

West Lothian Youth Action Project



Nothing is impossible... in your own powerful way

Annual Report 2022/23





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Foreword

I have the pleasure of introducing our Annual Report for the year 2022/2023. Our challenge continues to be addressing the many complex needs that young people, their families, and local communities are experiencing. Some key priorities have remained the same since the pandemic with the focus on mental health and wellbeing high on our agenda.

Working on isolation, anxiety, and fear for the future are without doubt areas our staff team have prioritised. An additional pressure is the emerging impact of the cost of living increase which is placing significant strain on families, young people and support services such as ours.

Our community-based interventions focused on the reduction of youth anti-social behaviour, reducing substance use, addressing food poverty, and improved community cohesion have been in high demand.

The Youth Action Project recognises that the way forward to improve communities and opportunities for the young people we work with requires effective partnership working, leading to a greater likelihood of securing joint funding. A positive example of this has been the financial award from the Corra Foundation, allowing us to create the Wraparound Project, a partnership with West Lothian Drug and Alcohol Service and Circle West Lothian to address the harmful impact of substance use in an innovative way.

The organisation will continue to adapt and deliver our services to enhance the lives of young people and the communities of West Lothian.

The Board of Trustees thank our partners for their shared efforts, our team of dedicated volunteers and the committed staff team, who despite continued challenging times have delivered services that make a real difference.

We would like to thank Ryan Addison for his continued support in this, his final year as Chairperson. We would welcome enquiries from anyone interested in taking on the role of Chair for the organisation.

Janice Turner
Treasurer

We would like to acknowledge the passion and dedication to youth and community work shown by one of our previous long standing Board members, Andy Mount, who sadly passed away in February 2023. As a lasting tribute we are introducing an annual award in his name to a young person, volunteer or staff member who has achieved success or made a real difference to others.

Helen Davis
Project Director

Overview of services provided

The Youth Action Project provide a wide range of services developed with young people and communities in response to their needs.

This year we have delivered the following :-

- Streetwork - A targeted detached youth work service, addressing youth anti-social behaviour (further detail provided later in the report).
- Early Intervention 1-1 support - Individual plans developed with young people to encourage change in their behaviour, reduce involvement in risk taking and criminality, improve attendance at school, encourage involvement in positive activities and support to improve their life circumstances and future opportunities. Young people are referred from a variety of sources for this work.
- Alternative Curriculum Programmes - In partnership with a number of High schools and the Inclusion and Support Service.
- Tooled Up - practical skills programme, offering young people the chance to learn skills in Joinery and landscaping.
- Cycling, Outdoor activities and visits to places of interest.



Our alternative education programmes are popular with those struggling with mainstream education. The smaller group sizes, use of a more informal approach to learning in work based or environmental settings, delivered by experienced youth workers prove to be less challenging for some of our most vulnerable and at risk young people. As our core funding does not cover the costs of these programmes we enter into funded working agreements with individual schools and establishments.



Outcomes - moving onto college or training placements, improved behaviour and attitudes, recognition of their capabilities and the value of education resulting in increased attendance in mainstream education. This work continues to build the social enterprise aspect of the organisation.

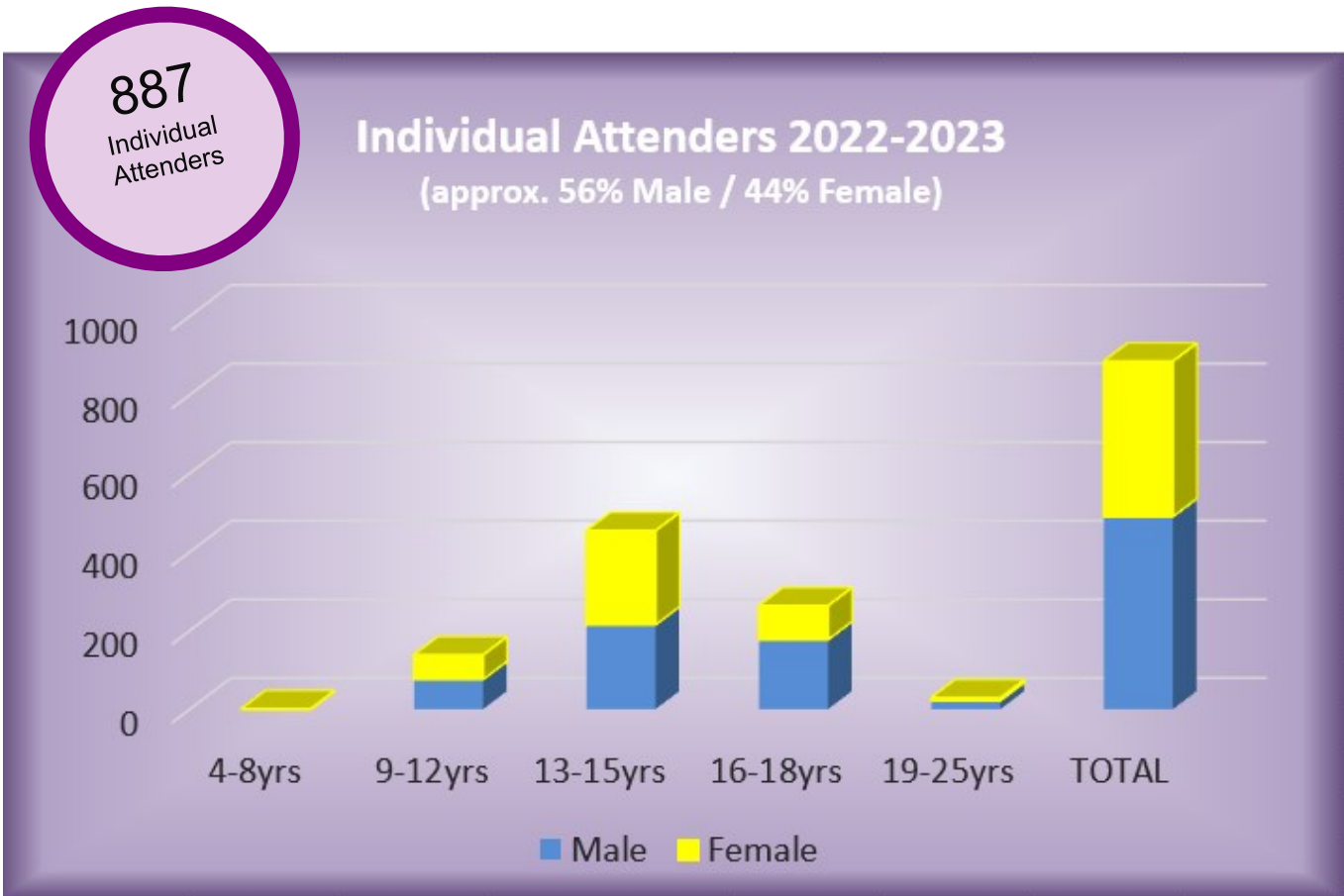
The practical skills training is also linked into the Growing Together Project, funded by the Scottish Government in partnership with Almond Housing Association.

- INtegr8 Befriending Service - trained volunteers matched to provide bespoke support to referred vulnerable young people (additional information detailed later in the report).
- Young women's work - Service Level Agreement with WLC CLD Youth Services to provide a groupwork programme for young women in Craigshill and appropriate referrals.

- YAP Music - groupwork and 1-1 sessions - creative support for young people wishing to explore their interests in music or access tuition for those more experienced.
- Wraparound Service - A new partnership project with WLDAS and Circle to address substance use (details provided later in the report).
- Drop-in youth work and support groups - Blackburn, Addiewell & Stoneyburn.
- Roots - WLYAP are active members of the partnership service providing families with a range of support services, reducing the need for CAMHS interventions, including a drop-in service and individual support.



Number of young people engaged in all project services excluding Streetwork.



Streetwork Service

This work remains one of the key aspects of the organisation, it is funded by West Lothian Council as part of our Service Level Agreement. The service operates primarily on Thursday evenings, Friday afternoons and evenings and a flexible time for the service on a Saturday dependent upon need.



There are also certain times when additional shifts may be required such as bonfire night or if there are specific challenges with youth issues identified in the community.

The key aim of the service is to reduce youth anti-social behaviour using a detached youthwork approach.

The Community Safety Partnership hold weekly tasking and coordination meetings. These are a valuable form of communication between partners and an excellent referral route for our organisation, determining hotspots, for our service to target.

Workers engage with young people who congregate in public spaces/parks, and outside shops etc. Generally the young people are just meeting friends and socialising, at times in large numbers, they are advised to move to areas where noise is less of a concern. Safety advice is provided to those who may be involved in substance use, and if required additional support or referrals are made to other services.

There are times when more concerning behaviour is displayed by young people, targeting residents, shops and also incidents of fire raising. At these points our team will work with other community safety partners and community members delivering specific actions to stop these problems. We also provide follow up interventions with a number of the young people, establishing what may be underlying causes of their negative behaviour.

Our team will make home visits to residents that report they are experiencing anti - social behaviour from young people around their properties. This can be quite distressing, particularly for older people.

Workers will make discreet visits to gather information about the issues and complaints, then follow up actions with schools, police campus officers, the safer neighbourhood team and other community safety partners. The aim of this work is to reduce the level of anxiety experienced by the residents; they know that they have an organisation they can contact for support other than statutory services.

The streetwork service operates throughout West Lothian. However, the following areas received the highest number of requests for our service.

Bathgate	59	Livingston Centre	25	Blackburn	17
Armadale	39	Fauldhouse	25	Carmondean	12
Broxburn	39	Craigshill	23	Blackridge	10

We delivered **329** sessions, more than six sessions per week throughout the year.

The team engaged with **1184** young people.

The table below details the age and gender breakdown.



What impact does our work have?

Tooled up (West Calder High School)

"I really enjoyed getting experience of working and doing it in a different setting".

Pupil

"The guys that took the course were great. I always looked forward to a Thursday".

Pupil

"He's loved the course and really enjoyed going out on all sessions. Every Thursday he was up and ready to go. He always talked about how good a day he had".

Parent

"Our group that went out last session always spoke very highly about how much they enjoyed their time at the sessions. They also couldn't be more complementary about the team that collected them from school and lead the day. These sessions were always well attended by pupils in the group and some of the pupils have moved onto positive destinations linked to the work completed during this programme".

Deputy Head Teacher

"The boys loved the sessions; they said the difference was that it was giving them a real-life experience. Throughout this time, we seen improvements in relationships with staff, increased attendance and the boys all having a plan for their future".

Alison Shields Pupil Support Manager



YAP Music



"I've been attending the music club for around 3 months. I like how I get to play different instruments, I've tried electric guitar, bass and acoustic guitar. I like the guitar the best and now have my own guitar at home. After the club I come out feeling hyper, it makes me happy. My mum noticed and encourages me to keep going. I feel a lot better playing guitar in school now, I think the music club has helped build my confidence. I've started a band at school and although we don't rehearse much at the moment the music department are happy for us to use the school instruments. My aim is to get a bit better then start playing in a smaller group at the music club".

Ella-Louise
Roots Referral
Riverside Music Club

Addiewell Drop In

ADDIEWELL



"Only thing I look forward to every week"

"Trips were really good"

"The Youth group is fun"

*"Our voices are heard, as we talk about things
that matter to us"*

"We get to socialise with people we wouldn't normally"

"It gets us out of the house to enjoy something out of school"

Young People

Sports, Gaming, Pool,
Music, Art,

18
years

*"Happy that she is going to the youth group with her
friend".*

*"Reassurance for me knowing that you're in a safe place
with your friends and off the streets".*

"Positive addition to the community".

Parents

ALL WELCOME

Alternative Education Programme

I've now worked with the Youth Action Project for nearly five years, starting when I was in P7.

I didn't really cope well with change back then, didn't do well with larger groups and what the Skills Centre were offering.

Starting initially with cycling, Alex and I did this for around six weeks,

but with the changing weather into winter I didn't enjoy the cycling as the weather was getting worse as it got really cold and not enjoyable.

I've always had an interest in history and old buildings, in particular castle ruins being my favourite.

Every Tuesday weather dependant we explore places like this, some of which have taken us quite far including into England to the historic town of Berwick Upon Tweed. That was a great day.

The staff often challenge my way of thinking, and over the years have asked what I'd like to do in my future.

This has helped me redirect where I want to go moving forward after school.

My first choice would be St Andrews University to study computer science, history, or both.

I look forward to the Tuesdays with YAP as it's been the one consistent thing in the last four years of my education in High School.

Male (14yrs old)

Case study

INtegr8 Befriending Service



This year for the annual report, we asked a question of our volunteers, young people, parents/carers, and referrers.

“What difference does befriending make?”

In their own words, participants had the following to say:

Young people

“It gets me out more and I feel less isolated. My befriender feels more like a friend than what I thought it was going to be like. I think she is amazing, and she should get lots of praise”.

“I think it’s made a big difference, and it’s made me feel more confident”.

“The befriending service changed my life for the good. It made me realise that I can do good in the world and that it’s not a bad place”.

"We've got on very good. It's been fun to get out of the house. There's not been anything that I've not liked. I've loved all the befriending sessions basically - Kelpies, bowling, ice-skating, Edinburgh Dungeons, long walks. Glitter Cannons is a good club my befriender introduced me to. I like it and I can meet people. When the befriending is done, then I'll have something that I can go to every Friday for the rest of my life basically".



“It’s like having a therapist; someone I can actually speak to who listens to me.”



“A befriender helps me with my behaviour and other issues. I like spending time with her and love the group activities too.”

Parents / carers

The young person struggles with maintaining relationships and needs help to learn social boundaries and independent travel. His befriender helped him to join a local club independently and helped apply for a driving licence for him. The young person loves working with the befriender and hopefully he takes on board everything they have done in the time they spent together.”

Befrienders

"I think befriending makes a huge difference to a young person's life. It gives them the opportunity to get out into the community, have someone safe they can talk to, and feel less isolated and alone. I think it is a brilliant service. For me, befriending gives an opportunity to give something back and builds on my experience massively. I love seeing the young people I support happy, smiling, and enjoying themselves, which I think is the most important thing".

"Befriending is very different to everyone who receives support. I personally make sure each young person has the chance to get the most out of their experience. Befriending can help to boost young people's confidence, develop new skills, and through encouragement can help them to make their own choices. Befriending helps to empower young people. I get job satisfaction and I love helping to make a difference. Befriending has helped me to gain a better knowledge and understanding of the pressures young people face in this current day and age".



"Befriending reduces social isolation, enabling the young person to develop social skills and the ability to work at long term relationships. It also helps build their self-esteem, giving them confidence to try new activities, to take on board new ideas and to learn from a positive role model. Personally, I love being a befriender as it's hugely rewarding. Benefits include a sense of fulfillment, uplifted spirits, and a way of meeting new people. It can really boost your confidence to know that you are helping someone and doing that little bit to improve their life. Every time I visit my young people and their family, I feel the positive impact of having brightened up someone's day. Not to mention getting to know other volunteers at our meetings – they are lovely and it's great to share different ideas and experiences.

Referrers

"Befriending makes a huge difference. It brings emotional support but it's also about great memories and fun, having something to look forward to and the knowledge that there is an adult who cares and is there just for you".

Befriending service stats for 1/4/22 to 31/3/23,

18 enquiries logged into the waiting system
3 enquiries from community members exploring volunteering opportunities
No volunteer applications or befriender training
18 young people received befriender support
12 trained and vetted volunteers provided befriender support to young people



Girls Group

The group was attended by between 6 and 8 girls. The first few weeks were the girls meeting up and getting to know each other. Weeks 1 – 3 we did make up and beauty stuff with the girls, this was facilitated by Lana one of our sessional workers, most of the girls enjoyed this however some of them were not really engaged in the make up sessions.

The girls received a grant from ASH Scotland to do some work around promoting health and fitness and the no smoking message.

The girls decided they would like to try boxing sessions as a way of engaging in sports and fitness activities. We did 10 weeks of boxing session which all the girls loved. When they started, they all had false nails and were a bit sceptical about if they would like it. After the first week, they had all removed their false nails and were very enthusiastic about going again.



The sessions were well attended and some of the girls continued going at night taking a bus from West Calder to Broxburn to attend sessions. The girls all agreed it helped their mental health and anger issues as well as their fitness levels.

The girls then moved on to writing and recording an anti-tobacco song, with help from Gordon our Music Coordinator, they all engaged with Gordon and worked well. The girls later filmed a video which three of the girls agreed to be involved in.

(Click the link below to see the video)

'Turn It Around'

Written and performed by WLYAP Girls Group



YAP MUSIC

YAP Music has been steadily moving forward post-pandemic with the slow return to more 'normal' social conditions.

Our weekly music group in Craigshill has included a total of 70 individuals accessing music making opportunities, with a steady weekly attendance in double figures.

Over the year it became apparent there was an increase in need for more support for neuro-diverse young people attending the drop in, so as well as providing for more socially able young people our music staff, who are also experienced musicians, shaped the small area we had to create a safe and supportive environment for any young person who felt they weren't ready for mixing in the main group. Staff focused on offering one to one support when needed, but always encouraging with a view to assimilating into our groupwork. This technique has been proven to be successful and we now have several young people who regularly access the music group who struggle with social isolation and peer related issues.

We also regularly receive referrals from the ROOTS programme which offers mental health and wellbeing support for families in West Lothian.

A number of sessions were held in support of the WLYAP girls group who had been successful in a small funding bid with ASH Scotland. The aim was to support the girls in writing a song highlighting the dangers and risks of smoking cigarettes. This short project proved to be an excellent means for the girls to express their thoughts and experiences in music. Shortly after the song was composed the idea for an accompanying video was devised.

(an electronic link to the video can be found on page 15)



Community Fridge - addressing food poverty

The Youth Action Project recognised the continued need to provide a service to support a high number of people within the Craigshill community and individuals referred experiencing financial crisis, with essential food provision.

We have provided 1250 households with essential provisions, fresh fruit and vegetables, meat, dairy and ambient items throughout the year, from our weekly based community fridge. In addition we have delivered a further 132 food parcels to families in crisis.

We are working with a number of agencies providing pantries, community fridges and meals throughout West Lothian moving forward in partnership to develop a food network in 2023/2024.

Comments from community fridge users:

“Coming to the community fridge helps me enormously, I have the care of my granddaughter, I am able to make sure she has fresh fruit, vegetables and dairy produce that she needs every week. The little bit extra money I can save allows me to take her swimming and outings occasionally that I wouldn’t be able to do without the community fridge. I want to thank all the staff for their help and support.”

“I use the community fridge quite regularly since losing my job, and during Covid I lost confidence and suffer from poor mental health. At times my anxiety means I struggle to get to the shops. Having the community fridge close by means I can get essential items for a small cost, it is a life line for me.”



Partnerships and Future Developments



The Youth Action Project are very fortunate to have strong positive relationships with a wide range of partners, the details below highlight a few of these but by no means them all as that would be too lengthy.

I am fortunate to Chair the Children & Families Third Sector Forum, a sub group of the Third Sector Strategic Group that feeds into several planning and decision making groups within West Lothian Council, allowing the third sector to have clear pathways and ensure the voices of our clients and communities are heard. It is a privilege to work alongside such a diverse, enthusiastic and dedicated group.

- **Wraparound** An exciting partnership with WLDAS & Circle West Lothian, funded by the Corra

Foundation, allowing us the opportunity to address the issue of substance use using the Whole Family Approach. We secured two specialist youth worker posts to carry out this work.

- **Roots** A third sector partnership with Children 1st, Playworks, Carers of West Lothian, Action For Children, Signpost and Safe Families who work alongside the extended partners involved in the Wellbeing Recovery group and Mental Health Operational group.
- **Growing Together** Project In partnership with Almond Housing Association. The Scottish Government Investing in Communities Fund will allow us to build on the current successes in the community of Craigshill, with Spark as an additional new partner.
- **The Centre, Livingston.** For the financial support and provision of Easter eggs and supplies for our community Fridge. We would like to thank Patrick Robbertze the Centre Director and the Management Team for their continued support.
- **Community Action Blackburn** Partnership work delivering the weekly youth drop-in, support to the Change in Blackburn group and the Blackburn Future Plan



I have previously mentioned the excellent partnership that we have with the Community Safety Partnership. Working with Police Scotland, Fire & Rescue Service WLC Safer Neighbourhood Team, Housing Officers, Regeneration team and the Early and Effective Intervention Officer amongst others has led to a number of successful initiatives for example the Fauldhouse initiative addressing Youth ASB and Bonfire night action. The following statement demonstrates the strong partnership.

Throughout 2022 - 2023 the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service has continued its close collaborative partnership with the West Lothian Youth Action Project. WLYAP are a highly valued partner of the Community Safety Partnership. Information on antisocial behaviour, including deliberate fire setting, is shared with WLYAP at the weekly Task and Co-ordinating meetings and WLYAP provide vital support to communities by delivering street-work sessions in the identified areas. This has proved highly effective in deliberate fire reduction, this not only reduces the impact on front line fire appliances but also allows WLYAP to engage positively with young people and explain the dangers and consequences of their actions. On occasion SFRS have joined in with the street-work sessions which has allowed us access to hard-to-reach groups and individuals.



SFRS have delivered Fireskills courses to young people within West Lothian and are grateful for the support of WLYAP in delivering drug and alcohol awareness sessions to the young people that we have been working with.

In turn SFRS personnel have supported WLYAP with the excellent community garden project in Craigshill, attending community engagement days and allowing SFRS to deliver safety messaging to communities on everything from water safety to bonfire safety to winter safety campaigns. SFRS have also been proud to assist WLYAP with the delivery of food parcels and presents to vulnerable families struggling with the cost of living at Christmas.



Recently WLYAP provided invaluable assistance to SFRS during the busy bonfire period by providing a patrol to give guidance and safety advice to those who may be engaging in risk taking behaviour. The sharing of information on the night allowed decision to be made on the safe deployment of SFRS resources to areas where they were most needed.

The partnership that SFRS have with WLYAP is one of our most valued and long may it continue to contribute to the safety and wellbeing of our communities.

Paul Harvey

Local Authority Liaison Officer

Watch Commander Prevention and Protection Falkirk and West Lothian

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Staff Team

2022/23

Helen Davis ∞ Project Director

Margaret Douglas ∞ Finance Administrator (Appointed Jan 2023)

Lesley Brogan ∞ Youth Worker

Dominic Kane ∞ Youth Worker

Sheila Leslie ∞ Finance Administrator (retired June 2022)

Hilda Dolan ∞ Senior Project Worker

Angie Gourdie ∞ Befriending Coordinator

Barry Walker ∞ Workshop Coordinator

Alex Hughes ∞ Activity and 1-1 Coordinator

Gordon Balfour ∞ Music Coordinator

Joe Cassidy ∞ Project Worker

Kirsty Calderwood ∞ Mental Health Youth Worker

Richard Lee ∞ Project Worker (left April 2022)

Kathleen Ward ∞ Project Worker

Carrie Reid ∞ Project Worker

Stephen Logue ∞ Project Worker

Kevin Campbell ∞ Project Worker

Tammalynn Hassell ∞ Project Worker

Andrea Sneddon ∞ Project Worker

Janet Paisley ∞ Project Worker

Alan Halliday ∞ Cleaning Staff

Jim Sanderson ∞ Cleaning Staff

Many Thanks to Our Sponsors



Board of Directors who served during 2022 - 2023

Ryan Addison
Helen Wilson
Lynne Waddell
Mark Weigt
Michele Doull

Janice Turner
Nichola Clark
Ian Colquhoun

In addition, the following individuals acted as advisors on the Board and provided support to the organisation

Cllr. Peter Heggie

Beverley Akinlami

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