



# Open Door Scotland

*Annual Report 2023*

**Serving West Lothian's Youth**  
**Reg. Charity SCO08533**

## Table of Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Foreword by Councillor Pauline Stafford    | 3  |
| ODS Objectives & Values                    | 5  |
| Comment from Chairperson, Tony Holloran    | 6  |
| CEO's Report by Aileen Willmott            | 7  |
| Service Manager's Report by Avril Mooney   | 8  |
| Fundraising 2022–23 by Claire Neill        | 9  |
| Craigshill Supported Accommodation Service | 10 |
| Supported Flats Service                    | 18 |
| Funder Support                             | 24 |
| Outreach Service                           | 25 |
| Outreach Service: Away Days and Workshops  | 30 |
| Meet the Staff                             | 33 |

Young people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless are some of the most vulnerable in our communities. Open Door Scotland provide an invaluable service in West Lothian and beyond to support these young people to overcome their challenges and secure positive, long term outcomes. Having recently visited Open Door's project in Craigshill I witnessed the incredible work done by their team to support the young people there. Open Door most certainly isn't just a roof over someone's head but rather a service which helps young people build their skills and self confidence including access to education and employment to achieve their full potential.

**Councillor Pauline Stafford**



*Several councillors visited the flats meeting with young people and the ODS team.*



## Young people's comments on Open Door Scotland

"Open Door saved me; they help me with my house and everything I need to learn and fix. They have help me with my English and how to live in a different country. They teach me how I do things in this country, they always make sure I am safe, when I come home from London, I lost my key, 11 o'clock at night they help me."

A/

"When I came to Open Door, I have no idea what I was supposed to do, Open Door helped me on my budgeting skills and how to manage my money better. They have also helped me with getting me ready to manage my own tenancy. I am very grateful to Open Door and all they have helped me with." ZI

"Thank you, Open Door, for helping me with independent life skills and setting up my own tenancy, I couldn't have done it without you." DD

Open Door Scotland (ODS) exists to support young people who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless for a variety of reasons, e.g. family breakdown, social, practical, behavioural and emotional problems.

Open Door Scotland aims to support young people in the short term, working towards longer-term, sustainable independent living and improved life chances.

Open Door Scotland aims to provide a flexible and innovative service to the population of youth homelessness; actively promote, encourage and highlight the needs of young homeless people and work in partnership with our funders and community towards addressing any need identified; provide an environment that supports and encourages freedom of choice and promotes the learning process towards sustainable, independent living.

## Values

- A person centred approach: To place the primary focus on the welfare, development and aspirations of the young person.
- Respect: To pay full regard to the individuality, integrity, humanity and right to privacy of the young person and to their wishes at any time. To apply Open Doors policy on confidentiality.
- Self Determination: As far as possible, to encourage the young person to exercise choice, to make or participate in decisions, which affect them, and to contribute to decisions about the running of the organisation.
- Participation: As far as their capacity and wishes allow, to encourage the young person to become involved in all activities in which they are engaged.
- Openness: In relation to young people, to be honest and truthful, to allow them full access to information and ensure that the organisation processes are transparent.
- Personal Development: To promote the social confidence and self awareness of residents and to encourage and to help them to achieve their potential.
- Inclusiveness: To avoid discrimination on any grounds, to ensure that the young persons' views are fully represented.
- Rights and Responsibilities: To encourage young people to exercise their rights and to achieve proper balance between rights and responsibilities.

It has been another remarkable year for Open Door Scotland as the organisation has continued to support the most vulnerable young people through the cost-of-living crisis and high inflation. The organisation has also felt the brunt of these challenging financial and cost pressures which has resulted in an overall increase in the organisations operating costs. Recruiting and retaining an experienced and motivated team to deliver high-quality person-centred and holistic services has also continued to present some difficulties. It is recognised that Open Door Scotland has not been alone in this but that these issues are being felt across the entire care sector nationally. Open Door Scotland have responded by engaging with its staff team and implementing innovative initiatives such as our employee referral scheme; flexible working arrangements and further training and development opportunities. Open Door Scotland was also able to award staff a pay award in recognition of the cost-of-living crisis.

I continue to be grateful to our diverse and increasing number of external funders, who continue to support the organisation to deliver the holistic range of services for our vulnerable young people. Over the past year considerable efforts and focus has gone into securing longer term funding opportunities to allow the organisation to sustain and maintain its holistic range of services. This has become increasingly difficult given an increasing demand being placed on a more limited source of available funds.

As will be recognised throughout this report, Open Door Scotland have delivered truly life changing support to young people when they have been at their greatest time of need. The Board and I are extremely grateful to our team and wider stakeholders for all of their outstanding work and dedication that they have invested over the past year.

Whilst maintaining its existing services, the organisation has been working to deliver its strategy of growth and development to meet the increasing levels of homelessness in our communities. This has included Open Door Scotland working to become an SQA accredited centre in order to deliver training and learning opportunities for young people and care workers, to develop their skills and experience.

In addition, it is recognised that there continues to be a lack of available affordable and suitable accommodation for rent in West Lothian and this has unfortunately led to more young people living in unsuitable temporary accommodation for prolonged periods of time. In order to respond to this challenge, Open Door Scotland have been working with local stakeholders to explore opportunities to acquire and repurpose under-utilised and vacant community assets with the view to transforming these into suitable accommodation. This is an opportunity that we are continuing to explore and develop.

It is a truly exciting time for Open Door Scotland as we explore new ways to respond to the growing crisis of homelessness in our community.

**Tony Holloran**  
**Chair**



Our 2022 to 2023 Annual Report gives the opportunity to reflect on a busy year and outstanding work achieved at Open Door Scotland. This would not be possible without the dedication, skill and commitment of the fantastic team of people that we have here at Open Door Scotland.

This year we started the process of applying to become an SQA Assessment Centre, we aspire to grow and provide further opportunities for education, learning, training and employment. Our enthusiastic employability worker Rosemary will be key in steering us through this process.

We have continued with our much needed Outreach Service, where support is offered to the hardest to reach young people, who may be sofa surfing, living in Bed and Breakfast or need guidance on how to navigate the way through their homeless journey. Funding from The Robertson Trust, Royal Bank of Scotland, Corra Funding and Crisis Funding made this service possible. With the dedicated work of our Fundraiser Claire, we will reach out to funders to keep this innovative service running.

During this year we again engaged with the Pilotlight Project, who along with Morgan Stanley on the Make an Impact Programme developed a centralised young person's information tracking system. This will allow us to easily track from referral through to leaving the services. Keeping track of the young people's journey is central to everything we do and allows for easier handover between services. We can also use the information for statistics to measure our services. This is now at the presentation stage, and we are looking forward to implementing into the services.

We know from our current work that there is need for increased living accommodation in West Lothian. At Open Door Scotland we have put a focus on the need for additional accommodation as part of our strategic plan. This has involved engagement with our staff, board of trustees and stakeholders. To help support us in developing this plan we have been involved with West Lothian Council's Property Team, Business Gateway, Community Enterprise Association, Community Ownership Support Service and Just Enterprise. These professionals provide a wealth of experience and advice. We will continue to engage with these stakeholders and others. This is a truly exciting time at Open Door Scotland, and I look forward to continuing this work that will result in increased services in West Lothian.

## Looking Ahead

Homelessness can lead to isolation, poor physical and mental health. Homelessness can also lead to substance misuse and create barriers to accessing healthcare.

One of our main priorities will be to ensure that everyone receives the support that they need to have a safe place to live. We will work alongside our partner agencies, for increased investment in preventative services. Proactively identifying young people at risk and supporting them to access these vital services through integrated partnership working.

Reflecting on our learning during the COVID-19 crisis we will continue to build on our digital capacity. We will invest in our people, our system, our fundraising and our communications.

It is recognised that there is a housing crisis, you don't need to be on the streets to be homeless, and too many people in Scotland have no permanent home. "What is the housing emergency in Scotland, 1.5 million people are denied a safe and stable home" (Shelter Scotland).

Our aim is to work together with West Lothian Council and our partners, to provide a coordinated approach to delivering services and housing within safe communities and to assist the most vulnerable through increased learning, training and employment opportunities.



## Thank You

I would like to give a massive thanks to the staff teams of Open Door Scotland, who go above and beyond in meeting the needs of the young people, I look forward to seeing what's next on our journey.

I would like to give thanks to our ever committed Trustees whose time and expertise is given so freely and generously to guide the organisation and support its work. In particular I'd like to thank our Chair, Tony Holloran, who has provided consistent support and steadfast leadership through challenging times.

**Aileen Willmott, CEO**

2022–2023 moving away from Covid has brought new issues to Social Care especially in staffing. Such a difficult and emotionally challenging time for all which I feel has taken its toll on people working in Social Care. Recruiting and retaining staff is an issue for all care sectors. Open Door Scotland will continue to provide an inviting environment in which to offer all our staff an opportunity to invest in themselves and Open Door by providing training which will allow them to keep up to date with their SSSC's, continuous personal development. Having a fully trained workforce ensures we offer the best possible live chances to all the young people we support.

Youth Homelessness is far more than not having a bed for the night. There are usually complex needs involved which affects the young person, their families and wider social networks. We recognise the importance of tailored support which is why we began applying for additional funding. As a result, we offer a wide range of services that are designed to engage with young people who face multiple disadvantages in society.

Our services fall into a broad band of operational areas of accommodation, support, financial inclusion, health and wellbeing, training and employability.

None of this work would be possible without our dedicated staff team, our committed board and our supportive partners.

Whatever challenges may arise, we are confident that there is no problem that cannot be solved through effective collaboration.

I want to say thank you to all our staff for caring about the good work that they do and all the young people that we have supported throughout the year. Seeing young people achieving their potential makes all the hard work worth while.

**Avril Mooney**  
**Service Manager**



## Fundraising 2022-23

There remains a need to source additional funding to support the continuation of the Outreach Service and the expansion of its role in the community.

Over the year there have been 10 key successes:

A total of **£203,751** was awarded to Open Door Scotland:

| Money Awarded | Fund  |
|---------------|---|
| £94,560       | Corra Foundation                                    |
| £34,203       | Bank of Scotland Foundation                         |
| £25,000       | Best Practice Crisis Fund                           |
| £15,746       | Scottish Government's Young People's Guarantee Fund |
| £14,500       | Robertson Trust                                     |
| £10,000       | West Lothian Council                                |
| £8,000        | West Lothian Council                                |
| £1,000        | Young Scot Spring Fund                              |
| £742          | Youth Link Scotland cash back for communities       |

Furthermore, £10,832.90 from West Lothian Long Term Unemployment Programme, supported young people to work within Open Door Scotland and move on into full time permanent posts in time.

The Board would like to acknowledge and offer thanks to all supporters.

**Claire Neill**  
**Fundraising Officer**

## Life After Lockdown

Open Door Scotland, Craigshill Supported Accommodation Service is committed to supporting young people and further their opportunities. Providing them with practical skills they require through group work to prepare them for independent living before they are offered their own tenancy.

During the Pandemic we successfully accommodated 10 young people providing them with support and safe place for 365 days of the year.

Across the year young people experienced their own challenges like poor mental health, substance abuse, low self-esteem, and a sense of “Why bother attitude”.

Although life was very restricted for the young people, as a group they interacted well with each other, and sometimes times acting as a support for each other. They had built up amazing resilience and learned to adapt to a new way of living.

Normal everyday practices continued in the accommodation with a range of in-house activities for the young people to engage with including:

- Film night
- Fashion shows
- Games night
- Buffet nights
- Creative Cooking /Baking
- Halloween Party
- Fireworks night
- 24 days to Christmas daily activities
- Trip to Christmas Market ...See photos.

Post lockdown presented a changed landscape where the impact of the pandemic became apparent. There was no housing being offered. A bottle neck of potential tenants waiting for their for ever homes occurred.

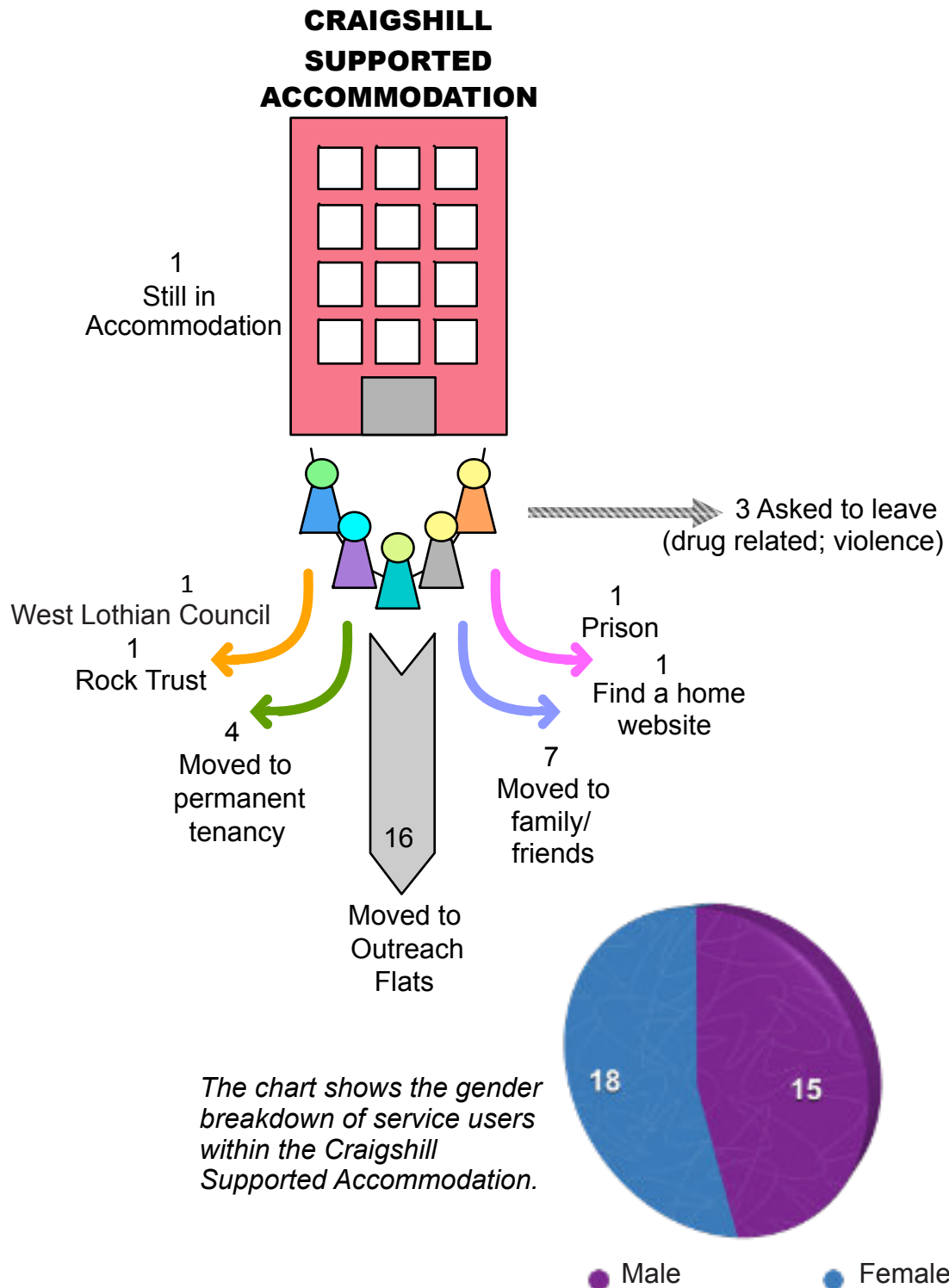
External services and agencies began to work to full capacity gradually minimising the bottle neck to a degree.

Within the service teams were getting back together and getting used to working together after a period of lone working. Working practices were reviewed and streamlined to enable getting back to ‘normal’ as smooth as possible. Plus, links with external agencies and face to face meetings started to take place again.

The young people within the service began to get their confidence and venture out again into the community looking to a more settled and rewarding life experience going forward with the support of the Craigshill Supported Accommodation Service.

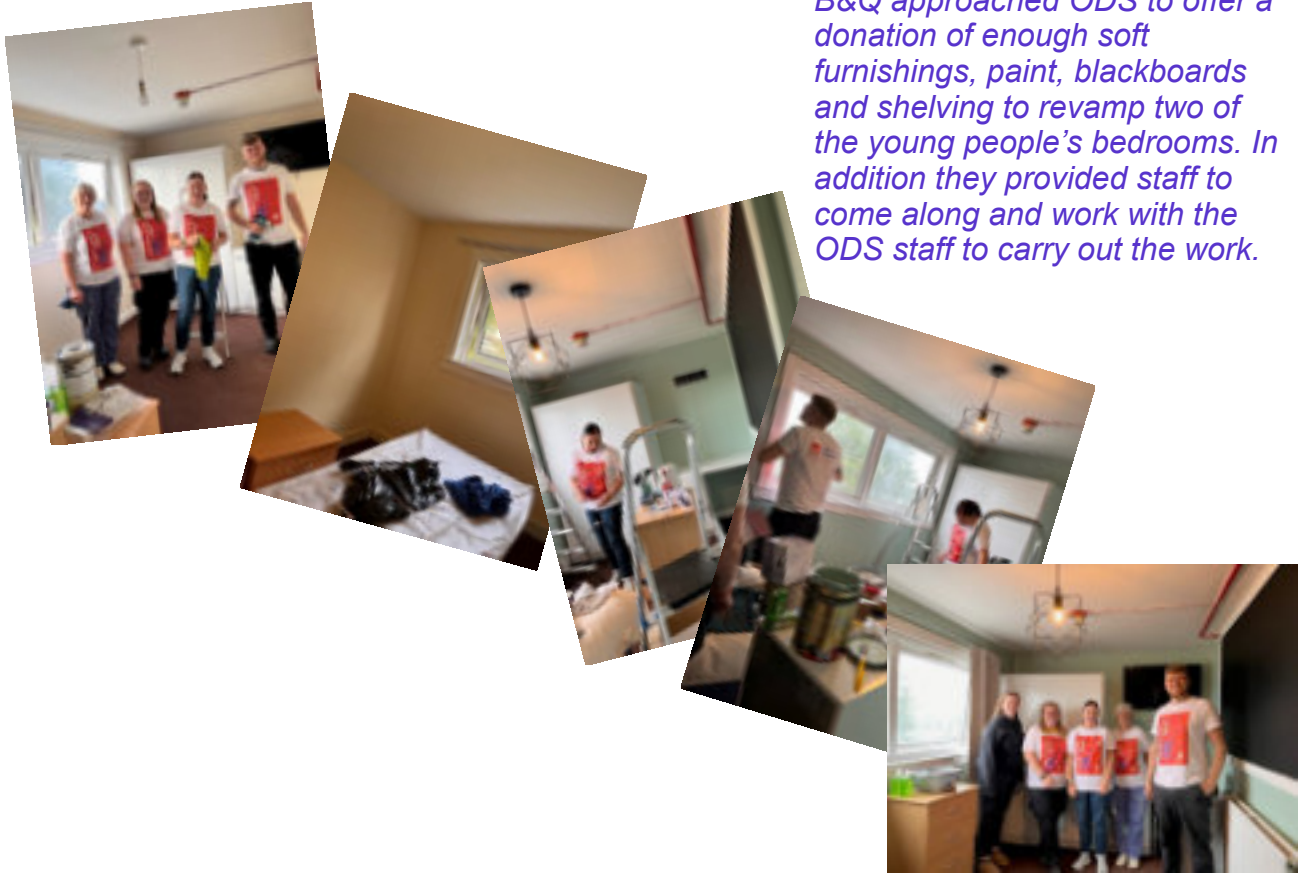
## Resident Departure Statistics (2022 – 2023)

*The aim is to move young people into their own “forever home” as soon as they are able to live independently. The following gives a break down of departures over the year.*



## Bedroom renovation with help from B&Q




*B&Q approached ODS to offer a donation of enough soft furnishings, paint, blackboards and shelving to revamp two of the young people's bedrooms. In addition they provided staff to come along and work with the ODS staff to carry out the work.*




*The Quiet Room was a new contribution to the Craigshill Supported Accommodation premises which was decorated by the Open Door Scotland staff; this provides somewhere for young people to meet with their visiting counsellor or their ODS key worker.*




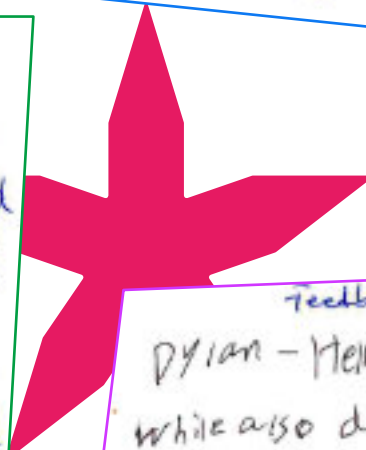
Support from staff in the open door is very helpful  
they teach me new things and give me advice when  
needed  
Open door has changed the way I think about others  
and myself. they help with alot and make open door feel  
like home  
/a




Keiron  
this servis is good i get everything  
i need Lots of stuff and Lots of fun  
noth ing Bad to say



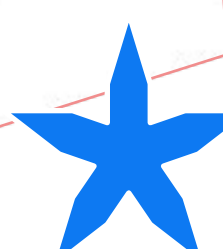
10/10  
good Relationship  
with Staff, and  
ongoing Support  
24/7, always a  
chap away and  
intense 1/1  
Demi




Feedback (Reviews)  
Dylan - Helped with, Benefits  
while also developing a relationship  
with everyone  
For  
Delbra



i think the hosicle is good and the staff are nice, can  
get lots of suport if needed. theres always someone there  
to talk too  
kelsie mcewan



## Young people's comments on Open Door Scotland




"So, upon crossing the sixth month mark of my homelessness, I moved into Open Door's Craigshill Hostel and after another few months I progressed into one of their private tenancies in Knightsbridge - this is when I was brought under my support worker's wing. She not only made my transition into my private tenancy as smooth as possible, but she also went out of her way to make sure my stay with Open Door was as comfortable as possible. She has a caring nature and loves helping people, which is clear from the first moment you meet her.

I can quote my family by saying; "You can tell she loves helping people and everything that comes with her job" - after my support worker went out of her way to help get prepared for moving into my new tenancy. Along with the random phone-calls I would sometimes get asking if I wanted X appliance or if I'm needing Y feature for my kitchen, she's always thinking of other people and how she can help them.

She's been amazing to me throughout my tenure at Open-door and I can only thank her for the service she's provided and made my transition from homeless to home that big bit easier.

Thank you to my support worker, for everything!"

Kind regards,  
Lennon Connelly



*"You help me everyday  
Susan, I can't thank you enough  
for the impact you have  
had in the time I have  
known you." KmcF*

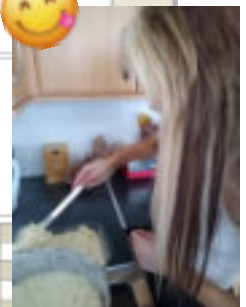
# Cooking Class



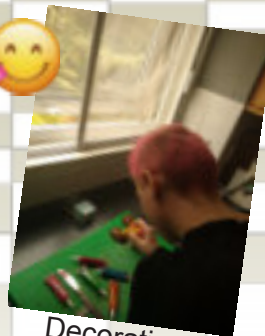
Making a cheese boat



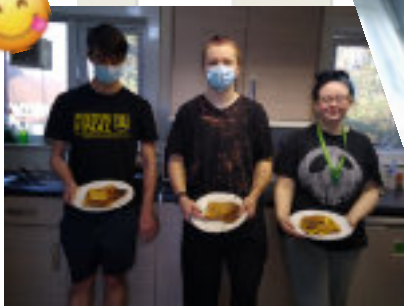
Preparing steak pie dinner



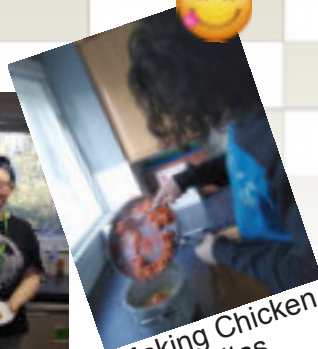
Making macaroni & cheese



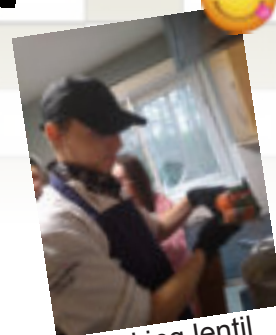
Decorating Easter eggs



Preparing French toast



Making Chicken Fajitas



Making lentil soup

*Across the year the young people were encouraged to take part in cooking classes to help with their independent living skills and to help with the isolation invoked by lockdown.*

*Once the lockdown constraints were lifted young people went with support workers to the Edinburgh German Market as a day out activity.*



# Christmas

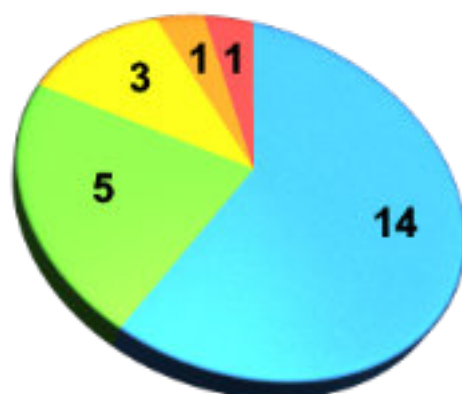
## *Outing*



## Introduction

The supported flats service have continued to provide an excellent support service to young people, supporting and accommodating 16 young people at any one time. The service supported 24 young people during 2022/2023 of which 14 were males and 10 females. 10 young people departed to various accommodations.

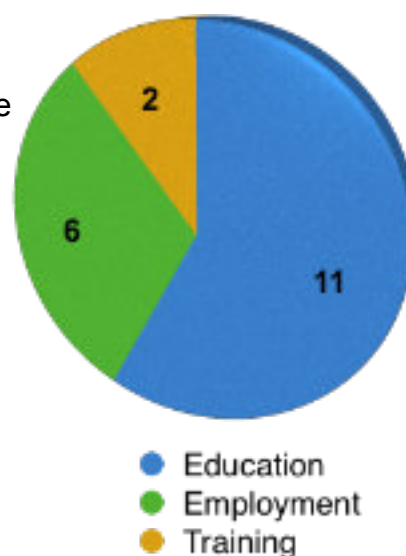
- Remained within our Open Door supported flats
- Secured their own tenancy
- Moved in with family or friends
- unknown
- Was accommodated at the Craigshill Supported Accommodation


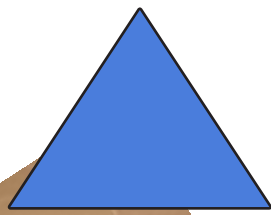
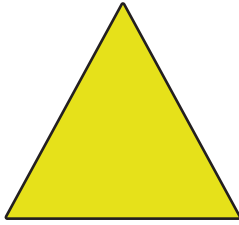



Three young people vacated their flat this year, and these were due to the same reasons which included lack of engagement, lack of use of the flat and neighbour complaints. Ongoing support was offered during this time to all young people to maintain their tenancies but unfortunately resulted in them vacating. All young people were offered to return to the supported accommodation to be further supported by Open Door with one accepting, the two others decided to move back in with family and friends, who are continued to be supported by our Community Outreach Team.


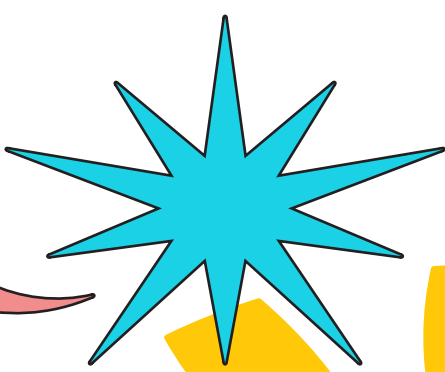
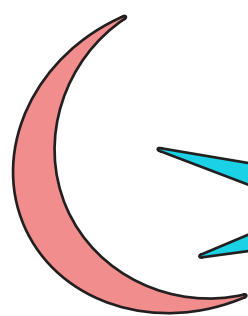
Due to the end of coronavirus pandemic restriction, the wait for housing offers decreased slightly between October and December 2022 and therefore more young people were able to accept permanent housing offers than the previous months of the year. This has since slowed down and we have seen another significant wait for permanent housing offers since January 2023, this is due to the lack of tenancies available in the West Lothian area. Staff have worked in conjunction with their young people to apply for other housing associations and districts to increase their chances of being offered a permanent home.

Some of our key challenges, like in previous years, continue to be supporting those with drug misuse and recreational use, poor mental wellbeing, financial struggles and overall resistance in engaging with support. The service and young people have benefited greatly from working in partnership with external agencies and our Community Outreach Team to tackle the issues the young people have faced.

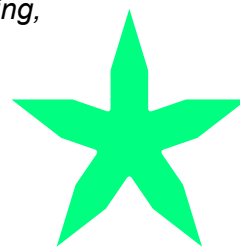




*Bowling Activity. Young people from all services joined in together to have a fun and successful day socialising with healthy dose of competition bowling against one and other.*



*Aberdour Beach Trip. Young people enjoyed their beach trip at Silver Sands, which included beach games, sunbathing, socialising and a bbq.*



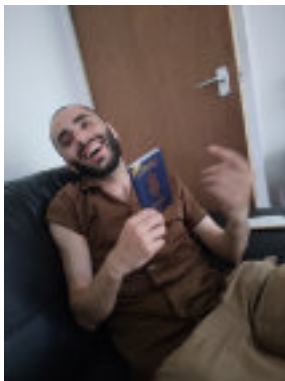
## Selection of Case Studies

**CS 1:** I started helping Ayad in December when I over took his support.

Ayad is a Syrian refugee who was brought to Scotland seeking asylum. Ayad has had a brutal past, but does not let this define him or get him down. Together we have been working on Ayad's confidence, goals and working on how to motivate himself to achieve the goals he has set for himself. In December, after a long 5 years wait Ayad was finally awarded citizenship. This gave Ayad a push in creating some goals as he now knows he is free from the danger and the anxiety he had of the not knowing.

Since December, Ayad and myself have created and worked towards his goals. One of which was Ayad's driving, this is something Ayad has wanted support with now that he has citizenship.

With this we created a budgeting plan so we could budget money a week that Ayad could afford so we could save for his provisional. We also made a plan that because of his driving, he would need to get better at English so the signs, and road markings he would understand, therefore Ayad and myself started seeking appropriate English classes for him. Ayad wanted something close to home so he didn't need to travel to Glasgow or Edinburgh for this so he could still engage with this support and UC meetings. After a few weeks of searching and referrals we now have secured Ayad a place in an English level 2 class that is a ten minute walk from his house.



Through the budgeting support that was given to Ayad, Ayad had enough money to get his provisional driving licence, we completed this form together and sent it away, and within a week Ayad had his provisional licence. This made Ayad really happy and gave him the motivation to do the best he can at his English lessons so this gives him the best possible chance of achieving his driving goals. We have since applied to the Independent Learning Fund

to try and get support for driving lessons to help further achieve Ayad's driving goals.

Support Worker

**CS 2:** Ibrahim came to the flats service from the accommodation support project. Ibrahim is an asylum seeker from Iran. When Ibrahim first came to the service, he didn't know much English, he didn't have many contacts, and he wasn't receiving any educational support. Ibrahim was reliant on supported assistance for pretty much all social, education, and financial needs.

Ibrahim came to the flat's service in November after having received amazing ongoing support from the accommodations project to work on his confidence and life skills that he would need to maintain his own tenancy in the future, if/when he receives his right to remain.

Within the flats service I have been Ibrahim's worker since he came to our service. We have been working on independent life skills such as cooking, cleaning and appointment making for guidance with whatever Ibrahim needs during his process and outside recourses, this includes: college, GP's, English tutoring, Freedom from Torture and other agencies that we have sourced for Ibrahim to help him with the new environment and help him with mentally dealing with the trauma he has suffered/fleeing from.

Together we got Ibrahim help from Freedom from Torture to help with his trauma, and he is still currently working with this organisation.

In January 2023, Ibrahim was granted his asylum with right to remain. Following his new status, we set up a UC claim, housing benefit claim, and housing application with Ibrahim and an Interpreter so that Ibrahim got the experience and knowledge of how to do this and understood why this had to happen. We went through how to maintain and work all this so that he could maintain these accounts himself promoting his independence.

In May 2023, Ibrahim brought to my attention that he was wanting to move to Birmingham to be closer to his friends, this was explored with social work and an interpreter so we fully understood what Ibrahim wants and wishes so we could respect these and try to the best of our abilities to support with.

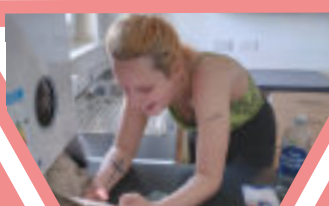
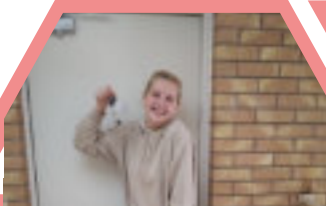
In June 2023, Ibrahim arranged with friends in Birmingham to move in with them, the relevant checks were carried out to ensure Ibrahim's safety. All staff involved in his care instructed Ibrahim how to present as homeless when he sees fit. I changed the address of Ibrahim's UC claim, so he was finally set up going forward. Ibrahim thanked everyone at open door for their effort into making him feel no different from someone that was born here and thanked everyone for what they have done for him. Ibrahim now has fully moved to Birmingham where he appears settled and happy.

Support Worker

When young people move into their forever home from ODS, they are given a starter pack to give them that initial start.

The Starter Pack contains:

Microwave  
Toaster  
Kettle  
Iron, Hoover  
Light bulbs,  
A towel  
Cutlery  
Dinning set  
Pots and pans,  
And a £25 Asda voucher (subject to availability).



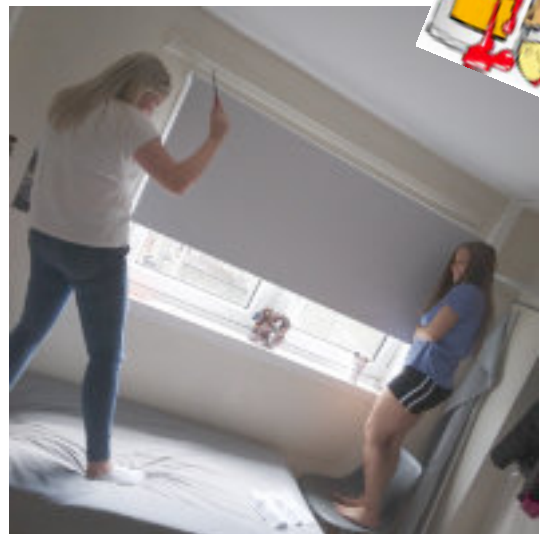
Moving in to a new flat with starter pack



Independent living skills with young people.

Staff and young people engaging in building furniture for their flat.

Staff and young people engaging in putting up a new blind in the young person's bedroom.



**CS 3:** Jackie, a young woman at the age of 16 was referred to our supported accommodation in Craigshill in November 2022, after a family breakdown and ongoing mental health concerns. Jackie had previously lived with her parents, which was a chaotic environment and had moved in her with grandmother at the early teenage stage of her life; Jackie remained close with her gran throughout her time in Open Door.

Jackie attended the accommodation with her social worker for an interview and then proceeded to be offered a room, which she very reluctantly accepted.

Jackie did not appear to settle into the accommodation and often would tell me in her first few weeks that she did not want to reside here. Jackie had been brought back to the accommodation multiple times escorted by the police due to suicidal ideations and attempts, and ongoing issues with her family.

It was highlighted to staff very early on that Jackie will use self-harm as a method of coping with her declining mental health and therefore a comprehensive risk assessment was in place. I liaised closely with Jackie's CAHMS worker, Susan, who also gave us access to very useful information that would aid us in supporting Jackie as best we can.

Although Jackie had a turbulent first few months within Open Door, she began to settle and re-engage with her support network. Jackie was supported to regularly attend her CAHMS appointments and remain in her fifth year at high school. Jackie engaged very well with myself when I took over as her key worker. Jackie would make her two weekly meetings with me creating a safe environment for her to open up and talk about her mental health, family, life and housing situation at present.

A monthly planned review meeting was set up between the professionals in Jackie's life each month to further discuss her support, which I attended. A support plan was put in place for Jackie, which included independent living skills, mental health coping strategies and education based support; Jackie was often supported by myself to attend this meeting.

Jackie throughout her stay in Open Door has engaged well with myself and through support by Open Door had begun to self-harm less, and also saw an improvement in her mental health. This changed, however, when Jackie's gran suddenly passed away, it had a huge impact on Jackie. Jackie was supported by Open Door Scotland to attend her GP for grief counselling and I ensured there was ongoing regular key working meetings.

Jackie had a settled time thus after within Open Door and after being in the accommodation for nearly 8 months, Jackie has been offered an outreach flat. Jackie is very happy for this opportunity and is eager to begin the next stage of her journey and will continue to be supported by Open Door.

Team Leader

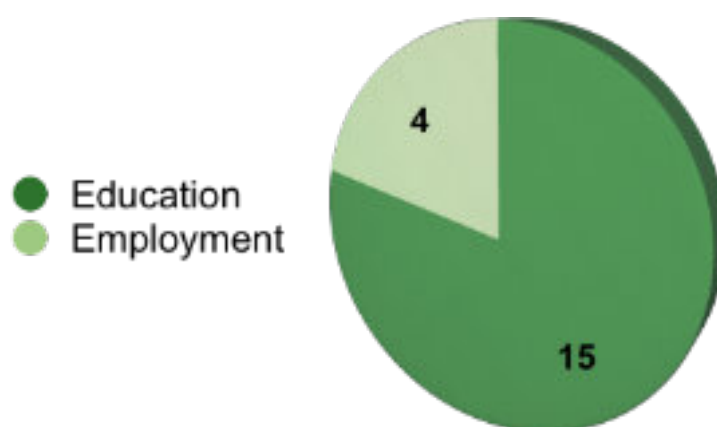
# Funder Support

## Ongoing Impact

Open Door Scotland was granted funding through the **Social Isolation and Loneliness Fund** which had a very positive impact on our service. We successfully managed to provide our young people with mobile phone top ups and grocery shopping vouchers. Each young person was supported by staff to successfully top up their mobile phones and each had a supported shop to buy a month's worth of food and toiletries. This was done in conjunction with a budget and meal plan to ensure the young people have the necessary independent living skills to better budget their finances, plan healthy meals in advanced and subsequently cook meals, to ensure they have all the tools they need when moving onto sustaining their own tenancies.

## Employment, Education and Training

The supported flats have continued to develop partnerships with organisations to help support young people into employment, education and training. Open Door have continued their partnerships with the **Grass Roots and Smart Works Foundation**, who provide interview clothing and 1:1 coaching for interviews, to help further young people's chances to gain employment. 10 of our young people were able to successfully access this service. Open Door have also continued to work in partnership with **West Lothian College**, West Lothian Council's **Access2Employment** and **Employability Scotland**, supporting and helping young people to realise their potential and expand their professional and personal horizons. 6 of our young people gained full time employment, 11 of our young people gained places in further education and 2 of our young people were able to access training courses.



## Introduction to the Service

This service is designed to support young people within West Lothian who have been through Open Door Scotland and now have their first tenancy “forever home”. Or they are already out in the community in own tenancy, homeless from home, or in temporary accommodation (Homeless unit, bed and breakfast, hotel, or sofa surfing).

The support workers provide support through one-to-one meetings, text messages, phone calls, emails, workshops, or with joint meetings with external agencies also helping the young person. For example, West Lothian Council, Action for Children, Through and After Care and West Lothian College.

Areas of support include: help with claiming benefits, fuel top-ups, independent living skills, employability, learning and training, health and wellbeing, as well as, homelessness and resettlement.

In order to fulfil this, remit the Service team all network and establish strong links with similar service providers, other specialist professionals, the West Lothian Employability Forum and the West Lothian Volunteer Network. The cross refer, share working practices and information beneficial to the support of young homeless young people.

### External Beneficiaries who worked with the Outreach Service

West Lothian Council  
 Almond Housing  
 West Lothian College/Compass  
 Through Care After Care  
 Skills Development Scotland  
 Money Advice  
 Action For Children  
 Rock Trust  
 The Larder  
 Youth Action Project  
 CAB  
 Five Sister Zoo  
 Spark  
 Learning Link Scotland.  
 Smart Works and Grass Roots

## Partnership Working

The Outreach Service became involved with **The Compass**, West Lothian College Venture. This involved Open Door Scotland taking part with ten other organisations to support students who required specialist help.

There was a designated Outreach Service staff member at the College each Wednesday. Their role was raising awareness of Open Door Scotland in general and the Outreach Service specifically. This was done through face-to-face meetings with young people being referred by the College or other organisations present.

It involved interacting with students in an informal way across campus; taking part in classroom talks with other organisations, for example, Action for Children and sharing similarities and differences in organisational services. Overall, 100 students interacted with the staff member across various routes. Working closely with academic staff and Student Support, Student Financial Welfare, Student Association and The Trust Project.

Attendance at Open Days, school specific events, Summer School and recruitment day all added to helping more young people; strengthening links with Open Door Scotland and West Lothian College and all it encapsulates.

Open Door Scotland looks forward to developing this collaborative way of working; going as far as to consider future joint events.

**During 2022-23 the Community Outreach Service supported  
258 young people.  
The following outcomes were achieved:**

**193** young people supported by the Outreach Service across West Lothian and 85 in college.

**193** young people had 1-1 meetings with a support worker.

**16** young people into Further education.

**18** young people applied to Further education.

**12** Employability Workshops delivered.

**10+** Jewellery workshops delivered.

**21** young people learned something new at workshops

**2** young people attended an away to Cyrennian Farm, Kirknewton

**2** young people attended an educational/employability workshop. And went around zoo identifying which careers/skills were needed at the enclosures.

**33** young people attended interviews.

**53** young people had a dedicated employability support worker.

**40** referrals.

**53** young people with written live documents/action plans.

**24** entered and sustained employment.

**57** job applications completed.

**13** young people completed certified training

**1** young person into a volunteering post.

**29** young people received Community Care grants.

**10** young people received Leaving Care grants to set up first tenancy.

**10** young people received Chrome Note Pads and data packages from Connect Scotland.

**33** young people received ASDA Vouchers.

**50** received Utility Top Ups.

**130** young people received food parcels.

**20+** young people supported to attend doctors, dentist or opticians.

**5** young people attended meetings with Skills Development Scotland and an Outreach Service staff member.

## Selection of Case Studies

**CS 1:** I have worked with John since the middle of June. We firstly had a chat regarding John's present situation and ascertained how I could offer support to him.

We collaboratively agreed a plan of action and begun by getting John's benefit claim back on track as he had missed appointments and was at risk of sanction. I advised him that he was eligible for free bus travel which would help him to visit friends and family and attend appointments without being constrained by his current financial situation. We set up an appointment in John's local partnership office who met with him and he is now in possession of a bus pass.

Following this we completed housing applications for associations separate from West Lothian Council to give John a maximum chance of being awarded a permanent tenancy.

John has suffered with issues relating to his mental health for some time. We are in the process of arranging an appointment to discuss this with his doctor. He is working with both Smile counselling and West Lothian Drug Alcohol Service and finds this helpful in allowing him space to process and cope with emotions and address issues with sporadic drug use.

John has shared that he is grateful to have support and feels more confident in dealing with his current situation since we began working together.

Support worker

**CS 2:** A young man (25) called ODS when he found himself homeless late on a Friday afternoon. He had been staying with an elderly relative having recently moved from N.E.Scotland to stay with her. He has a job at a local butcher. The EO supported him through the transition from a stable home to a chaotic homeless "home" lifestyle. She worked with him and encouraged him to retain his job, stay focussed. The EO helped him register as homeless and supported him whilst he was placed in a temporary hotel. Eventually he got a flat and managed to keep job with a consideration from employers. Has depression and anxiety. Action Plan.

Support Worker

**CS 3:** This young man is currently staying in hostel and is struggling with confidence and low esteem issues. EO supporting them to look for jobs and choose a college course for 2023-24.

Support Worker

**CS 4:** This young woman (18) has recently moved into a supported living flat. She has been meeting the EO to identify skills, write CV. Rehearse for interviews and has now got a p/t job in a chip shop. She is also getting support from EO to balance work/college course/ life balance. Depression, drug abuse, abusive relationship n past. Action Plan.

Support Worker

**CS 5:** This young person (21) started in ODS's hostel and subsequently moved into a supported living flat. She was supported by the flat team and the EO. The flat team taught her independent living skills and the EO supported her to stay on at college, complete an NC in the Built Environment. Help her to apply for an Apprenticeship in joinery, which she got an interviewed and offered. But could not take due to the rural nature of the workplace. She was disappointed but after a debrief with EO realised what an achievement she had had. She started attending the jewellery workshop in ODS then became a volunteer. She also began volunteering with SPARK. And moved into her first tenancy. Suffers from anxiety and low self-esteem. Action Plan.

Support Worker

"Open Door Scotland, Outreach support worker helped me at the very start of my homeless journey. They helped me complete the homeless application and supported me when I got my hotel accommodation. They supported me to keep on track at college. The result being, I am going onto 2nd year music at Edinburgh University. She helped me to keep my family and to try not to keep falling out with them." R.B.

"The ODS Outreach Team helped me tackle my drug & alcohol abuse. They also helped me make a housing application. They also helped me to build a better relationship with my family." J.W.

“When I began working with Open Door in January of this year, I was living alone in a hotel and I didn't have much control over issues in my life. Due to some of these difficulties, I often found it hard to engage with the support I was offered. My Open Door worker met with me and we began to look at making a plan together. We worked together to sort issues with my benefits and access to healthcare and I was offered a permanent tenancy soon after. This was a challenge for me, I had never lived independently before and I had little idea of where to start with furnishing or decorating the property or managing bills and other aspects of running a home. I didn't feel I could cope and stopped engaging for a while. When I was ready I got back in touch and my worker helped me to apply for a grant for furnishings and floor coverings and to set up and manage my gas and electricity accounts. The next step was to look at repairs to my house and having a bit of routine. I have now been living in my own home for a few months, there are still challenges and issues to address but I am more settled than I have been for a while. Open Door have supported me throughout the last months and I don't know where I would be without this help. I feel more confident now that I can manage having my own house.”

27/4/22

③ This ~~great~~ workshop is worth the time as you learn things that you never knew about cameras on phones or cameras and think you will enjoy the course and after course you might take it away with you.


① I enjoyed my time, would come again for another class. I would recommend for beginners and pros alike. I learned about third lines and grids, which will help me with more common photos that are taking normally 10/11

Young peoples written evaluation of the 'Mobile Phone Photography for Learning and Mindfulness Workshop'  
27/4/22 Reliaith Employability officer.

evaluation of the Learning and Mindfulness Workshop.  
Reliaith Employability officer.

During the year service users were invited to attend a variety of workshops, as well as, going on an away day to Cyrenian Farm. Plus, attending a workshop at the Five Sisters Zoo and having an opportunity to go around zoo and being told about all the different jobs and skills that are linked to supporting the animals and running the zoo as a business venture.

All of which were aimed at providing service users with new experiences, an introduction to new learning, employability options, and health and wellbeing.



**Open Door Scotland**  
**Outreach Service: Employability**

**Venue:** Large Meeting Room, Almondbank Library, Shiel Walk,  
Craigshill, Livingston EH 54 5EH

**"Pick n Mix" Workshop Programme**  
**You decide which one/s you wish to come along to.**

**Aimed at:**

- young people between the ages of 16-26 years old who are homeless, in fear of being homeless or resettled.
- who are either seeking employment, in employment but wanting to change, modern apprenticeships, college, university.

**1** What do I have to offer?  
Tuesday 1st November 11am-2pm

**2** Skills Identification  
Wednesday 9th November noon-3pm

**3** Why network?  
Friday 25th November 11am-2pm

**4** Time Management  
Monday 28th November 11am-2pm

**5** Reduce your stress by knowing how to make working and learning right for you.  
Tuesday 6th December 11am-2pm

**6** Reflection: what now?  
Friday 9th December 11am-2pm

**No tests, No pressure ONLY fun, sharing of ideas and helpful ways of doing things to make the world of work and learning easier for you.**


**Want to know more?**  
**Contact:** Rosemary Sleith, Employability Officer  
**Email:** Rosemary.Sleith@odap.org.uk  
**Mobile:** 07739296459

# RE//ENGAGE

WITH LEARNING AS A YOUNG ADULT

**Open Door Accommodation Project**, in partnership with Learning Link Scotland, is excited to present:

X4 1 day workshops over the course of 5 weeks, with a day out on the 5<sup>th</sup> week!



**Who can attend?**  
Anyone at risk or experiencing homelessness across West Lothian, aged 16-26 years old, who is/was in any learning setting

**When is it?**  
Every Friday from 11am-4pm  
Friday 18<sup>th</sup> March to 15<sup>th</sup> April 2022

**Where?**  
Craigfarm Café  
Maree Walk, Livingston EH54 5BP

**Details:**  
Workshops covering:  
- Stress Management  
- Study Skills  
- Time Management  
- Developing Networks

**Contact:**  
Rosemary Smith

Learning Link Scotland  
Open Door Accommodation Project

Learning Link Scotland contributed some funding towards these activities.

The workshops were tailor made to support the young people attending. They helped with employability and mental health and wellbeing issues. Other partners and independent business people worked with the Outreach service staff to deliver some of the workshops.


The following diagrams shows the workshops that were on offer.



Using a mobile phone for mindfulness learning and skills development

# RE//ENGAGE

WITH ADULT LEARNING



**Coping with transitional changes:**  
Dealing with stress related to changes (being in college, moving into the workplace, getting your own tenancy, becoming homeless...) while being a young adult learner during a pandemic.

**Open Door Accommodation Project**, in partnership with Learning Link Scotland, is excited to present:

X5 1 day workshops over the course of 6 weeks, with a day out on the final week!

**Who can attend?**  
Anyone at risk or experiencing homelessness across West Lothian and aged 16-26 years old

**When is it?**  
Every Friday from 11am-4pm  
Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> April to 27<sup>th</sup> May 2022

**Details:**  
Workshops covering:  
- Stress Management  
- Coping Strategies  
- Work/Life Balance  
- Importance of Self-Care

**Contact:**  
Rosemary Smith  
rosemary.smith@lelscot.org.uk  
or  
Fiona McLaughlin  
fiona.mclaughlin@lelscot.org.uk  
If you have any questions or wish to attend.

Learning Link Scotland  
Open Door Accommodation Project

The **Cyrenian Farm** visit found the young people taking part in a mediation and mindfulness session in the woods, tapping sap from a tree for a lunch time “toast”, helping with the day-to-day farm tasks including collecting 240 eggs from the free-range chickens. Being shown around the fruit and vegetables growing in a poly tunnel, as well as being able to taste the leaves. Followed by some wood craft skills, including how to whittle a stick to help keep the fire going, plus, making fire in first place.



Tapping for sap for a lunchtime drink



Tasting leaves of plants – hearing about different crops



Collecting free range eggs



Making fire stage 1 & stage 2  
making whittle sticks

## Meet the Staff

My name is **Jordin Cowan**, I have worked in various roles throughout my career, the most prominent of which was as a Prison Custody Officer in HMP Addiewell. This was a job I loved but also challenging at times. It taught me a lot about myself, about mental health, vulnerabilities and overcoming some very difficult violent situations.

I left the prison to focus on my family and made the decision that I would like to work in the community to support others, to help them to have the life they deserve, not the life that circumstance may dictate to them, to avoid some people ending up in a prison environment.

Open Door Scotland gives young people the opportunity to make the most of themselves, to teach them how to support themselves, take responsibility and become the person they want to be. I hope that I can contribute even a little to the lives of others and help as many as I can through the amazing work that Open Door and the support networks attached to it do every day.

I am a project worker based in the Craigshill Supported Accommodation Service. My name is Elise Watt. I love my role. It is my first job working in the social care sector, and I am passionate about helping the young people. The diversity between the young people is amazing, and gives me the opportunity to learn how to deal with different conflicts, but also how to encourage the independence of our young people. Some of them need more support than others, and that's alright. I am happy to continue to learn, and support my young people. I am quite an outgoing person, and like to think that if my young people want to speak to me, that they would feel comfortable enough. I have already built good relationships with my young people, and continue to encourage their independence. I enjoy doing supported group work with my young people, and encouraging them to build their independence. I will continue to support the young people here in the hostel, as I am very passionate about doing my job.

**Elise Watt**

Project Worker

My name is **Olumide**, a social work student from Edinburgh Napier University. I was excited when I received the notice that I would be doing my placement at Open Door Scotland. This was because I had always enjoyed the opportunity to work with young people.

My experience so far has been positive and one that has improved my practice as a social worker. I have had the opportunity to face challenges that have forced me to reflect on my practice and to seek more enduring approach to practice. I have received training and continue to receive support towards personal development. I look forward to more opportunity to support young people within the service.

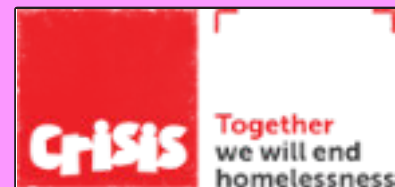
The Open Door Scotland working environment is welcoming and I have been pleased with how service is being offered with dignity. I appreciate the team and the team work.

Hello, my name is **Susan**. I previously worked for Open Door back in 2011 until I retired in 2019. I was part of the admin support team. In that short period I worked in the Broxburn office, then we moved to Bathgate and then finally to the Craigshill Office. During this period Open Door became part of my extended family as well as work colleagues. With that in mind, I am delighted to be able to give a little back as a 'thank you' in a volunteering capacity, over the coming months.

My name is **Lavanya** I first came to Open Door Scotland in 2022 after being on the Long term unemployed programme for young mums. They gave me the opportunity to work with them on a 6 month contract. This was my first job in Scotland. I had come here in 2019 from India with my family. This job provided me with experience which led to my next job. Unfortunately, I was recently made redundant. I approached Open Door Scotland and they have given me a short-term opportunity.

Being from India I was nervous about working in Scotland but the staff all made me very welcome and they were very supportive.

# NOTES



**Copies of this report are available on our website or on request**  
Registered Office: Open Door Scotland, Almondbank Centre, Shiel Walk,  
Craigshill, Livingston, West Lothian, EH54 5HG  
Registered Charity: SCO08533