



Home Link Family Support



ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15

Working with our volunteers to provide practical and emotional support to families with young children

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Who we are:

We are an award-winning home-visiting service in Edinburgh and Midlothian, providing families with support through the following provisions:

Four different Family Support Services operating across Edinburgh and Midlothian :-

- > Antenatal Service
- > Midlothian Young Parents Support Service
- > The Family Support Service
- > A Systemic Family Counselling Service in Midlothian: a unique therapeutic service for the whole family in their own home, for families with children aged 0-18.

What we do:

- > We work with volunteers and paid staff to provide practical and emotional support to families with young children in their own home.
- > We also work with our strategic partners to influence the policy landscape as it impacts on families and young children in Edinburgh and Midlothian.



What our funders say:

“Home Link Family Support provides a quality service which is very responsive to the needs of our most vulnerable children and their families in Midlothian. For many families the support provided when working with Home Link Family Support is invaluable in meeting a need and relieving family stress. This session their support for families as part of our Big Bedtime Read project and the development of the Young Parents Support Service have been key projects benefitting many of our Midlothian children.”

Julie Fox, School Group Manager Early Years- Midlothian Council

“The City of Edinburgh Council recognises the hard work undertaken by the volunteers supported by Home Link Family Support. Their efforts have helped address the social isolation experienced by many young parents across South Edinburgh.”

David Hoy, Commissioning Officer Planning and Performance Children and Families - The City of Edinburgh Council

What our service users and volunteers say:

What our families said

“It was a real positive time in the week – the children loved her.”

“My volunteer being a friendly and non-judgemental person helped me make decisions.”

“Getting that support you need to help you get through by having well trained volunteers walking alongside you.”

“Having Home Link has meant the world to me, it has changed my outlook on life and now I feel much stronger than I ever did before.”

“The Big Bedtime Read made me feel very proud I wanted to shout from the roof to let everyone know how proud I was contributing to the DVD. This also helped me to recognise what a good job I was doing with my child. Now after doing the Big Bedtime Read it has helped with E’s speech and language and the nursery told me he was doing P1 work as his reading has come on lots.”

The following comments are from exit reviews completed by volunteers in 2014-15

“Everything I wanted to achieve at Home Link I feel I have achieved. This experience has been fantastic.”

Josie

“This experience has been most useful in gaining a deeper understanding of my future career as a social worker.”

Sue

“It was a good experience and one that came to an end too quickly [because I moved away]. Thanks for the opportunity.”

Kirsten

“Home Link helped me to develop my confidence to gain employment as I learned to put my skills into action.”

Claire

Message from the Manager:

The last year has flown by, and no wonder; with the amount of work that has been undertaken in 2014-15! I would like to give my heartfelt thanks to all the volunteers, staff team and board for all their support and endless enthusiasm and commitment. Here is an overview of all that we have achieved in 2014-15.

1 PEEP at Home

In July 2014 the R S Macdonald Charitable Trust kindly gave us an award of £5,000 to support our work with families with young children, who have been referred to us by Health and Social Work as they were not coping and were not accessing community support services for themselves or their children due to their lack of confidence, being disorganised, stressed or suffering from depression. These families are potentially most at risk of their children having behavioural issues or being withdrawn, families breaking down and children being taken into care.

- > We have trained a total of 26 of our family volunteers to deliver PEEP
- > A total of 30 volunteers are now actively engaged with families delivering PEEP
- > A total of 50 families have accessed PEEP this year

Family group sessions have been run in Milton Road and in the Southside of Edinburgh



Josephine is a mum of 3 children aged 6, 4 and 18 months. Josephine had become isolated due to mental health difficulties. She wanted to access PEEP at home as she found it difficult to attend local groups whilst juggling school, nursery and the sleep time of her 18 month old. PEEP was delivered by a volunteer on Friday afternoons with all three children. Josephine felt supported to join in and was able to rotate who she spent time with each week, and gained new ideas of how to play with all 3 children. The oldest child was keen to be involved and help her younger siblings and the 18 month old made strong progress in developing language skills. Josephine gained confidence to attend a local group and managed to alter the sleep pattern of her youngest child to accommodate this.

2 Play@home

We have continued to train our volunteers to deliver play@home to the families we support. Play@home was first introduced in New Zealand in 1990 and then brought over to be delivered in Fife in 1999 and is now offered to families all over Scotland.

The main aims are:

- > to promote the benefit and importance of physical activity and play for young children
- > to strengthen bonds and communication
- > stimulation in curiosity, imagination and creativity
- > positive praise
- > to promote physical activity as fun
- > to link home and nursery through positive social interaction and shared goals.

We are delighted that 60% of all our volunteers received this training in 2014-15 with a view to a 100% roll out next year.

We stress the importance of play to all our volunteers for the following reasons.

Play:

- a allows children to learn about the world they live in
Multi-sensory experiences – seeing, smelling, touching, hearing as they play in different ways and with different things helps to teach children about the world
- b provides means for learning about and resolving emotions
They can test out their emotions through play, learn ways of expressing themselves and resolving their conflicts
- c is a chance to “try on” or practise different roles or experiences
Children can work out their fears, anxieties or stress about something by “playing through it” – role playing as the doctor, going to hospital, mummy having a baby, hearing loud noises like fireworks, etc.
- d helps to acquire and improve control of the body – playing, jumping, hopping, etc.
- e helps to establish brain connections – sets the foundation for learning in the future
 - i A child’s brain develops more rapidly in the first 5 years of life than it ever will again; the brain establishes pathways for learning through experiencing new things and engaging the world around them – primarily through play!
 - ii A child’s capacity for learning, emotional stability and control, behaviour management and much more is primarily established in the first 5 years and is largely linked to the quality and quantity of opportunities for play.



3 Social Media 2014-15

Twitter

We have been really active with Twitter this year to help get our services known and celebrate all our achievements. Follow us on @homelinkfamilysupport.org



Our new website was launched in March 2015. This meant a major overhaul in this last year. We recognise that this is a valuable resource telling people what we do and a tool for volunteer recruitment. Check it out at www.homelinkfamilysupport.org

Facebook

We have had much debate about how to get the best out of this social media platform. We have set up a Facebook landing page for the time being and will develop this further in the coming year.



4 The Early Years Collaborative

“The Early Years Collaborative (EYC) is the world’s first multi-agency, bottom up quality improvement programme to support the transformation of early years. Launched in October 2012, it involves all 32 Community Planning Partnerships and a wide range of National Partners. Its focus is on strengthening and building on services using improvement methodology. This method enables local practitioners to test, measure, implement and scale up new ways of working to improve outcomes for children and families.”
Scottish Government 2012.

www.earlyyearscolloborative.co.uk

We have participated with the last two “learning sets” as part of the Midlothian Community Planning Partnership.

We are involved with the following Tests of Change in Midlothian: Sleep Clinic Sessions, Antenatal One Stop Shop and Big Bedtime Read.

5 Big Bedtime Read

We were delighted to work in partnership with our Early Years colleagues in Midlothian under their Early Years Collaborative Test of Change Programme. Throughout the year 85% of the families we supported across Midlothian were involved in this initiative. Our learning from this initiative has allowed us to re-evaluate our service provision. In the next year we will be providing all families with opportunities to engage with play, reading/storytelling and building positive relationships.



The Big Bedtime Read Team at the COSLA Awards 2015



This is an example of how bedtime reading has changed the life of a whole family

At the beginning of the Big Bedtime Read we had a family being supported by one of our volunteers. The child was 2 years old with special needs: he had little language and was suspected to have Aspergers, but certainly on the Autism Spectrum. When the family was introduced to the Big Bedtime Read, Mum stated that the little boy would not sit for any length of time and had no concentration. The befriender started to visit weekly and took along “You Choose”, a book which has no words, just pictures. Previous to the match starting the befriender was involved in Bookbug training through Home Link, so was able to take along her Bookbug pack to the family. Each week she visited she would bring out the “You Choose” book and as the family had a cat the befriender was able to attract the boy to the book by searching for the cat, since there is apparently a picture of the cat on every page. This then attracted him to the book and they would sit together looking for the cat. The befriender then was able to introduce other books to him, although he would select the “You Choose” book every week; then they would read a few others.

Each time we met with the family for a review, we asked the family about how the little one was engaging with books, Mum said he still was not interested. This continued for 6 months of visits. The befriender gifted a book to the little boy at Christmas and it was the “You Choose” book. During a review with the family the Mum said that he had lain beside her for 20 mins, looking through a book. Previously the child had little speech and language and has started using the name of the cat in the book along with other objects such as bus, sheep, etc. Mum has been introducing books in the evening and other members of the family have also been doing this, which has been calming down the little boy when he gets frustrated. The family have gone from no reading/story time to 4 times a week.

Heather McKie represented HLFS at the 2015 COSLA awards. The Big Bedtime Read team were awarded the Silver Award. Well done to everyone who took part.

6 Christmas Gifts in 2014

For the past 2 years we have worked in partnership with Fresh Start and Scott Moncrieff to enable the vulnerable children we support to receive a gift at Christmas. Once again we were truly amazed by the generosity of the Scott Moncrieff staff members. Thank you for your continued support.



The arrival of the gifts

7 Bookbug

We have an established partnership with the Scottish Book Trust and have had 60% of our volunteers trained to date in the Bookbug Assertive Outreach Programme. This has enabled our volunteers to feel confident to introduce books to children and their parents, and to know how to tell a story so a child remains engaged.



8 Swimming lessons

Thanks to the funding from the Lottery Commonwealth Games Fund we were able to encourage our families to take up swimming lessons and attend family swimming sessions. To date, 10 families have accessed lessons and 100 family sessions have been accessed across Edinburgh and Midlothian.

9 Fundraising 2014-15

We have been fortunate this year to be so well supported with many funders and amazing donations.

We would like to say a special thank you to Danny Bhoj and his "12 Nights 12 Charities" gigs during the Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2014. Danny donated an impressive £75,000 to the 12 charities.



Karen Murray (right), a long term family support volunteer, ran the Edinburgh Marathon! She fundraised £1015.



10 Guest Speaker Opportunities

Paula Swanston was asked to present at the European Mentoring and Befriending Programme, sharing good practice in befriending.

We were also given the great privilege of presenting to the City of Edinburgh Council Members in March, as a guest of the Lord Provost. Paula Swanston talked about the challenges of the voluntary sector and the success of the organisation in the last 29 years.



YEAR *in* NUMBERS

18,864

Volunteer hours provided

304

Children supported

7,680

Home visits provided

30

New volunteers recruited

163

Families supported

Full time equivalent staff members employed **8.7**

53

Funders and donors who donated

£122,616

Economic value of volunteer hours

63

Network of volunteers maintained

Our Core Work undertaken in 2014-15

1 Antenatal Support Service

Launched in March 2014, as a pilot, this is an innovative specialist befriending service recognising the earlier we get involved in a child's life the bigger impact we can have in making a difference. We supported 12 families during 2014-15 with an impressive 7 babies supported to stay with their parents or working towards being returned home, who were at risk of being accommodated.

The Aims and Objectives

- 1 Strengthen universal antenatal care and early years services, especially for vulnerable children and families
- 2 Reduce the need for children and young people to become Looked After
- 3 Improve support for children and young people Looked after at Home to reduce the need for children to become accommodated

Measured Interventions

- > Increase the number of families receiving support and capacity building activities

2 The Young Parents Support Service

The service, launched in January 2015, covers all of Midlothian and offers support to parents under 25 who have a child under 3 and where Health and Social Work professionals have identified that there are significant barriers to being able to provide the child with a safe, secure and supportive environment

The Delivery Model

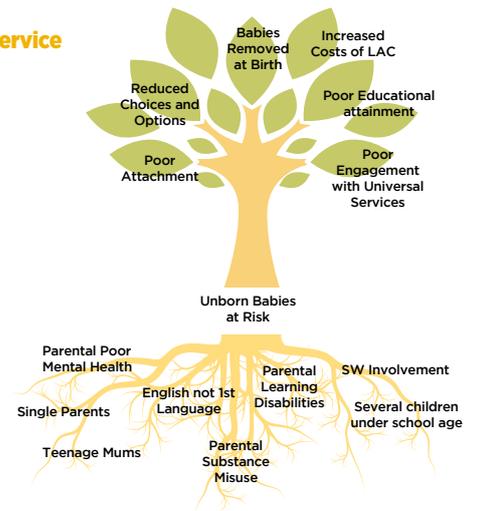
- > One-to-one in home support from a volunteer for up to 3 hours per week for 12–18 months
- > Help to access external supports provided by existing universal services
- > Identification of other appropriate resources within the community and support and encouragement to access these
- > Support to work towards child plan if this is in place
- > Priority is given to families from Midlothian's CPP 3 priority areas of Gorebridge, Mayfield and Dalkeith, although we also support families across Midlothian.

Antenatal Support Service Situation Tree

What May Happen

The Situation

Factors Affecting Risk



Quality Improvement Interventions

- > Improved early support for vulnerable families
- > Improved flexibility and availability of support provision



An example of how we have helped a young parent.

Claire is 22 and lives with her 3 year old daughter Chloe. She was referred to the service by her health visitor. Claire has depression and is currently on medication for this and is receiving support from her GP. She is desperate to move out of her current property and has had issues with her neighbours who are very noisy and often have lots of people visiting and loud parties. Claire is very anxious when taking Chloe out on her own as she worries about being able to keep her safe or who they might meet and so often stays in the house.

Her family live in the next town, which is a bus journey away, and she often feels very isolated and lonely. Her dad is an alcoholic which means that her family are not always able to be as supportive as Claire would like. She has recently split up with her partner (Chloe's dad) who Claire reports was quite controlling and emotionally abusive in the past. The family had Social Work involvement on a voluntary basis last year due to the condition of the family home. This has improved with the support of the Volunteer introducing basic household routines.

Claire was matched with Sarah. The initial focus of the match was to support Claire to take Chloe out and offer emotional support to Claire, who has now started to build a relationship with Sarah. She feels she can trust her and has been sharing how she is feeling. Sarah visits the family in the late afternoon/early evening so has started to support their tea time and bedtime routine. Sarah has been showing Claire some simple meal ideas and recipes. Sarah has also been encouraging them to eat together at the table as a family.

When the weather is good they have been making short trips to the local park and other local amenities. Claire is beginning to feel more confident to go out of the house and things have settled down with her neighbour. Sarah has also started to support Claire with Chloe's bedtime routines and has been bringing storybooks to the visit which they have been reading together at bedtime. Sarah is going to start helping Claire look at classes or courses in the local area. We are working to help integrate the family into local community resources to help build their resilience so that in the future they are more likely to ask for help rather than let a crisis deteriorate.

3 Systemic Family Counselling Service

What is it?

Systemic Family Counselling:

- > Working systemically with families to talk about problems they are experiencing
- > Ensuring that each family member is given a voice
- > A time to talk together as a family about their concerns
- > Taking away the culture of blame enabling members to look at the family as a whole system
- > A resource for finding new ways of handling old problems
- > The sessions take place within the family home and usually last about one hour

Who is it for?

- > Any family who is concerned about a current difficulty in their family
- > The whole family together or individual family members
- > Families who would like to change their family relationships

How can it help?

- > Improve communication between family members by allowing everyone to have a say
- > Identify strengths already within the family
- > Help families find solutions to their problems and build positive relationships with each other

Number of people supported 2014-15

29 families

72 children

43 adults

Where the referrals have come from in 2014-15

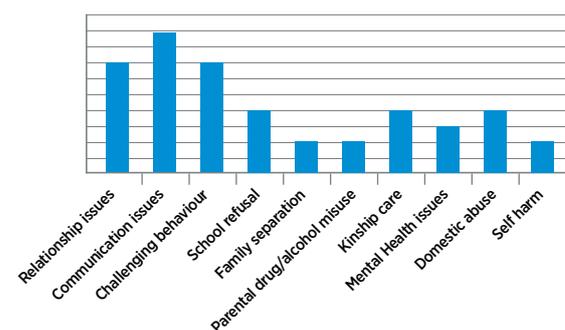
21 from Social Work

6 from HLFS

1 Self referral

2 from Education

Reasons for referral in 2014-15



We have improved family communication, functioning and difficulties by **65%** this year.



This Case Study gives a flavour of the support provided.

Diane (mother), Andy (father), Lynn (14) and Michael (12) This family was referred for Systemic Family Counselling by a Family Support Worker with Social Work who had been working with the family for a few months regarding Michael's challenging behaviour and how the family were coping with it. Michael's behaviour was aggressive in the family home, mainly towards property, and he had difficulty accepting boundaries and rules within the home. He was also undergoing assessment for ADHD.

Systemic Practice is a therapeutic approach which includes, usually, all family members; or at least family members living in the same household. It encourages the family members to sit together and discuss problems and anxieties that they have and it enables each to share from their own perspective. Systemic Practice explores relationships and dynamics within the family and it enables each member to have a voice and be heard and work together to look at change. It does not apportion blame to any one member but looks at the problem within the whole family system. It also highlights the positives with family life and does not become saturated in problem narrative only.

It did take about six sessions for the family to stop projecting all negative feelings onto Michael and realise that all members had to be responsible for their own behaviour. Using art therapy techniques the family were asked to draw their own self and place it on a sheet of paper that represents their family as it is now. The family were then asked to draw their own self again, place the image on a piece of paper showing how they would like the family to be. This exercise demonstrated a close representation of how the family were now but more importantly how much they all wanted change, especially Michael. Using image-making the family were able to be responsible for their self and start the process of self-reflection. They were amazed how they all wanted the same future family and from this we could start to look at how this could be achieved.

Throughout the sessions tension between Andy and Michael was clearly evident. Andy was a quiet man and found it difficult to speak up in the sessions. Building trusting relationships is crucial in therapy and Andy slowly began to find his voice. He was able to share how difficult and abusive his childhood had been and how similar Michael was to him. He said that he didn't really know how to be a 'good parent' to Michael as he had never had a good experience himself. This felt another critical moment in the therapeutic process as Andy was admitting his part in the family dynamics and both Michael and Lynn were able to hear this.

Although it took some time, Andy and Michael started doing some activities together and Michael's behaviour did improve greatly.

4 The Family Support Service

101 families were matched with a family support volunteer in 2014-15

- > A total of 208 children benefited from the support of a family support volunteer
- > The outcomes achieved as the result of having a family support volunteer
- > Parents' improvement in parenting skills = 75%
- > Families supported who felt that their feeling of isolation reduced = 70%
- > Families who felt that their general health and well being had improved = 57%
- > Families who felt they were coping better after the support of a volunteer = 74%
- > Families who felt that their relationships were better = 60%
- > Families who had felt they had achieved their own outcome = 62%

The support offered is varied but has a general theme of supporting the parent and child relationship, encouraging child development, linking families in to long-term local services, supporting parents to be the best that they can. The reasons for referral have included parental stress, practical help, housing issues, parenting skills, special needs, family separation, child emotional health, domestic abuse, social and emotional isolation and child protection.

5 Volunteers delivering face-to-face support

Our volunteers are truly amazing; without them we could not make sure that so many vulnerable children and their families get the support when they really need it. We are committed to making volunteering with us a positive experience providing regular support and supervision and ongoing training opportunities. We evaluate how we are doing and ask the volunteers to score themselves every 3 months. You will see from the volunteer feedback across all our befriending services that they feel valued and are getting something back for themselves.

- > Volunteers feeling satisfied with volunteering = 81%
- > Volunteers feeling connected to the local community as a result of volunteering = 65%
- > Volunteers feeling they are achieving /have achieved their own outcome = 64%
- > Volunteers who feel that their self-esteem and confidence has improved as a result of volunteering with us = 72%
- > Volunteers who feel ready to return to work and have improved their skills in supporting children and their families = 83%
- > Volunteers who feel they have more understanding of the issues facing children and their families = 84%

Future developments 2015-17 to enhance service capacity

We are collaborating with all the voluntary Children and Families services within the City of Edinburgh who use volunteers as part of their support to families to create a shared network of additional training resources across the city. This will enhance the skills of our volunteers which will in turn have an impact upon the quality of the support the families referred will receive.

We intend to expand the service area of the Antenatal Support Service to become city wide covering all of Edinburgh from June 2015, allowing families in the north of the city to benefit from support.

The 2 year initial funding of the Young Parents Support Service in Midlothian will allow us to support the most vulnerable children, improving their chances of getting the best possible start in life, helping reduce the waiting list we have for the general Family Support Service in Midlothian.

Our Excellence in Befriending award is up for renewal in December 2015 and we are already working towards achieving this quality assurance award from Befriending Networks.

We are also planning to refocus our volunteer service to take on a family learning approach ensuring alignment with Early Years policy and practice, as directed by Scottish Government through the Early Years Collaborative. Volunteers will be trained to support families to engage more with reading to help develop language and to underline the importance of play in child development and in assisting parents to recognise their role in helping their child to learn.



Finance

Income and Expenditure Accounts

	2015	2014
	£	£
Income		
Charitable Resources Grants	310,890	270,112
Voluntary Income	58,225	33,194
Investment Income	787	780
Total Income	369,902	304,086
Expenditure		
Charitable Activities, Direct Support Costs	311,713	284,834
Governance	4,836	4,080
Total Expenditure	316,549	288,914
Surplus/(Deficit) for Year	53,353	15,172

	2015	2014
	£	£
Balance Sheet		
Fixed Assets	1,323	2,665
Current Assets	296,343	170,773
Current Liabilities	99,717	(28,842)
Net Current Assets	196,626	141,931
Net Total Assets	197,949	144,596

The performance of Home Link Family Support has been impressive in 2014-15. A surplus of £53,353 was generated (Prior year: £15,172) based on income of £369,902. (PY: £304,086)

Midlothian continues to be Home Link Family Support's largest funder, contributing £157,520 (PY: £147,020). Home Link Family Support also received significant levels of funding from:

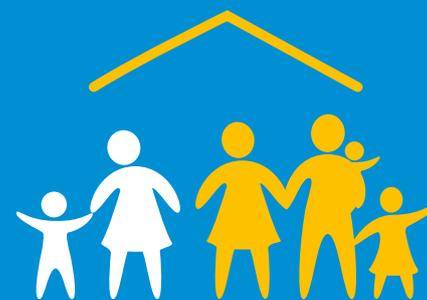
- > £48,373 City of Edinburgh Council (PY £51,533)
- > £9,298 BBC Children in Need (PY £18,654)
- > £92,699 Donations from trusts and individuals (PY: £33,194)

Home Link Family Support continues to have a strong balance sheet with total reserves of £197,949 (PY: £144,596) made up of unrestricted reserves of £152,764 (PY: £103,078) and restricted reserves of £45,185 (PY: £41,518). We will continue to monitor the level of unrestricted reserves to ensure that the organisation is equipped to deal with the economic uncertainty which lies ahead.

The Board of Directors are confident that Home Link Family Support is well placed to meet the financial challenges which face all charitable organisations. Home Link Family Support has already secured the majority of its 2015-16 funding and the Board are confident that the management and staff team is well placed to continue to provide the excellent services which have built Home Link Family Support's reputation.

Dave Kerr

TREASURER



Board Members at October 2015

Alan Morrison	Chairperson
Chris Kelly	Vice Chair
Dave Kerr	Treasurer
David Mason	
Emma Jamieson	
Nicky Yarrow	
Rosemary Millar	

Non Board member

Paula Swanston	Secretary
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Board members who retired during the year

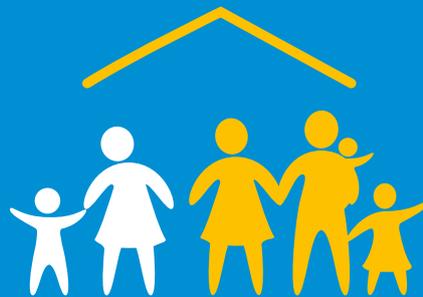
Phil Watt	Chairperson
Mark Smith	Secretary
Judith Matheson	
Marion Dunbar	
Callum Chomczuk	
Grant Sugden	

Staff members at October 2015

Paula Swanston	Manager
Liz Pattinson	Finance Officer
Jane Ellis	Volunteer Officer
Sheena Smith	Senior Practitioner
Helen Gault	Antenatal Service Coordinator
Amanda Vickery	South East Edinburgh Project Worker
Heather McKie	Midlothian Project Worker
Georgia Koutousi	South West Edinburgh Project Worker
Liz Notarangelo	Systemic Practitioner Midlothian
Rachel Campbell	Young Parent Support Service Coordinator
Wendy Fraser	Midlothian Family Support Worker

Staff members who left us during the year

Maggie Dickson	Systemic Practitioner Midlothian
Jenny Fardell	Family Support Worker



Home Link Family Support

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Scottish Charity No SC001360 | Company No 229797

Funders 2014-15

On behalf of the Board, staff, volunteers and the families we support we would like to give our sincere thanks and appreciation to all our funders and donors this year. Without your support we would not have been able to help so many vulnerable children and their families.

Albert Hunt Trust
BBC Children in Need
Binks Trust
Casa Stella
Cattanach Charitable Trust
City of Edinburgh Council
CM Lowe
Cruach Trust
Cruden Foundation
D & C Harding Foundation
Danny Bhoj
Dave Kerr
Dr Mike Wilson
Everyclick
EVOC Early Years
Give-a -Car: Gary Ashley
Jenny Lowe

Karen Murray
Katherine MacKenzie
Kelly Family Charitable Trust
Kennedy Charitable Trust
Lloyds Bank -Henry Duncan Awards
Lottery Commonwealth Games Fund
M Murdoch
Mickel Fund
Midlothian Council
Nancie Massey Charitable Trust
Nancy Roberts Charitable Trust
Nigel Bruce Charitable Trust
Paterson Logan Charitable Trust
People's Postcode Lottery Trust
Pleasance Trust
Ponton House Trust

Robertson Trust
RS Macdonald Charitable Trust
Ryvoan Trust
Sir Ian Stewart Foundation
Sir James Miller Trust
SMB Trust
Souter Charitable Trust
Stirling University
Tabhair
The Big Lottery Fund
The Bridging Fund Charitable Trust
The University of Edinburgh
Thirkleby Trust
Thistledown Trust
Volant Charitable Trust
Widowers' Children's Home Trust