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# OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

**512**

significant conversations with our support agencies at our drop-ins

**8,009**

food parcels provided to people in need

**2.9**

people on average are helped with each referral

**40**

Events and workshops were held

**FROM THE START OF THE HUB IN AUGUST 2023 WE HAVE ACHIEVED**

**67**

successful onboarding with our partner support agencies

with **105** attendances

**30**

Volunteers help at our Hub foodbank

**45**

children and carers attended our Family event

**105**

volunteer hours per week

**12**

people took part in our focus group

# THE CRAIGMILLAR HUB

## What is the Hub?

The Hub is a partnership between the Edinburgh Food Project and the Thistle Foundation that brings together, under one roof, a suite of support tailored to meet the needs of the local community. An ambitious venture to meet the concerning levels of food insecurity in Edinburgh while also supporting people to break out of the cycle of poverty.

The community Hub model consists of 5 elements:

- **Shop style foodbank** offering emergency food with choice and dignity.
- **Money Advice Service** our in-house service that offers advice on benefits, debt and income maximisation.
- **12 Support Agencies** that support people to address poverty, exclusion and disability
- **Courses** (cooking and digital inclusion)
- **Seasonal Events** that bring the whole community together



The Hub opened in August 2023 at the Thistle Centre of Wellbeing right at the heart of the Craigmillar community.

## What makes the Hub successful?

**Our fantastic partnership with the Thistle Foundation.** Finding the perfect partner was crucial in making a success of the Hub. Thistle's fantastic support over the past year has meant that we have a space that meets the needs of our ambitious venture. The welcoming building and staff create an atmosphere of ease that enables relationships to be built with the people we support and wider Craigmillar community.



**Our Experts by Experience** who have direct experience of living in poverty and of the issues around it, have given their time and opinions, providing valuable insights on every aspect of what we do. They have shaped the design of the shopping lists that guide people as they choose their food along with suggestions on activities and agencies that should be available at the Hub. Our Experts by Experience have been consulted at every stage of the Hub's development and have been fundamental to its success.

**Our Incredible Volunteers** who give their time and tireless energy to the Hub each week. There are cups of tea to be made, referral numbers to be checked, shelves to be restocked, people to be supported. Vital to the Hub's success has been the compassion shown by our volunteers. They provide a listening ear to the people we support. Taking time to listen to those, often harrowing, stories is never easy but it's in those conversations that volunteers play a key role in introducing community members to the wider support available at the Hub. Joining the dots between people's challenging circumstances with the help that can support them out of crisis for good.

Our partnership with Support Agencies allows the Hub to act as a resource for the whole community. A place where, if you have a problem, someone at the Hub will be able to help or signpost you to someone who can help. They have provided invaluable advice and support over the last year that has seen many people find pathways out of poverty for good.

Our amazing Money Advice Service which provides a dedicated phone line, outreach support at our Hub, and engages in casework to help people with individual issues including benefit advice and appeals. Their long-term commitment to supporting people to maximise their income, while also providing budgeting advice has been transformative for people's finances. This support has seen many people we support reduce their need to access emergency food.



A big thank you to everyone who has contributed to making the first year of the Hub such a success.

# SPOTLIGHT ON OUR SUPPORT AGENCIES

After looking carefully at the factors that can lead people to fall into the trap of poverty, we brought together a group of specialist support agencies that provide expertise across a wide range of poverty related issues. These agencies run fortnightly drop-ins at the Hub providing the regular, dependable support that people in crisis so often need.



**Voice Ability** Provide advocacy for unpaid carers offering support with Guardianships, Mental Health Act tribunals and communicating with health and social care professionals.



**Real Jobs** part of **The Action Group** is a supported employment service to help people with a learning disability, autism, long term health condition or other support need to find paid work.



**Advocard** provide advocacy for people with mental health issues, people with problematic substance use, people who are in prison in Edinburgh, as well as those people experiencing problems with their benefits because of welfare reform.



**Venture Scotland** empower young adults, who are facing challenges in areas of their life, to improve their mental health and emotions through a progressive outdoor-based personal development programme.



**The Big Issue** is a social business that helps people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness earn a legitimate income and reintegrate into society.



**Salvation Army Digital Inclusion Team** help you get the most out of technology from learning how to use a smart phone to studying for qualifications online.



**Access to Industry** works with individuals to support them into education and employment.



**Vocal** provides support for unpaid carers in Edinburgh and Midlothian in all caring situations and relationships



**Changeworks** Home Energy Advice service provides advice to individuals on their energy use, helping them to make savings on their fuel bills by identifying qualifying grants, funds and ensuring people are on a tariff that is right for them.



**Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home** offer Pet Care Clinics supporting pet owners with: Basic behavioural queries, equipment to support training, advice on welfare, providing wellbeing checks and signposting to accessible vet appointments.

The logo for SACRO, featuring the word "sacro" in white lowercase letters on a black arrow-shaped background pointing to the right.

**ADITI** part of **SACRO** offers one-to-one wellbeing, support and advice for Black and Asian ethnic minority women of all religious backgrounds living in Edinburgh who have experienced or are currently experiencing domestic abuse or 'honour' based violence.

**Edinburgh Tenants Federation** works to ensure that tenants and residents of all landlords can participate fully in the development and implementation of proposals relating to the social, economic, physical and environmental regeneration of the communities of Edinburgh.



**Turning Point Scotland** are a homelessness and Prevention services provide support to those experiencing homelessness and individuals at risk of homelessness. We co-ordinate with a wide range of services to provide a whole system approach to supporting those we work with.

### Support Agency Reflection on the Hub by Scott Murphy of AdvoCard

The logo for Advo, featuring the word "Advo" in blue.The logo for Card, featuring the word "Card" in white on a green speech bubble background.

AdvoCard has been working with The Edinburgh Food Project for a number of years now, as part of the working group in the early stages of developing their hub model and providing an advocacy drop-in service in some their foodbank locations.

It has now been a year since we started a drop-in at the hub within the Thistle in the Craigmillar area of the city. The benefit that AdvoCard has within the partnership is being able to have a presence in the Hub on a regular basis, being able to meet people who we would not normally have the chance to meet.

A real focus of AdvoCard's is making independent advocacy accessible to all and this partnership allows us to do that. We are grateful for the time and space we are given at the Thistle. The benefit however is not just about people finding out more about AdvoCard but our team also becomes more familiar with other services and opportunities that the people we support may benefit from. Using the shared space at the Thistle allows us to network with other service providers and enhance our knowledge and understanding.

Overall, I would say ourselves and our advocacy partners have benefitted from our working relationship with The Edinburgh Food Project.

## Support Agency Reflection on the Hub by Nikki Cutler of Changeworks



I can't believe it's been a year already! It has been exciting to collaborate with Edinburgh Food Project and all the partner organisations to deliver the new Hub model.

The Hub model works in that it brings together a range of high-quality advice and support agencies in one place for those most in need to access them. It builds on the established and trusted relationship the local community has with Edinburgh Food Project and now provides more services in addition to emergency food.

This has been beneficial to Changeworks as it has enabled us to reach vulnerable clients who benefit from our support in North East Edinburgh - all in the very comfortable surroundings of the Thistle Foundation building. In addition, the change to a pantry style layout has been a well-received improvement and likely also played a part in attracting service users to the Hub.

There is a diverse range of support available to the Hub service users when they visit and there may be opportunity to further develop or encourage the cross referral between the partner organisations in the future. It would be useful to have a 'brief sheet' of all the other agencies with an outline of the services they can offer. This might help us direct clients better when using the Hub.



# EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Social isolation is often a factor associated with poverty. 1 in 4 people referred to foodbanks in the Trussell Trust network in Scotland are experiencing severe social isolation. The vision of our Hub included establishing a program of activities that not only met the needs of the community but also provided opportunities for people we support to come together, socialise and simply have fun. Below is an overview of activities and courses over the last year:

## Circle

Circle's 'Harbour' project offers holistic, whole family support for children, young people, and families impacted by complex social factors and parental substance use. At the Hub they offer a weekly 'Makers Group' that enables families to get creative through crafting together while also accessing the wider support that Circle provides.

## Salvation Army Digital Skills Course

A lack of digital skills can have a huge effect on people's ability to access the support and benefits they are entitled to as well as people's ability to connect with their community. The Salvation Army's Digital Skills course covered basic PC and phone skills, an introduction to the internet and helpful resources on keeping safe online.

## Family Event

In response to requests from our Experts by Experience to have more opportunities for families to have fun, a Family Fun Day was held in the summer. Think Circus provided circus skills workshops, there was a 'make your own pizza' stall and Nuffield Health provided healthy eating advice all in the beautiful gardens surrounding the Centre of Wellbeing.

## Edinburgh Food Social Cookery Classes

Cookery courses formed a neat link between the food people receive at our foodbank and how to prepare it. The classes were very popular and feedback from participants was that they would like to see more next year.



# CASE STUDY - A JOURNEY FROM ISOLATION AND GRIEF TO CONNECTION AND HOPE.

## How do you feel about life just now?

It's not good and it's not bad. When I'm at home it's bad days, when I'm at Thistle, it's good days. I'm around people, never alone. I'm with friends here, it's like a family because everybody is lovely and caring and always there, always listening. It gives me confidence when people listen to me. Knowing that I have people that I can talk to gives me a boost and encourages me to try new things. I do activities like tai chi, I go to the gym and volunteer at the foodbank. All these activities and friendships give me the spirit to carry on.

## What was your life like before?

I wasn't active before. My friend brought me here as my doctor had suggested it. They said it would be good for my mental health if I did activities. You see my partner passed away and I had stopped going out and looking after myself. I was binge eating for three months. My partner was my rock and when he passed away I felt lost. He was in a wheelchair for ten years so I was his full-time carer. The nurses only came in to do the medical stuff that I wasn't trained in. I did all the rest.

## Crossing the threshold

The first time I came through the door of The Hub it was strange as I didn't know anybody. My neighbour had been coming here for years so knew it well and she brought me the first time. I had butterflies in my stomach the first time. I knew I had to try this for me, I had to get my life back together. I'm not a quitter, I was determined. I had to do this.

***“If it wasn't for my friends here and the staff I don't know where I would be.”***

It was a struggle to start with. I felt that I didn't know anybody but I was able to stay in control by staying in the classes. I heard my partner's voice in my head saying I needed to get my life together. I tried some of the activities. Tai Chi is very relaxing, like martial arts. Your body is relaxed, your mind goes elsewhere - it stopped me thinking about my problems. I have a lot of bad memories from my past.

## Practical Support

When my partner died I had no income for two months because I had to wait for his death certificate to prove he had died before I could claim for Universal Credit. I was struggling to pay for food but I got linked to Edinburgh Food Project's, Money Advice Service. They found me a grant. I went into rent arrears; they helped me to sort that out too. If it wasn't for them, I wouldn't be where I am because I'm debt free now. I was in debt as I had to pay for the funeral. My Housing Officer also helped with the rent arrears and transferring the tenancy. I was so afraid of losing the house but that's all sorted.

## Now...

I can't wait to get to the Hub in the morning. I'm never in the house anymore which is a good thing. I go to my sisters every Sunday for my dinner but my friends at the Hub are family too. There's a closeness here and I'm not shy about speaking to all the staff. I got introduced to my 'friends friends', if you know what I mean? I told my story and they listened. That gave me the confidence to get out even more. The other volunteers at the foodbank helped me too by suggesting that I needed to get out there. If it wasn't for my friends here and the staff I don't know where I would be.

## Bringing hope to others

I began serving tea and coffees at the foodbank but then was asked to volunteer officially. Because people had helped me then I wanted to help others. I knew what that was like to be in their shoes. By helping others, it helps me. I love it. People can talk to me. I have always been a good listener. I started helping in small ways and have worked my way up and am now part of the team that helped me. I've got too many friends now!

## The Future

***“My hopes for the future are to be happy and try and socialise more. I need to keep moving on from my past and being here is helping me do that. I'm just taking it one step at a time.”***

I'm hoping to get into work next year. Maybe a caring role because I did that for my partner for years. The love that my partner and I had gave me hope through it all. I had a routine with my partner but I have a new routine now.

# FUTURE PLANS

The last year has been a whirlwind of activity and energy at the Hub. Our partnerships with Thistle Foundation and our support agencies, alongside the excellent work of our Money Advice Service has provided pathways for people to navigate their way out of poverty for good. We have learnt so much from listening to our Experts by Experience. Our dedicated volunteers have gone above and beyond time after time to provide a warm welcome to the people we support. So, what next?

Well, we have ambitious plans for the future. We know from looking at our referrals that more families are accessing food at the Hub compared to our other foodbank centres. While we have Circle's, 'Makers Group' creating a fun space for families to craft together, we need to do more to understand what is driving the challenges families in Craigmillar are facing and investigate how we can meet that need.

We've been delighted to have Aditi as one of our support agencies. We are pleased that, after several months of careful consultation, they are starting a women's-only, wellbeing group in January.

Our vital partnership with the Thistle Foundation has made so much possible this year but we know there are more ways we can work together. We have a shared vision of reaching local people with the support they need. Finding new, exciting ways to do that will be a priority next year. We are exploring the possibility of a starting a gardening group in a space near to the Thistle's Centre of Wellbeing. Not only would this provide fresh food to our foodbank but also a relaxing and therapeutic space for the whole community to use.

Our cookery classes with Edinburgh Food Social were extremely popular last year. We plan to consult with our budding chefs to find out what they would like from cookery classes in the New Year. Finally, we've connected with an enthusiastic group of local women who are keen to get their community more physically active. We're in the process of finding the right partner to make their dream a reality.

These exciting opportunities will only add to our already varied response to the acute need in Edinburgh today, meaning fewer people will need to use our food banks. Undoubtedly, next year, life at the Hub will continue to offer up fresh opportunities, surprising insights and more ways for us to support people out of poverty for good.



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