



the bridge

CONNECTING HOME WITH HOPE



SUPPORTING DURING COVID

All of us at The Bridge hope you and your family have been safe and well over the past few months during what has been a very testing time. The response in West Lothian from the voluntary sector has been excellent with a range of local charities coming together to provide vital food supplies and practical support.

At The Bridge, we have been working tirelessly to ensure that our services can continue to operate. This has not been a straightforward process, but thanks to some additional funding and our fantastic team of volunteers and staff, we have been able to offer all of our current services remotely to existing and new clients.

We recognise the added financial and emotional burden the current crisis is having on those across West Lothian and are now taking steps to increase our current capacity to ensure we can support as many people as possible moving forward.

“I AM SO GRATEFUL FOR ALL YOU ARE DOING FOR US DURING COVID, I AM SO OVERWHELMED BY YOUR KIND HEARTS AND COMPASSION, THANK YOU SO MUCH”

CELEBRATING 5 YEARS!

What seems like a lifetime ago now, we gathered together at the end of January to celebrate the work of the Bridge over the past 5 years. We were joined by Cllr Kirsteen Sullivan (pictured) who shared her thoughts on our work and its linkage with the local anti-poverty strategy in West Lothian.



It was great to see so many people in attendance to share another milestone in our journey, we look forward to the next 5 years plus!



FINANCIAL SUPPORT

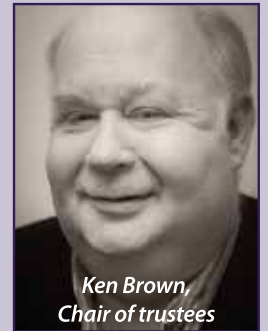
We would like to thank the following funders who have provided us with vital funds over the past few months, enabling us to adapt and continue to offer our services remotely during the COVID crisis.

Third Sector Resilience Fund
 :: Wellbeing fund :: SCVO:
 Community Response, Recovery
 and Resilience Fund



REBUILDING HOPE

The Bridge continues to make solid progress in meeting its key aim of improving everyday wellbeing. Both our main services are being regularly accessed by people across West Lothian who find themselves in difficult circumstances. It is humbling to hear that over time, with the help and support of our committed team, hope of a different future becomes a possibility for many. This is why we exist.



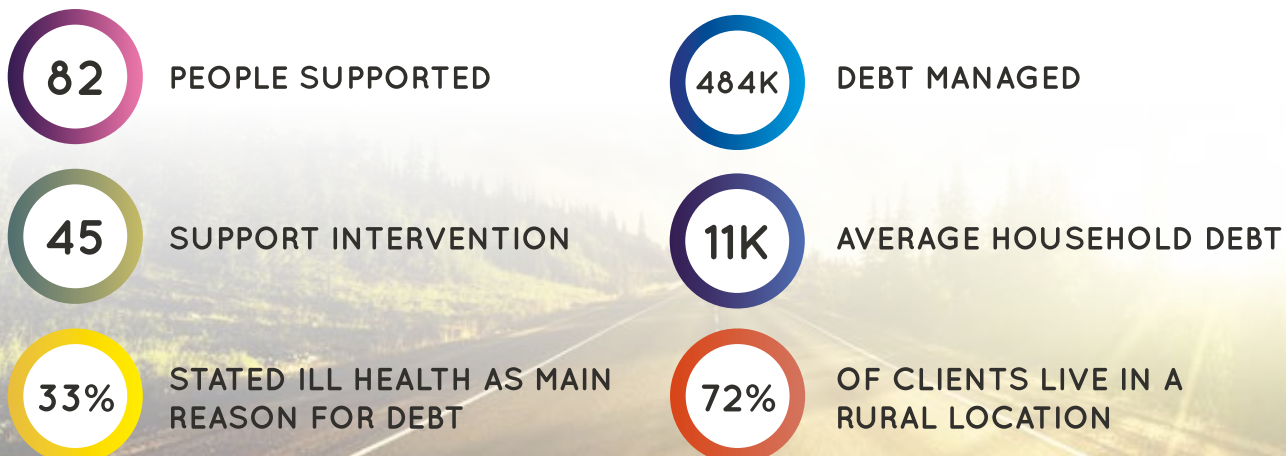
OUR IMPACT (SEPTEMBER 2018 - AUGUST 2019)

Improving financial wellbeing

We continue to focus our work on those within our communities who require longer term support and mainly within a rural location where our home visiting model makes a direct difference. Over the past year our work has seen people become less stressed, have improved mental wellbeing, have less debt and improve their independent decision making.



the bridge
financial wellbeing service



Improving emotional wellbeing

The counselling service continues to grow from strength to strength with more volunteers coming on board and more sessions being offered at our wellbeing hub. The positive impact of this work continues to be seen with clients providing very positive feedback on the impact that counselling has had on their life circumstances.



the bridge
counselling service



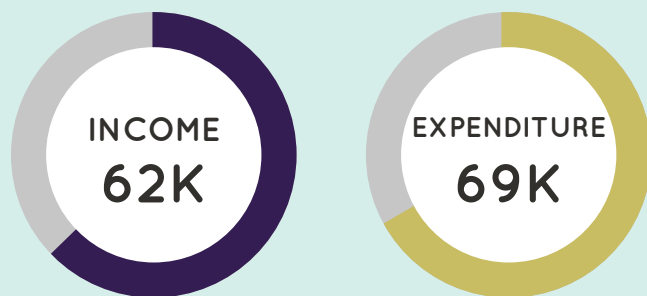
Volunteers

We have seen an increase in the number of volunteers throughout our work, with this increasing to nearly 40. Thanks to funding from Impact Funding Partners, we have hours dedicated to the recruitment and support of new volunteers and this has been vital to ensure we can adequately support them.



Finances

With increased spending, in part due to our office move, our last financial year was challenging. The new location has however enabled us to develop our services further and the forecast for the coming financial year is much brighter.



Impact

Clients across our services reported:

- ❖ **Being less stressed**
- ❖ **Improvement in emotional wellbeing**
- ❖ **Improvement in financial wellbeing**
- ❖ **Improved resilience**

More detailed statistics can be found on our individual impact reports for each of our services, which can be accessed on our website.

"The Bridge manages to fill an important need for a niche service in offering intensive, patient and unconditional help that goes wider than financial advice to those who for one reason or another aren't for the moment managing on their own.

The really important thing is that vulnerable people are being guided and supported to see a positive way through what seemed like insurmountable challenges, and to dare think that life is worth living again. We've seen this many times now. It's real, and it's giving people hope.

It's great to be involved in the team doing this work."

- BRIDGE VOLUNTEER



MEET CARY, ONE OF OUR COUNSELLORS

"I approached The Bridge for a volunteer Counsellor position as part of my Diploma in Counselling course, and was struck by the friendliness of everyone who worked there. I was immediately made to feel at home and a valued part of the team. It felt a very safe place to work.

Having qualified at the end of last year as a Counsellor I decided to stay on at the Bridge as a volunteer and continue to do the work I love. For me, being a Counsellor is a privilege, being able to walk alongside another person in whatever journey they are on, not judging them, not trying to fix them, but offering them unconditional support in whatever they may be experiencing. I look forward to meeting many more clients in my role here."



NEW STAFF



In March we welcomed Manjeet to the role of Support Lead, a new role at The Bridge. This is a role that will provide additional practical and emotional support to our financial wellbeing clients. Manjeet started with us just as the lockdown started and she has adapted brilliantly in difficult circumstances. She explains:

"Having only started at The Bridge two weeks before lockdown, I feel like I have been in this role forever. Considering the role is relatively new, there were clear guidelines on how I could support our money advisors in ensuring the financial wellbeing of our clients. Since lockdown, we noticed the need for a listening ear as well as a connection to the outside world. I have provided that support over the phone, developing great relationships with our clients and am now also beginning to offer some financial support. I am a bit of a dinosaur when it comes to technology, so the thought of starting a new job remotely did overwhelm me but with the support of a fantastic team, I feel I have got there. Thank you to everyone at The Bridge."

DEVELOPMENT TRUSTS

Over recent years we have developed good relationships with local community development trusts. Building on our work over the past 3 years we will continue to work with Fauldhouse Community Development Trust to provide Financial Wellbeing support to families and individuals in this area.

More recently we have been working with West Calder and Harburn Community Development trust to deliver counselling to members of this West Lothian community. For more details on both please contact your relevant development trust.



www.fauldhouse.org.uk/
01501 773 699

www.westcalder.org/development-trust/
cdt@westcalder.org



WESLO SUPPORT

We were delighted to have been chosen as WESLO's charity of the year last year and this week we received all the fundraising money, totalling just over 2k. We would like to say a huge thank you to all of the staff at WESLO for their support.

The money will go directly into our Financial Wellbeing service, providing vital monies as we support people being affected by COVID19.

weslo
housing management

Thank
you

GROWING DEMAND

Last year we witnessed a significant increase in the demand for our front line services, with us having to close both of our waiting lists.

With demand increasing, we have looked to increase the capacity of our services through increasing staffing hours and supporting more volunteers. During the past 6 months we have received a number of significant grant investments which have helped us make this transition.



We would like to thank the following funders for their recent investment and support:

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT | ROBERTSON TRUST | FISCAF
 ALBERT HUNT TRUST | NANCIE MASSIE CHARITABLE TRUST
 GORE | COMIC RELIEF | SCHUH | FOYLE FOUNDATION
 FAULHOUSE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TRUST
 WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL MODERNISATION FUND | AWARDS FOR ALL

ENTERPRISE

We have recently secured some grant investment that will enable us to explore and implement options for the Bridge to generate some much needed trading income. Over the coming year we will be exploring 2 areas of development:

Counselling: Complementing our affordable service, we will explore options for us to support a counselling social enterprise that will enable like minded counsellors to use our facilities at the Bridge Wellbeing Hub and importantly, create a supportive counselling community.

Training: Before lockdown we were able to trial some bespoke training days on subjects ranging from listening, to mental health. We would like to build on these courses and be in a position to offer these more widely.



BRIDGE COFFEE

We have partnered with a coffee roaster to create our very own fair trade filter coffee brand and over the past 6 months our staff and volunteers have been enjoying having the chance to taste test it. The feedback has been brilliant and our hope is to launch it some time this year once we have finished the design of the brand.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO
YOU GIVING IT A GO!



BRIDGE BUILDER

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 through a one off or monthly donation.

Visit www.bridgecommunityproject.org.uk/give for more details.



GET IN TOUCH

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Email: admin@bridgecommunityproject.org.uk

Find us on Facebook: [bridgecommunityproject](https://www.facebook.com/bridgecommunityproject)