

cyrenians

Impact Report 2023



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FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Welcome to our 2023 Impact Report. Within it, I hope you'll find out something about us you didn't know before, a story that connects with you or a reason to support our work if you don't already.

Scotland is facing a housing crisis. Last year, more people presented as homeless than ever before and the numbers of people in temporary accommodation waiting for a home have never been higher. The pandemic and lockdowns took a disproportionately negative toll on the resilience, financial stability and mental health of individuals and communities who were already struggling. This has been compounded by the cost-of-living crisis and spiralling housing costs. Meanwhile, budgets for vital public services for those in need have never been tighter. And after years of missed targets for new social housing, there are simply not enough affordable homes. The Scottish Housing Regulator is now warning of the risk of "systemic failure" in our housing system.

So how do we deal with the crisis?

It was Desmond Tutu who said, *"There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in."*

We know from decades of experience that homelessness is so often a late marker of a range of difficult life experiences such as childhood poverty, trauma, abuse, relationship breakdown and poor mental and physical health. So our response to the housing crisis has to be trauma-informed and mindful of the many pathways into homelessness, which is why we work in so many services across health, education, the justice system, social care and housing provision.

To get upstream to prevent adverse experiences from happening in the first place, we are steadily influencing government and statutory bodies to enact the changes that will make all the difference. In the meantime, we need to intervene where the system has failed but before the crisis occurs. This is what we mean when we say we take a public health approach to homelessness prevention.

Despite the challenges we face, I am warmed every day to work with such a fantastic team of people who live our values.

We meet people where they are, see them as people not "a problem" and support them towards where they want to be. We know that takes time and trust. We go onto the streets and into homes, to prisons, hospitals, workplaces. We open the doors to our communal houses, our kitchens and the gates to our gardens. We are frontline, face-to-face, hand in hand, day after day.

This year we have structured our report around the three key areas in which we work: Homelessness **Prevention; Moving on** (helping people recover from homelessness) and **Change** and within each section we share a story from someone we've worked with in the last year and how their time with us has changed their lives.

We hope that you will join us to help turn the tide on homelessness.

Thanks for reading.

Ewan Aitken
Chief Executive Officer



A white handwritten signature of Ewan Aitken on a teal background.

WHO WE ARE AND HOW WE WORK

Cyrenians has been tackling the causes and consequences of homelessness for over 50 years. We do this through building trusted relationships.

Formed in Edinburgh in 1968 by a group of concerned citizens, Cyrenians brought together men experiencing homelessness with willing volunteers to live alongside each other in a previously disused property in the heart of the city. Sharing experience, life skills and kindness, the house became not only an essential living space, but a home. This radical new model worked. It helped those men move towards more stable lives, breaking the cycle of homelessness, and became the foundation on which the rest of our organisation was built upon.

Today we are much larger. We employed 198 staff in the last financial year and now operate five residential communities, which still operate on the same ethos and volunteer-led model. In the financial year 2022/23, these communities provided a home to over 70 people, including 44 young people aged between 16 and 25 years.

Across the organisation, we now deliver 63 services covering seven local authorities across South East and Central Scotland as well as five national services.

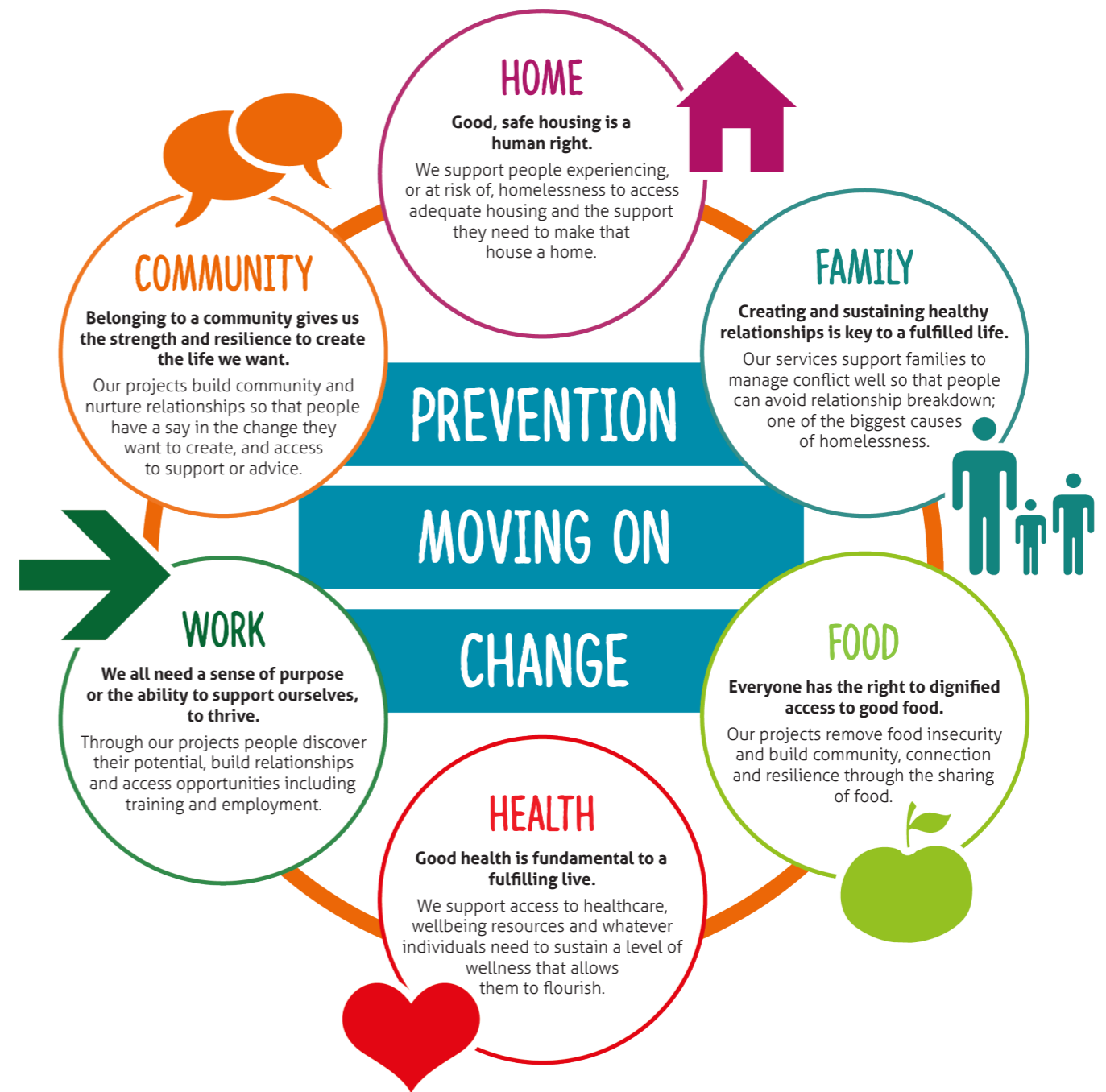
These services, which range from supported housing, outreach and family support work to food pantries and food education projects, supported over 10,800 people in the last year.

The work that we do not only aims to support those who are currently homeless or on the edges of homelessness, but also to prevent individuals and families from becoming homeless in the future.

Our volunteers are essential to our work. Each of our individual and corporate volunteers who donated time, experience and skills, help shape and become part of our success. From residential workers to volunteer drivers, from gardeners to administrative workers, volunteers make our work possible; their diverse skills, experience and lives enrich Cyrenians as a whole.

We couldn't do our work without the support of the hundreds who contribute every year.

Below: Graphic representing the key areas in which we work and the environments are services operate in





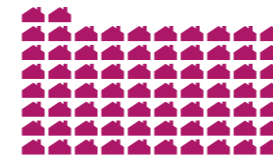
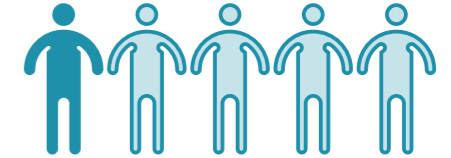
OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS



In the last year, we directly supported **10,800 people** in their time of need



50% of the people we supported were women, and **1 in 5** were under 25



Our residential communities offered a home to **72 people**



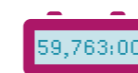
431 young people have been supported through our programmes and services to continue in education, gain qualifications, develop their skills and grow their confidence



Our work with the over 60s supported **1673 people** to live well in their homes and be socially connected



84p in every pound raised for Cyrenians was spent on our frontline work



460 volunteers gifted a total of **59,763 hours** to help us make a difference



We created opportunities for **199 frontline workers** to have their say on policy and practice through the Scottish Frontline Network



We redirected **2 million meals-worth** of good-to-eat surplus food from landfill, reducing hunger and supporting over **170 projects and services** to bring people together through lunch clubs, breakfast clubs, pantries and other community food initiatives



We received **3,575 visits** to our Community Pantries, offering dignified access to quality food

Opposite: Githa Overton, Mediator, Cyrenians Mediation and Support. Photo by Phil Wilkinson

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

While poverty is the biggest single predictor of homelessness, it occurs most commonly as a result of household disputes (violent and non-violent). Anyone, at any age, can be vulnerable to losing their home as a result of conflict in the space where they should feel safe and secure but we know that it's the young, specifically those under the age of 18, who are most vulnerable.

Responding to the drivers of people losing their homes, we deliver services which build relationships, keep people connected, develop employability skills and prevent routes into homelessness.

Working with young people in care as part of our work with The Promise, and those in kinship care, we strive to strengthen relationships via our family and support services and by offering young people and their families the skills they need to manage conflict and communicate effectively through the work of the SCCR (Scottish Centre for Conflict Resolution).

We run learning and work programmes for young people who might have disengaged from education, as well as adults who are struggling, to help them get their lives back on track. We offer activities, work placements and support that enable people of all age groups to realise their potential and reduce the risk of them becoming homeless or entering the criminal justice system in the future.

As well as strengthening family and community connections and tackling food poverty to build universal resilience against homelessness, our range of specialist services provide relationship-based support to people at higher risk of homelessness. This includes women experiencing domestic abuse, people in the criminal justice system, people who are isolated, veterans, those with poor mental health and people with addictions.

Below: Amy Rumney, Lotus Community Volunteer.
Photo by Phil Wilkinson



ETIVE'S STORY

19-year old Etive self-referred to Cyrenians in the summer of 2022.

I'd describe my family as 'very dysfunctional'. I try to limit the fallout that my younger siblings deal with and take the heat off them – I've had to grow up fast.

When I finished school, I didn't feel able to go to college yet, because remote learning was really difficult for me. So I was just sitting around – I wasn't leaving the house, but being home was unbearable.

I needed out, but I had nowhere to go. I went to a youth homelessness service, but at the last minute I panicked and walked out. I thought "I'm not on the street, they're going to ask, 'why are you here?'" I tried to talk to a doctor about how depressed I was, and he said, "you're not depressed, you're in a bad situation."

I don't know what would have happened if I hadn't found Cyrenians.

I come into their community space really regularly now, so I'm getting out of the house and getting some structure in my day. They've helped me to apply for support and they even make sure I eat every day. Everything's that bit more manageable, and they're so encouraging – I want to work in the arts and that actually feels like a possibility now.

It's not just practical stuff. I feel heard, and there's no judgement. I can be myself and figure myself out. I'm accessing counselling through Cyrenians that I wouldn't be able to afford privately, and I can do it from a place where I feel safe and supported. It's scary, but positive.

They're encouraging me to do stuff that matters to me and to ask for help when I need it. I'm not really used to this amount of positive feedback. It's overwhelming in the best way possible.

I'm still not ok yet, but there's a future for me now. Whatever I end up doing, I know I'll have support with it.





OUR PREVENTION IMPACT

Our prevention activity includes skills development and training for people of all ages.

At our Cook School in Leith, we provide training to achieve industry accreditations as well as paid and voluntary work opportunities. Sandy (pictured far left) did three cookery courses and completed his food hygiene certificates at the Cook School. The week after he received his certificates, he started volunteering at the Cook School and has been cooking at the weekly Thursday lunch club for over eight years.

Our work with the under 25s has supported over 431 young people through our programmes and services to continue in education, gain qualifications, develop their skills and grow their confidence. Of these, 71% achieved a positive destination (education, training or employment). These include cookery courses in our **Good Food Programme**, helping young people secure places in further education through our **Key to College Programme**, or learn new skills in our **Creative Natives** project.

"We're in tears laughing all the time when we're cooking. And we have a sense of pride in what we're doing. Seeing people loving what you're doing because a lot of love and pride goes into the food as well"

Sandy, a volunteer at the Cyrenians Cook School



Last year thirteen young people moved on from our residential communities into a home of their own.

"Being in the communities is the safest I have ever felt"
City/Farm community member

Opposite: Cyrenians Cook School volunteers preparing for Thursday lunch club. Photo by Sue O'Neill-Berest

Across our conflict resolution and mediation services, 245 young people have attended our conflict resolution training sessions and 239 young people and 228 parents and carers have accessed training or support to better manage relationships in the home. Our Keeping Families Together service – which supports children (12+) in secure care and their families – worked with 45 young people and 11 families last year.

Our work to support the over 60s to live well in their homes and be socially connected within their communities supported 1673 people.



MOVING ON

Through our outreach work and our addictions services we meet people facing tough realities where they are and support them towards where they want to be.

We understand that there are many routes into homelessness, and that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to supporting people towards more positive and stable futures. That's why all our work is values-led and relationship-based.

Our services, including Housing First in the Borders, offer people the wraparound, sustained support they need to maintain a home of their own. Last year, none of the people receiving case work support from our street outreach team in the City of Edinburgh have returned to rough sleeping.

We work in hospitals and with health services to identify people who are homeless and make sure that they have somewhere safe to go when they're discharged.

Our Community Gardens focus on welcoming people experiencing mental or physical health problems, disadvantage, involvement in the criminal justice system, isolation or poverty. The gardens offer people fantastic opportunities to grow, socialise and improve general health and wellbeing.



ANDY'S STORY

Andy came into contact with Cyrenians in December 2019. Whilst in treatment with Lothians and Edinburgh Abstinence Programme (LEAP), Andy came along to an Edinburgh Recovery Activities (ERA) Christmas Party. He now regularly attends and volunteers to help with ERA events, including the meetings of its Fishing Group.

Childhood was quite scary for me. There was a lot of violence and a lot of bullying. I started using alcohol and drugs when I was pretty young to deal with that. By the time I was a teenager I was fully addicted to alcohol, and drugs followed not many years later.

It's not a good way to live. I spent time in prison, I spent time sleeping rough. It reached a point where I felt there was no way out and I tried to take my own life. My Mum found me.

The thing is that rehab is just the start of the recovery journey. Cyrenians gets that. I've been clean now for three years, but every morning when I wake up my addiction is waiting at the end of the bed for me. That's why the Cyrenians' recovery community is so important for me. It's amazing that we can help each other. We have walking groups, fishing groups – whatever you're into, you can do it. And I can help people who are earlier on in their recovery journey. People see that I'm clean and I'm happy and they might think "I want a bit of that".

My wife and I, we don't have a lot of money and we kinda accept that, but this last winter was brutal. I know what it's like to be homeless so I'm so grateful for the house, but there is a lot

of pressure that comes with that. We had the energy company on the phone to us every day, chasing us for debt. There's no doubt in my mind that if I didn't have Mick from Cyrenians to talk to and if I didn't have the community to support me, I would be straight back on the drink.

Cyrenians helped us get a grant to pay off the energy company, which really helped. But the most important thing is having people to speak to. They helped me realise that there's better ways to deal with problems. I feel lighter.

It's tough in the community man. Lots of people just die too soon. There was twelve of us went through rehab at the same time, and there are only five of us left alive now. It's rough because you really form a bond with these people. There's a huge stigma around drug addiction, but I wish people would realise that we're good people. Having a community of people who understand matters so much. We did a memory walk for the families who have lost people to overdoses and that. We threw flowers in the river for the people we want to remember. You couldn't see the water, only flowers for a long time. I wish people could see that.



Opposite: Andy and his prize pike, caught and released on a Fishing Group trip in March 2023

SUPPORTING RECOVERY

In 2022/23, we supported 72 people experiencing or leaving street homelessness

"How can you get better sleeping in a doorway?"

Feedback from our services



We helped 43 people to access support including emergency accommodation and four people to maintain permanent accommodation after experiencing street homelessness.

We supported 462 people experiencing homelessness into appropriate accommodation on their discharge from hospital. 372 of these patients were provided with essentials (clothes, phones etc) to support their engagement with inpatient treatment and safe discharge.

As part of our therapeutic recovery work, we had over 10,000 visitors to our Community Gardens at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital, the Midlothian Community Hospital in Dalkeith and the Walled Garden at Dollar Park in Falkirk.



"You literally saved my life. I was sitting in my bed thinking 'I have nowhere to stay, and when they tell me to leave I will be on the streets in winter and won't survive the cold or I will have to start using again and that would be it for me'. Then you came into the ward to offer your service and it was like being sent an angel to look out for me."

Feedback from our Hospital In-Reach service

In the last year, Edinburgh Recovery Activities (ERA) had 3146 visitors and recorded nearly 750 volunteer hours. This is a growing number with new people attending and taking part on a weekly basis.

41 people were supported by the Lothian and Edinburgh Abstinence Project (LEAP).

106 people were supported by our Justice Employability Project in Falkirk, that helps people to prepare for, seek out and sustain future employment.



CHANGE

We are working together to drive system change to bring about a fairer Scotland for all where homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring.

Our work in this area includes our policy and participation work, working with All in for Change and the Scottish Frontline Network. These projects centre people with lived and professional experience of homelessness and seek to influence policy and practice in a collaborative and solutions-focused way. In the last year, 110 people contributed to the National Conversation hosted by All in for Change, and 199 people working in the sector attended our Scottish Frontline Network events and training sessions.

We are always eager to work together with partners from other organisations and use the collective voice of the sector to affect change. We do this through local partnerships such as SHAPE (Strategic Homeless Action Partnership in Edinburgh), and nationally through the Everyone Home Collective where Cyrenians has active participants in the influencing work of the collective by supporting campaigns and giving evidence to the Scottish Parliament.

We also used our experience of delivering upstream, prevention-focused services to work with partners across different public bodies and develop key recommendations on new homelessness prevention duties proposed by Scottish Government.

Below: Members of All in for Change at a meeting with Minister for Housing, Paul McLennan

OUR WORK TO KEEP THE PROMISE

Cyrenians is proud to work in partnership with The Promise so that all of Scotland's children and young people will grow up loved, safe and respected. Our Chief Executive Ewan Aitken is a member of The Promise Oversight Board, where he represents our commitment to care experienced children and young people having the right to safe and secure homes throughout their lives.

We have been part of the first steps to secure positive outcomes for care experienced children and young people in Plan 21-24 and we will continue to be part of the push to achieve The Promise by 2030. The Promise Scotland Plan 21-24 highlights five priority areas, and states that "all children in Scotland's 'care system' will have a good, loving childhood. They will feel loved. They will have their needs met. And their rights upheld." It also states that to realise a child's rights, you have to support their whole family.

Across Cyrenians, we've been upskilling staff in using child rights-based approaches and have created an organisational Child Rights Wellbeing impact Assessment. We have also been actively engaging with the young people who use our services, listening and responding to their voices and supporting them to participate in the decision-making spaces across our organisation.

Below: Young residents from our City Community at a bushcraft outdoor learning session with Sam Gardiner, Outdoor Education Officer



JOHN'S STORY

John Conway works with Cyrenians as Development Lead for Lived Experience at The Edinburgh Access Place (TAP). The role was developed in recognition of the importance of listening to and responding to the voices of people with lived experience so that we can create trauma-informed, person-centred services. Through the course of his work, John and his colleagues are evaluating standards – like the MAT (Medication Assisted Treatment) standards – to improve the experience of those accessing treatment, shaping service delivery and influencing change.

I'm a voice for the service users. My role is to gather data from people who use our service to help influence and shape the service delivery. I want every person who comes in to feel safe, listened to and respected.

At the start of doing this work, and because of my background, I didn't know how I was going to be received, but all of my colleagues have recognised what I have to contribute. I've got a 360-degree view of services, from using the services myself for years to now working in them. I know how difficult and how challenging it is to walk through the doors of these services. I have good insight. And I've seen lots of decisions being turned around with what I had to say. My job is to be a voice for people and to influence decision-making to have system change so we can adapt our ways of working to support the people who are coming through the doors.

Working with Cyrenians has been amazing from day one. I've been fully nurtured, fully invested in and fully listened to. I've been given the freedom to express myself in what I do, which I

really love. If I'm left, I will get on and do what I need to do and so much more, not to do what I want but I'm trusted by my colleagues. My connections across the Recovery community are huge and I'm left to use my initiative and my connections. It's been one of the best experiences of my life to come in to work with an organisation that has the same heart as me, that walks alongside and supports people until they can manage by themselves.

One of the highlights in my job after four years is interviewing people to join us as key worker trainees (lived experience), and giving them a chance, to train them up and invest in people that I know have had a tough gig and I know they have so much to offer. And to walk alongside that, it's come full circle for me. Giving back the experiences that I've learned that will hopefully nurture and support other people to come and do the same thing. To help them understand that there is hope.

There are people that will nurture, listen to you and invest in you. I just want to do what Cyrenians has done for me.



VOLUNTEER AND BE PART OF THE CHANGE WE NEED TO SEE

Our thanks to all our volunteers, including our corporate volunteers, who generously give their time and their skills to support the work that we do across our services and our social enterprises.

Volunteering at Cyrenians is a great way to meet new people, learn new skills, give back to the community and boost your confidence. We have a range of opportunities available across Central and South East Scotland, which are flexible to fit around the time that our volunteers are able to give. Please get in touch today to chat about how you can get involved!

For more information, contact volunteer@cyrenians.scot

Below: Staff from The Alchemist volunteering at the Cyrenians Fareshare Depot in Leith. Photo by Ross Groves



FROM OUR CHAIR

"Since I joined the Board of Cyrenians over a decade ago, the charity has doubled in size and expanded its reach significantly. Today we are able to help more people than ever before who were homeless or at risk of homelessness.

We cannot do this without the idealism and commitment of our supporters, our staff, and our volunteers who give their time so generously. For the future, we need to ensure that our services are effective in helping people at risk of homelessness to avoid ever getting to that stage."

John Lawrie, OBE

Our thanks to John and all of our current trustees – Dr Deborah Benson, Veronika Gunn-Boesch, Elinor Jayne, James Johnstone, Angela Leitch, Peter Lloyd, Viv Monaghan and Isobel Wylie – who generously give their time and experience.

We are also grateful to Kirsty Bathgate – our former Chair who stepped down earlier this year after eight years on our Board including four years as Chair – and to Peter Flockhart, Carolyn Girvan and Ciaran McGuigan who also stepped down as trustees in the last year.



SUPPORTERS

Thank you to all of our trust, corporate and statutory supporters for making a difference. We could not do what we do without your generous support.

Artemis
Albert Hunt Trust
Alliance (Health and Social Care)
Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust
Ashfield Trust – Edinburgh
Baillie Gifford
The Barcapel Foundation
Barrack Charitable Trust
Basil Death Trust
Befriending Networks
Blackrock
British Science Week
Capital City Partnership
Capricorn Energy
Cashback for Communities Phase 5
Cattanach
Charles Hayward Foundation
City of Edinburgh Council
Community Jobs Scotland
The Communities Recovery Fund (Adapt & Thrive)
Cordis Trust
The Corra Foundation
Cost of Living Support Fund (National Lottery)
Criminal justice – Edinburgh
Cruden Foundation

Denny Women's Guild
Dr & Mrs Olav Kerr's Charitable Trust
Dr Guthrie's Association
East Lothian Council
Edinburgh Access Practice (Peer Mentor Project)
Edinburgh Alcohol and Drug Partnership
Edinburgh Integrated Joint Board
Eildon Housing Association
Enterprising Bathgate
Ernest Cook Trust
Essential Edinburgh
Falkirk Archaeological and Natural History Society
Falkirk Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund
Falkirk Council
Falkirk Health Inequalities Fund
Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership
Falkirk Homeless Project
Falkirk Justice
Falkirk Employability Training Unit
Food Charity Support Fund Edinburgh Council
GambleAware
GMB Scotland
Green Hall Foundation
Hello Fresh
Improvement Fund

International Lyceum Club of Edinburgh
John Watson's Trust
JTH Charitable Trust
Kickstart
Leith Benevolent Association
Meikle Foundation (formally Martin Connell)
Merchant Company
Midlothian Council
Misses Robinson Charitable Trust
Murdoch Forrest Charitable Trust
Nancie Massey Charitable Trust
National Lottery Community Fund
NHS Lothian
NHS Lothian Charity
Patron Capital
The Promise Partnership
Queen Margaret University
Real Farming Trust
Royal Edinburgh Associated Services (REAS)
R S Macdonald Charitable Trust
Riada Trust
Resonance Ltd
Robertson Group
Ryvoan Trust
Scotland Loves Local Fund

Scottish Adoption
Scottish Borders Council
Scottish Government
Scottish Children's Lottery
SCVO
Social Bite (Social Bite Village)
Sodexo
St Martin in the Fields (All in For Change)
St James Church Leith
Tesco Charity Trust Community Awards
Third Sector Early Intervention Fund
Thrive Edinburgh
UK Government
UK Shared Prosperity Fund
Veterans Foundation
Voluntary Sector Development Fund
Walter Scott & Partners Ltd
Ward Family Charitable Trust
West Lothian Council
William Grant Foundation
Wilson Christie Fund
Young Person's Guarantee



We would also like to thank all the generous and loyal individual donors who have contributed to our cause this year, as well as to the dedicated community fundraisers who have organised events and fundraising in aid of Cyrenians.

- **196** generous individuals made an ongoing commitment to tackling homelessness with a regular donation
- Over **187** kind individuals and groups came together and participated in a fundraising event
- **36** companies, groups and individuals gifted priority items and services
- **239** donors supported our annual appeals
- An outstanding contribution of **1,448** volunteer hours was made by **362** employees from local businesses who participated in one of our team volunteering days
- **369** supporters attended a Cyrenians event.

Opposite, above: Cyrenians staff and supporters who ran in this year's Edinburgh Marathon, June 2023

Opposite, below: Cyrenians staff and supporters who took part in the Edinburgh Kiltwalk, September 2023



GET IN TOUCH

If you feel inspired by this report and would like to get involved and help to tackle the causes and consequences of homelessness in Scotland, please get in touch.

There are many ways that you can help – from volunteering to making a one-off donation, becoming a monthly donor, organising or taking part in a fundraising event.

To find out more or to start a conversation, please contact one of our team members below.

For Individual and Legacy Giving

Contact Liston at listonwalker@cyrenians.scot

For Corporate Giving and Events

Contact Sophie at sophiebell@cyrenians.scot

For Community and Fundraising Events

Contact Calum at calumwright@cyrenians.scot

General Enquiries

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Cyrenians is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated
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