equipment and data were required to support members to stay connected and join in digital activities.

### 4 ONLINE ACTIVITIES

Planned digital activities would also cover a wide range of themes to ensure that there was something of interest for everyone.

### 5 ONLINE GUIDANCE

Providing direct support and guidance on how to get online and access Zoom through the provision of easy read 'How To' guides.

The feedback from the Parent and Carer events was very positive with appreciation that we were including them in our planning and event programme.





# Photography

During Lockdown we started to host our own Photography group to help bring members together as well as learning a new skill. When people think Photography they instantly jump to the conclusion that you have to be a professional with a fancy camera to take part...well guess what, this is not the case and the members are here to show you why.

## PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

The Photography group formed a great bond with each other and each week they took the time to share what they have been doing and check in on each other.

Through the beauty of Photography this allowed for conversations to form, the saying is true a picture paints a thousand words. Members learned how to express themselves through Photography through focusing on different themes for example colours, feelings and representations.

Members enjoyed talking about nature and how out of nothing flowers can grow which symbolises life is always around. During Spring there was lots of daffodils which members spoke about resembling hope and light.

With forming such a close bond the members were able to have deep and meaningful conversations for example about things they have faced in their past, choosing to share about their sexuality and hopes and dreams for the future. The members are very supportive of each other and always make time and space to ask questions of inspiration or talk about how they are feeling. It has been inspiring to see how through different eyes things are portrayed differently.

Members have been brought together by Photography and ended with forming meaningful friendships for life. One member said 'The group has been great, I never knew how to take a picture, now look at me I can take pictures and I have made friends'. As the group was ran digitally it meant members from across the central belt of Scotland could come together on a regular basis which previously may have been difficult to do. Another member stated 'this has been a lifesaver and I love chatting to new people'.

All of the pictures shown here have been taken by members on a digital device. It is inspiring for anyone as 'Together Anything Is Possible!' Let your imagination come to life through the beauty and wonder of Photography.



“Photography is the story I fail to put into words.”

- Destin Sparks



## Photography





# Cooking

## Online cooking lessons – The Neighbourhood Networks Shortcut Chef!

During 2020/21 when we had several periods of being at home during lockdowns, there was a keen interest for us to deliver cooking lessons online to help members develop their skills, show off their talents and keep busy.



We were delighted when our Network Manager, Maureen Nisbet, stepped forward and volunteered to lead our online cooking classes. Although over the years we regularly run cooking classes in person at a local level within our networks this was a first for us running an online session for all our networks at once!

At that point in time many of our members were not keen on using Zoom or similar software, however our member survey highlighted that many of our members were a lot more comfortable using Facebook.

We set up a private Neighbourhood Networks Facebook group for our digital activities and held our cooking lessons as a Facebook Live event with Maureen's on screen information being supported by staff on the chat facility.

The cooking lessons covered many savoury and sweet recipes with members often putting their own ideas forward and voting during the class for what recipe they would like the following week. Recipes included vegetable soup, macaroni cheese, pizza, chicken curry, cottage pie, brownies, fairy cakes, cheesecake and more.

In June 2020 we decided to trial a bigger event with our cooking lessons. We invited all our members from all our networks across Scotland to let us know if they would like an ingredients box with all the vegetables and supplies required to take part in our first large scale cooking event. Over 150 people took part in our Soup-A-Thon and the ingredients box contained enough ingredients for not only the soup but also a good range of general food supplies for other recipes we would cover too.



**The soup-a-thon was a fantastic event that brought so many members and staff together during the first lockdown. We were delighted with the number of members that got involved and loved seeing the photographs of all the soup creations. For many, this was the first time they had cooked for their families and this was a huge achievement and a start of a new hobby.**

- Heather Calvo,

Chief Executive Officer,  
Neighbourhood Networks

# Wellbeing

The past year has been an incredibly challenging time for everyone. Not only was it essential to look after the wellbeing of our members' during the Covid-19 pandemic, it was also imperative to look after the wellbeing of our workforce too.

## SUPPORT TO MEMBERS

Some members experienced an impact on their mental health, which varied from individual to individual, and some managed very well and didn't appear to have been affected by the situation. Some found the restrictions very difficult, and we had to continually reinforce the guidelines with them. Several network members on the autistic spectrum found changes to their routine difficult. We had to work with those people to help them develop a new routine alongside some of their parents and carers. Some parents and carers required advice and support during the pandemic which we provided. Staff kept in regular contact with parents and carers, offering advice and support where necessary. We conducted a parent and carer evaluation of our service during the pandemic and the feedback was hugely positive.

## KEEPING BUSY AND GETTING CREATIVE

To help keep members occupied whilst there were Covid-19 restrictions in place, some of our artistically talented colleagues came together to facilitate a weekly online arts & crafts workshop for our members. Art and craft supplies were delivered to those members that wanted to take part in the workshops.

They were held on the run up to Christmas, where members got the opportunity to create a variety of Christmas crafts including T-Light holders, Christmas crackers and paper snowflakes.

**"It was great that members got the opportunity to express themselves through art and crafts, and it was amazing to see them put their own creative touches in their work".**

- Michelle,  
Garnock Valley Community Living Worker

Furthermore, some members in Glasgow and East Renfrewshire were delighted to receive activity packs from our friends at Cosgrove in Giffnock. Cosgrove kindly reached out to us to offer our members activity packs which included a range of things such as jigsaws, books, DVDs and games. Members were extremely grateful to receive these and we also give our thanks to Cosgrove for their kindness and thoughtfulness during these challenging times.

## MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING

In recognition of our role and in response to the pandemic we felt that as an organisation we should equip our staff with the skills to support people whose Mental Health was perhaps poor. As such, we chose to invest in Scottish Mental Health First Aid Training year (SMHFA) as we were of the thinking that this was most appropriate given the level of contact that we have with people. The training was delivered online, covering topics such as how to give immediate help until professional help is available and what to do and say in a crisis. The training was delivered over several sessions, and most staff have now completed all the sessions other than a final session which requires to be delivered in person. We hope to deliver this session early in the new year when COVID restrictions allow.

## SUPPORT TO STAFF

We recognise the importance of having a healthy workforce, therefore as part of the Neighbourhood Networks Mental Health strategy, we formed Wellness Action Plans (WAPs). A WAP is a tool that helps you to get to know your staff more, what works for them and what could trigger stress/anxiety. WAPs have been successfully rolled out across the organisation. Furthermore, other like-minded organisations asked us to share our WAP with them so they can also adopt it as part of their practice for maintaining staff wellbeing.

During Lockdown, to help bring staff together, we ran mindfulness workshops. Staff came together online to practice Mindfulness with a professional; we focused on breathing techniques, how we can switch off from work and improve our sleep patterns. This was a great opportunity to bring staff together to chat about how they were feeling as well as learn new skills which had positive and healthy benefits.

Practicing mindfulness and deep breathing was not for everyone, so we also ran yoga and fitness classes online to bring people together to try something different. Staff could join in live online or watch it back at a time that suited. Staff were also encouraged to schedule time in their diary for some wellness time. This was to encourage staff to take committed breaks from their computer to go out and get some fresh air stretch their legs.

Some staff enjoyed having their lunch break in the garden where they could connect with their surroundings, others enjoyed a walk around their local community. By encouraging staff to do this it meant they were re-energising themselves and creating a healthy work life balance. By encouraging staff to make healthy lifestyle choices it not only benefited them as an individual but also the organisation as it boosted morale and productivity.

Other supports that we offered colleagues included a free, confidential employee counselling service if they required this and we also hosted regular 'virtual' coffee and cake meetings which has helped keep staff connected to each other.



# Skills Development

## CREATIVE WRITING

Neighbourhood Networks Creative Writing group was formed during lockdown. The idea came from one of the members in the Garnock Valley Network, North Ayrshire.

At the time we were looking for ideas to get the Digital programme of activities up and running. Ryan had been along to the creative writing group in the local community and really enjoyed it. We approached Betty to come along and facilitate a couple of sessions with members across different networks. Betty who has had a couple of children's books published jumped at the chance and the group was formed from there.

The group has always stayed small with a consistent number of members turning up via Zoom every week. Members have had the opportunity to learn a new skill and for some members enhance and have the confidence to share an existing skill. This has involved all aspects of writing from forming character's, plots, fictional stories, and poetry.

The group has also provided an opportunity for members to connect with each other across different network areas and form friendships and relationships they might not have if we weren't thrown into lockdown. This has also contributed to members supporting and encouraging each other to contribute their ideas. The group have written several short stories together. Read for yourself their amazing work.



## McGregor's Point

By Neighbourhood Networks Creative Writing Group (August 2021)

Waves crashing against the cliffs,  
Splinter the castle.  
Music playing in the distance.  
An overgrown path leads the way.  
Wind howls through the gloomy fog.  
Flapping and fluttering birds  
Searching for a new home.  
A prism of light slices through the stained-glass window.  
Leaves swirl around the turret.  
The gate creaks shut to warn off unwanted guests.  
Once a family home, now a cobweb of ruins.  
Shrieks and screams from one hundred years ago  
Lure sailors to the haunted bay.





## OUTCOME FOCUSED MONITORING SYSTEM (OFMS)

We are delighted to report that all staff have received training and are now using the OFMS (Outcome Focussed Monitoring System) to record the contact they have with network members.

### Staff have also now started using the OFMS to complete Risk Screenings, Risk Management Plans and Support plans for network members.

The completion of Support Planning within the system will allow us to provide information to our stakeholders regarding the outcomes that are being achieved by members because of our support. This information will be invaluable alongside the anecdotal evidence we currently provide in ensuring that we are able to prove that what we do is impactful.

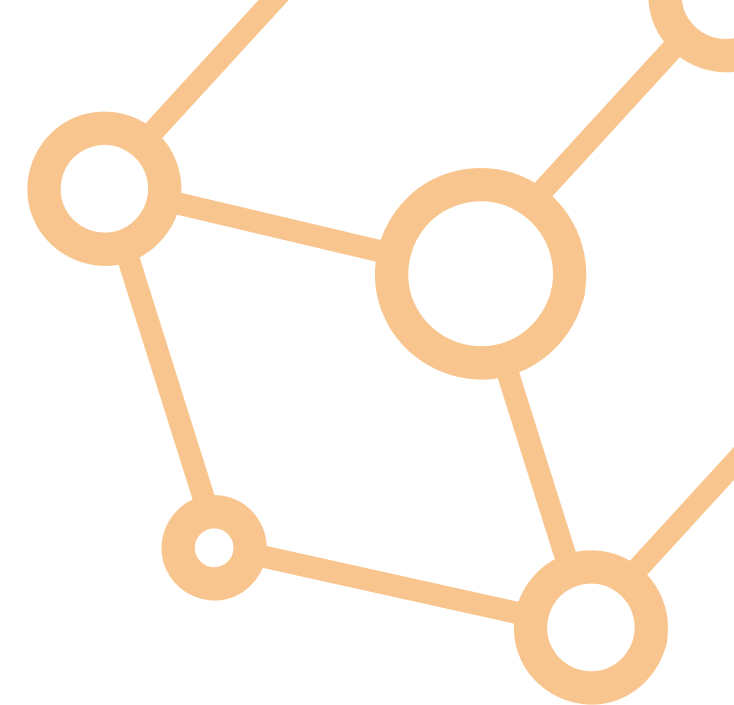
It is planned that we will introduce the time management element of the OFMS in the new year which will further reduce the time that staff spend completing monitoring and will also provide us with further quantitative information for our funders and other stakeholders.

In addition to using the system to record support provided, including Support Planning we have now also started using the system as a place to save all other member related documentation, this further reduces the need for staff to operate between the OFMS and SharePoint which will impact positively on the time it takes staff to complete member related administration.

To support the staff training a User's Manual has been prepared, this takes the form of a series of How To guides which are specific to individual tasks, this allows people to find the guide very readily, and it also allows us to add new guides as we start to use the additional functions of the system.

We have received ongoing support from the developers, c2, to iron out small issues that we have experienced and have found them to be very approachable and very responsive. We are incredibly positive about how well the migration to OFMS has gone and are hopeful that the system will adapt to meet our needs as we develop and grow as an organisation.

Thank you to everyone for sticking with us during the initial change, thank you all in advance for your continued patience while we continue to develop the system to fully meet the needs of all stakeholders.





# Keeping People Safe

We are extremely grateful to our amazing colleagues who ensured that our members remained safe, healthy, and well during the pandemic. Their commitment, dedication and adaptability was phenomenal.

Furthermore, we give our appreciation to our members for their peer support to their fellow members, helping each other to manage and cope through social isolation and extremely limiting restrictions, which created uncertainty and insecurity for many.

We worked with our members and their families & carers to ensure that our support met their needs, including conducting COVID-19 risk assessments and implementing any measures to minimise any risks as required.

Our Coronavirus Contingency Planning Team guided the organisation and regularly communicated pertinent information to colleagues and members. We also developed Health Passports with members in the event of any hospital admissions. As we had mostly been unable to meet with members during lockdown, except for doorstep visits to those who were most vulnerable. We provided regular welfare calls and where possible, we offered remote support using a variety of different communication methods e.g., text message, WhatsApp, Zooms and Facetime.

We communicated important, accessible information throughout lockdown and beyond to members, staff, parents, and carers. We routinely shared accessible information on the Scottish Government Guidelines in our networks and through social media from sources such as SCLD about staying safe during the pandemic.

The lockdown and social distancing restrictions meant that we had to cease regular group activities. When the restrictions were initially relaxed, we met with members in cafes (when permitted) and for walks mainly. We continued to provide a daily out of hours service to members out with working hours. We had to consider how to support members to keep safe whilst going out for walks and to the shops for essential items etc. We issued all members with 2 reusable, washable facemasks. This was both to support their safety and their confidence.

Some members and the organisation required additional support and information during the pandemic. We therefore shared information to parents/carers, members and colleagues about local support and sign posting services such as 'Glasgow Helps' and 'The Hub' in East Renfrewshire.





# Wider Development

It could have been predicted that developing new work and the associated relationship building involved with this could have proven very difficult because of the challenges of COVID and all the associated lockdown conditions but thankfully this was not Neighbourhood Networks experience.

## NORTH AYRSHIRE

In late 2019 we were given the go ahead for the first Network funded through North Ayrshire Council in the Garnock Valley. By April 2020 we had managed to quickly recruit a new CLW and fill the Network at a crucial time when the support of the organisation proved to be invaluable to people.

The Network has provided another opportunity to serve three more rural communities which include Kilbirnie, Dalry and Beith.

This experience has strengthened the capacity for Neighbourhood Networks to develop new work and connections and we look to the future with considerable optimism for growth opportunities in other areas and parts of the country.

## IHUB COLLABORATION

With connections and reputations strengthening during the pandemic we were delighted to be asked to be Falkirk Council Third Sector Partner in a Collaboration with Health Improvement Scotland and 7 other local Authorities to look at New Models of Day Supports.

This has been a unique opportunity to share our learning and experiences about creating meaningful engagement and activity for people with learning disabilities both historically but also in the context of lockdown.

At the same time, we have made many valuable connections in other areas and organisation's that have expanded our own learning. A good example of this are the links we have made with Leonard Cheshire who are making some significant advancements in Digital Inclusion and we hope to be able to learn from some assessment work they will be carrying out with some of the people we support in the near future.



## INDEPENDENT LIVING FUND

We have had strong links with the Independent Living Fund over the last few years. As we work some networks which specifically engage with young people, we have a particular focus on promoting the Transitions Fund which provides an opportunity for one off pots of money to help promote independence for young people aged 16 to 24. The pandemic did not prevent us from continuing to do this work and we were able to develop online events for young people and their families to virtually connect and learn about the application process for this fund.

We anticipate that this will lead to an increase in applications and Neighbourhood Networks can help young people and their families both plan and apply for this fund. We look forward to capturing some stories about how this has helped people achieve positive outcomes in their lives.

**ilf** Independent Living Fund Scotland



# Evaluation

**“We can’t improve when we can’t measure.”**

- Bharath Mamidoju

## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Throughout 2020 to 2021 we undertook considerable work to engage with all our stakeholders about the impact of the work we do. This included regular update meetings with the nine local Authority areas we work in. These meetings were crucial to ensure that we were on the right track with our engagement with member and communities at a time of crisis. We received very positive feedback from Commissioners about the work we do and there was a general recognition that the local flexible model of support was invaluable to ensure people stayed safe, secure and connected. This is evidenced in the many discussions that have subsequently taken place about growing the service.

## INTERNAL EVALUATION

We also undertook some internal and external evaluation to connect with carers and members of networks. The feedback from the Carers survey was very positive with a score of 4.31 out of 5 for satisfaction, the bulk of which was made up of carers who were very satisfied with service levels being offered prior to and during the pandemic.

**“The network have been phoning both myself and S constantly to keep in touch with S and his progress. There have been lots of activities to keep S and myself amused including quizzes, cooking, games, singing and chats with the other members.”**

**“J gets great support and thoroughly enjoys his time with the staff and other members, his dad and I are very happy with everything.”**

**“The support we have received during the lock down has been more than we could ever have envisaged. All the staff involved have been very thoughtful and kind.”**

## EXTERNAL EVALUATION

A critical Third Eye is very important to any Third sector organisation and being in a pandemic is not an exception to this. We engaged Outside the Box to carry out evaluations on this last year to review the work we have been doing in two of our newest areas, South Lanarkshire and Falkirk. Although Lockdown presented some different challenges for gathering feedback, Outside the Box used technology to connect with members to hear again their feedback as well as the chance to meet people in person when conditions allowed this. They gathered some poignant “Magic Moments” to capture the power of Networks and human connection.

**“During lockdown, all members got their own planter to grow their own veg. It was part of the Forth Valley Pledge your veg campaign. Members grew peas, onions, and salad, increasing their life skills, increasing their outside activity and encouraging them to eat home grown and healthy food. They also shared pictures with each other of the vegetables and flowers they were growing - again to help, share with and inspire each other.”**

**“One of the members loved the food parcel she got for the ‘cooking with Maureen Session’ on Facebook live. You can see the delight and pride in mastering a new skill. She also got creative making a coffee cake and a cherry cake. The photo was shared with Falkirk members inspiring them into the kitchen and to get cooking too.”**

The pandemic has not proved to be barrier in connecting with people for their feedback and we will continue to move forward with all that this varied activity has taught Neighbourhood Networks in the year ahead.

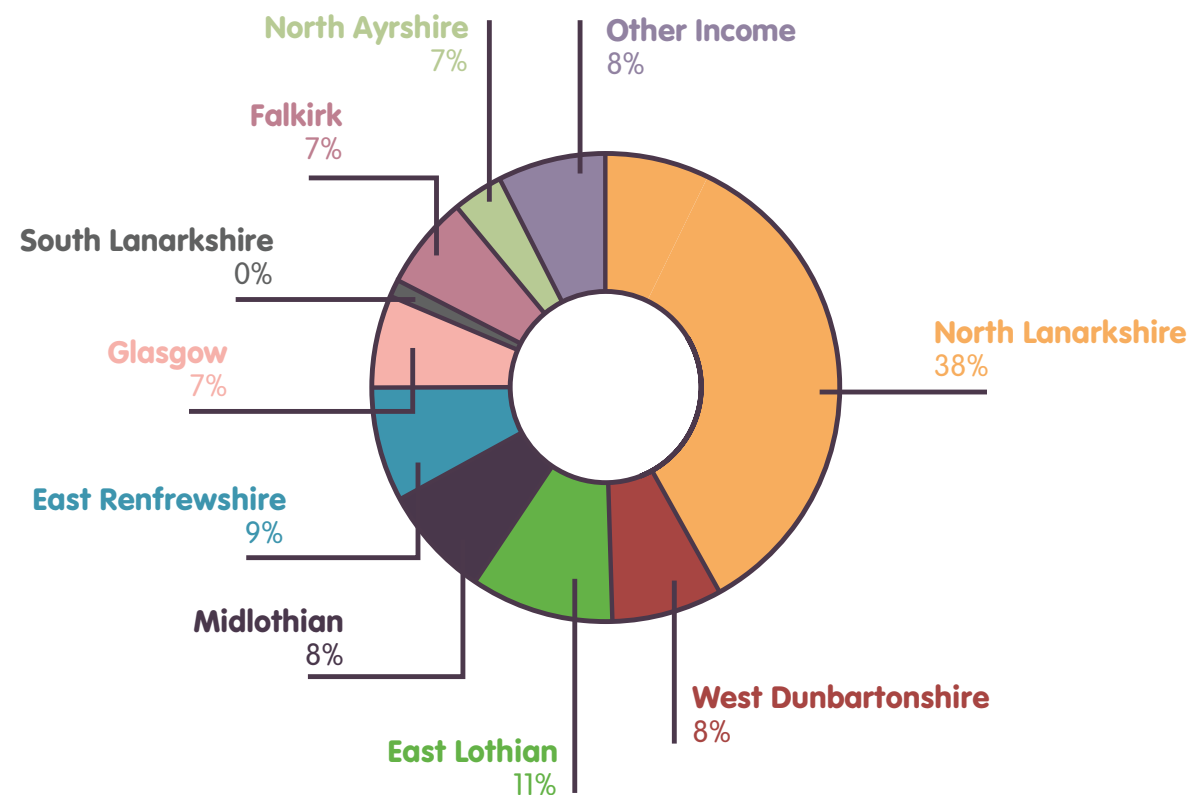




# Accounts

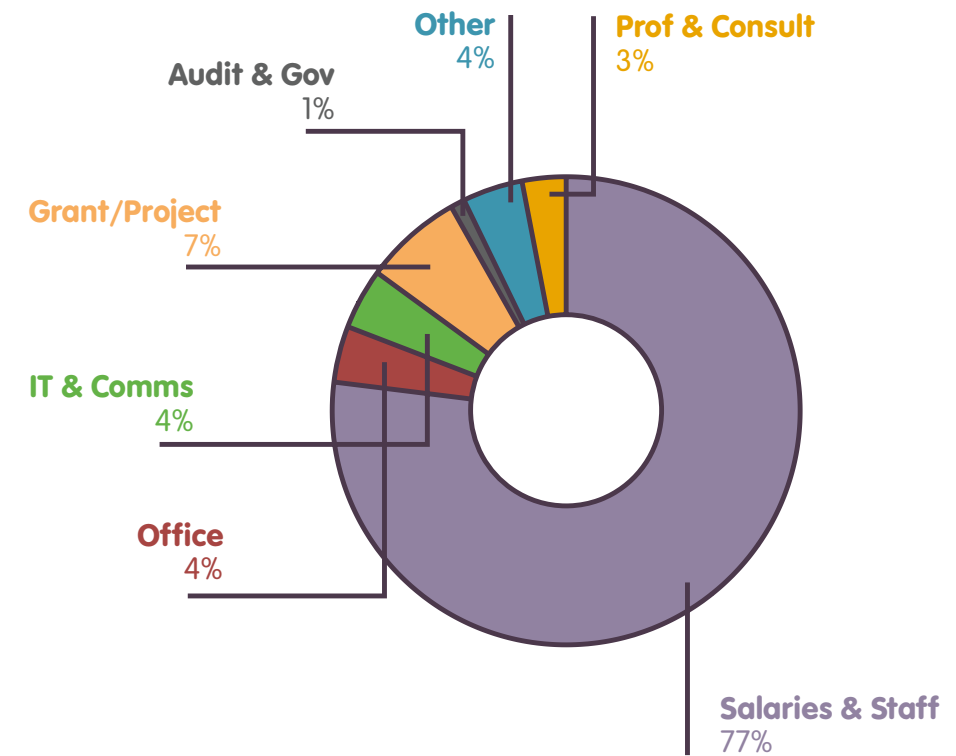
Local authorities across Scotland continue to recognise the merits and cost benefits of our peer support model and our ability to respond quickly to a changing environment. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of our amazing staff team, income received during the year totalled £911k (2020 - £874k) an increase of 4%, expenditure totalled £877k (2020 - £846k), an increase of 3.7%, generating a surplus in funds of £34k, a welcomed cushion for the challenges ahead.

## WHERE OUR INCOME CAME FROM...



We receive most of our income from local authorities throughout central Scotland. North Lanarkshire Council contributes 40% to our total income, the Lothians 19%, with Glasgow and West Dunbartonshire contributing 7% and 9% respectively. Falkirk and North Ayrshire are going from strength to strength, contributing 7% and 4%. We secured COVID response grants from The Big Lottery, Corra Foundation and William Grant, allowing us to connect digitally to our staff and Members, offering a digital option to our service to compliment the work we do.

## WHERE THE MONEY IS SPENT...



Our biggest asset is our dedicated staff team, and staff costs continue to be our biggest expenditure equating to 77% of our total spend, with 7% spent on project costs and our move to a digital environment with a digital programme for Members. Other expenditure includes Network, office, IT, communication, equipment, governance and audit costs.

## FINANCIAL POSITION AT THE YEAR-END ...

Increased income and prudent spending during the year resulted in a £34k surplus, taking our reserves position to £461k of which £450k is unrestricted. This represents over 5 months running costs in line with our reserves policy and within OSCR guidelines. The financial outlook for 2022 is strong with many of our existing Local Authorities looking to expand the number of Networks in their areas. We feel we are robust enough to cope with the challenges ahead thanks to our amazing staff team, and a healthy balance sheet.





# Thank You

We would like to extend our thanks to all of the contributors to this report, our staff team, our funders, local authority partners, supporters and most importantly to our members who show us that 'Together Anything is Possible'.

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