



the bridge

CONNECTING HOME WITH HOPE



IMPROVING EVERYDAY WELLBEING

PARLIAMENTARY RECOGNITION FOR THE BRIDGE

In March The Bridge was approached by our local MSP, Angela Constance, asking if she could submit a motion to the Scottish parliament on the opening of our new Wellbeing Hub.

We were delighted that our work to improve the everyday wellbeing of people across West Lothian was recognised at a national level. A huge thanks has to go to all of our volunteers and staff for their continuous effort in supporting people through the many crisis periods faced in an everyday setting and the hope that they bring through our services.



Motion S5M-16214: Angela Constance, Almond Valley, Scottish National Party, Date Lodged: 07/03/2019 **Opening of Bridge Wellbeing Hub in Livingston**

That the Parliament congratulates the Bridge Community Project on the recent opening of the Bridge Wellbeing Hub in Livingston; recognises that the Bridge improves the everyday wellbeing of people in West Lothian through the provision of financial and emotional counselling services; acknowledges the Bridge's contribution to mental health in the community through delivering over 500 counselling sessions since 2016, and to financial wellbeing through its support of over 100 families with money advice and long-term financial wellbeing support; thanks the local volunteers who dedicate over 4,500 hours each year, and wishes them continued success in empowering the residents of the Almond Valley.

Supported by: Rona Mackay, Kenneth Gibson, James Dornan, Stuart McMillan, Sandra White, Bill Kidd, Richard Lyle, David Torrance, Miles Briggs, Stewart Stevenson, Gil Paterson, Jenny Gilruth, Fulton MacGregor

CHARITY OF THE YEAR

We were delighted to be nominated and then chosen by the staff at WESLO housing as their charity of the year for 2019.20. This is a huge privilege for us and great to have the support of a local partner organisation who shares in the value of our work.





It's been a busy start to 2019 for the Financial Wellbeing team. Over the past few months we have been joined by some new volunteers who are currently going through the training process. We have also seen an increase in the number of new clients been seen, while also supporting more complicated situations with our current client base.

The feedback from our clients continues to be excellent with us now seeing the benefit of having both the Money Advice and Bridge Support projects working together to improve financial wellbeing through our newly introduced Hope Plan.

What do we offer?

Money Advice

Free, confidential support to those dealing with financial pressures

Bridge Support

Tailored additional practical support for those going through the money advice process

PARTNERSHIP IN FAULDHOUSE



We are delighted to be, once again, working in the Fauldhouse and Breich Valley area providing direct Financial Wellbeing support in partnership with Fauldhouse Community Development Trust. Each week we are working with clients from the area and each month we are raising awareness of our work locally. Much of our work here is directed at those who, for various reasons, find it difficult to access mainstream support.



"The Bridge is invaluable to people who are in my position, I was suicidal at the time. You are a godsend."



TEAM WORK

Our team have been enjoying a range of training opportunities over the past few months. We were delighted to run our first internal Bridge Foundational course that gave our team the chance to shape the future of the service.

We recently attended the Garden for Life project (pictured right) where we were able to learn more about the fantastic work of the project, do some planting in the polytunnel and consider how we can refer our own clients in the future.

More info on their work can be found here:
<http://polbethandwestcaldergarden.weebly.com/>



Contact the team on 01506 238980 for more information about the service



A SERVICE IN DEMAND

What do we offer?

Affordable counselling to those aged 18 or over who live within West Lothian

fully trained counsellors or those currently undertaking their diploma.

a range of different counselling modalities

A block of 8 week sessions

Since the launch of our service in 2016 we have seen a sharp rise in the number of people looking for affordable talk therapy options in West Lothian. As a service we have yet to actively advertise what we do, yet we have a 6 month waiting list in place at present. It is clear that the demand for our work is significant.

Over the past year we have increased the capacity of the service through:

- employing a part time counselling coordinator 10 hrs per week
- increasing our team of volunteer counsellors from 4 to 8
- increasing the variety of when sessions are available
- moving to the Bridge Wellbeing Hub

We are aware that the demand for our work will only increase as more people are made aware of the service.

"Counselling has been life changing for me. I now feel more positive going forward in life and feel a huge burden has been lifted from me."



PAY IT FORWARD?

With an increase in demand has come an increase in the costs associated with running our service. We do keep costs at a minimum, but we invest significantly in supporting our volunteer team to ensure that we offer the best possible service to clients.

Average donation from clients per session

£ 5

Cost per session for Bridge to run service

£ 4 0

Would you consider *paying it forward* to support a client through an 8 week counselling session? Please contact us for more information.

HEALTH CENTRE SUCCESS

At the start of the year we completed a very successful pilot project in partnership with Dedridge Health Centre. This involved us working directly with their clients either within the Health centre or up at our Hub. During the pilot we completed 77% of our sessions at the health centre with only 1 no show during that period. Feedback has been excellent with one client commenting "it is the best thing my doctor has ever done for me".

We continue to work with the health centre through them directly referring to our new Wellbeing Hub.

BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT COURSE



We recently completed our first bereavement support course in partnership with Livingston United Parish Church and Co-op Funeral care.

The course provided participants the opportunity to explore themes around dealing with loss, health, practicalities such as cooking, finances, making sense of socialising and whats next?. The Bridge provided speakers for each week of the course and feedback has been excellent. We intend to run more courses in due course.

"I was in a difficult and lonely place, distraught after my loss. The course was very informative, friendly and the team were kind and supportive."

CURRENT POSITIONS

Bridge Support Adviser

This is a growing role that is embedded within our Financial Wellbeing team. We are looking for volunteers who are at their heart, "people, people". The project provides additional support to those who are going through difficult financial situations and working with clients, we look to rebuild a sense of hope again.

This role can be diverse and has seen us support people with shopping visits, form filing, college applications, attending appointments or signposting. Please contact us to find out more.

ALISON EXCELLING

"Before I started volunteering at the Bridge Community Project I felt like I was getting no where with the job centre trying to get a job in Administration. The Bridge Community Project offered me everything I was looking for. Everywhere I wanted to apply was looking for people with experience only and I did not have any in Administration yet. I was advised to look into volunteering to get the experience that I needed to help me get into work and The Bridge Community Project was there to support me moving forwards.



I have really enjoyed my time at The Bridge Community Project, all the people that I have met and been warm, welcoming and supportive. They have been getting me involved in lots of different tasks to help me build my experience in Administration. This has helped me with my communication with other people in person and over the phone. This has made an impact on my day-to-day life at home too and I'm a lot more confident in myself. Its helped me become more comfortable in situations I was not sure of and feel I'm much more relaxed looking for a job and I'm confident to hold one down in the future."



WEST LOTHIAN VOLUNTEERS' CELEBRATION 2019

The Bridge is proud to be part of the West Lothian Volunteer Network, a group of like minded voluntary organisations who promote the positive benefits of volunteering. This year we will be part of volunteers week which runs from the 1st -7th of June and also part of a celebration event on the 21st June held at Livingston football stadium.



WELCOME SARAH!



We welcomed Sarah to our team last month as our Office Administrator. Sarah has already settled in well to the team and is enjoying the role of being the office DJ.

As well as working at the Bridge, Sarah is about to embark on her diploma in counselling. We wish her all the very best as she starts her course!

SHARING OUR VISION

In January 2019 we moved into our new Wellbeing Hub. This has enabled us to have more space to develop our current services as well as looking into new areas of service delivery, including training and bereavement care.

The building has 2 floors and is made up of the following:
 Ground floor (Admin space, 3 client rooms, training space, kitchen)
 Upper floor (Admin space, kitchen and 3 individual rooms)

This is an excellent space and one that we have until at least December 2019.



Bridge Wellbeing Hub

Having enjoyed being in the space for the past few months we see a clear wider benefit for its use by other like minded organisations. We are therefore keen to have conversations with other organisations who would be interested in developing a shared space for the Third Sector. If this is something of interest then please contact alan@bridgecommunityproject.org.uk.

BUILDING THE BRIDGE

Bridge Builders are the people who provide the financial foundation on which we are currently building our services. However, with our work growing we have seen our core funding being stretched to meet an increase in demand from clients. If you are in a position to do so, we would love for you to support our work in the following ways:



We have a range of people who give to us on a monthly basis to support our growing work. If this is something that interests you then we have partnered with Virgin Money giving and you can find out more details on our website at <https://bridgecommunityproject.org.uk/give/>



We have teamed up with easy fundraising who work with online retailers to give cashback to charities on purchases made online. If you are changing a TV deal or shopping online then the retailer donates a percentage to the chosen charity at no cost to the consumer, see here. <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/bridgecommunityproject/>



We are part of the Amazon Smile programme where amazon give a percentage of purchase price to an account holders chosen charity. Again this comes at no additional cost to the consumer and is a great way of supporting the Bridge. If you are an Amazon customer, be sure to sign up for the Bridge Community Project.



This year we will be entering a team into the Edinburgh Kiltwalk to raise vital funds for our work. If you are free on the 15th of September and would like to join us then please get in contact!

CONTACT DETAILS

01506 238980
www.bridgecommunityproject.org.uk
[/bridgecommunityproject](https://www.facebook.com/bridgecommunityproject)

WITH THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS





the bridge

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IMPACT REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2017 - AUGUST 2018



the bridge

financial wellbeing service



63 households supported



Average debt of 12k



74% have children



Average household income £1480

Additional Bridge Support provided:



shopping assistance, utility swaps, scribing, listening, filling systems, back into education, open new bank account, going to appointments.

Clients average score out of 5:

I feel less stressed

4.1

I am happy with advice

4.9

I am more optimistic about my future

4.9



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counselling service

45 clients supported

16

appointments available per week

311 sessions completed



6 month waiting list in place



322% increase on previous years session numbers



Outreach at Dedridge Health Centre

“

I was extremely ill when I made initial contact with them as my whole life had spiralled out of control. By involving the Bridge, they were able to help me get my life back together. ”

5

=

1.7

part-time employees = full-time equivalent

Operations

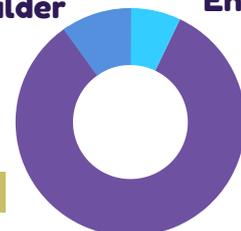
Finance



68% increase in income

Bridge Builder
10%

Enterprise
7%



Income: 70 k

Expenditure: 49 k

Grant Funding
83%

25

4500

=

2.4

volunteers gave hours = full-time equivalent

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