



the bridge

CONNECTING HOME WITH HOPE

## IMPACT REPORT SEPTEMBER 24 - AUGUST 25

### IMPROVING EVERYDAY WELLBEING

# 402

PEOPLE SUPPORTED

# 3

WELLBEING SERVICES

## 117

Individuals supported with financial wellbeing

## 235

Individuals supported with 1 to 1 counselling

## 52

Individuals supported with groups and courses

## Connecting Home with Hope

This year's impact report marks another significant chapter in our organisation's journey. It has been a year of consolidation, growth, and renewed focus, made possible by the extraordinary dedication of our staff and volunteers. Their commitment continues to shape everything we do – from delivering vital support to individuals and families, to nurturing spaces where wellbeing, belonging, and connection can thrive. Our Wellbeing Hub has continued to flourish, strengthening its role as a welcoming and vibrant centre for community, personal growth, and positive change.

Our three core services have remained in high demand, reflecting the ongoing and evolving needs within our community. We have continued to walk alongside those we support, offering practical guidance and compassionate care during challenging times.

Partnership working remains central to our approach. By collaborating closely with local organisations – particularly across rural communities – we have strengthened our reach, enhanced our responsiveness, and ensured that support is tailored to the unique needs of the people we serve.

Following last year's leadership transition, this year has been centred on strengthening our foundations and shaping a clear path forward. Under the leadership of our CEO, Siobhan, we have taken time to reflect, refine our priorities, and sharpen our strategic direction, ensuring we are well positioned to grow sustainably and respond confidently to the needs of our community in the years ahead.

As we look forward, we do so with clarity, confidence, and determination. Our focus remains on deepening impact, strengthening partnerships, and building a resilient organisation that can continue to meet the needs of our community. Thank you for your ongoing support as we move into this next chapter together.



# the bridge

financial wellbeing service

Our **Financial Wellbeing** team have been able to support **117** individuals in a person centred way. An additional **47** individuals were supported through our Eat Well cooking sessions, building resilience and essential life skills, making up our total below of **164** people supported this year.

We primarily worked with individuals living in **rural areas** and those experiencing **mental health challenges**, with many clients disclosing multiple areas of **vulnerability**.

<b>164</b> Individuals supported	<b>382</b> Support Interventions	<b>£413,964</b> Debt Supported
Majority of clients live in Rural areas	<b>14</b> Cases closed	<b>13 out of 14</b> Closed clients reported Mental Health Vulnerability:
<b>2 months</b> Average waiting time for first appointment	<b>13</b> Separate vulnerability categories reported by 13 clients	<b>Debt Management Plan</b> The most common debt solution
<b>21</b> Group sessions delivered	<b>0</b> Complaints	<b>100%</b> Client Service Satisfaction

### Our impact has ensured that clients:



are less stressed



keep on top of finances



have improved mental wellbeing



more money per month (+ £100)



are more connected to their community



have less debt

“ The bridge helped me through a difficult time in my life. Having the support and knowing someone was there to help made the difference. Rather than putting my head in the sand I had to confront my debt head on which helped me to plan and move on. ”

“ Today I wouldn't be happy with my life if it hadn't been for the Bridge. It has taken away a lot of stress to let me move forward. ”



the bridge  
financial wellbeing service

As an organisation supporting predominantly vulnerable adults, we implemented additional safeguards to mitigate the risk of self-harm, including:



Offering **home visits**, meetings in **confidential** public areas, or **close to clients** home. Online meetings are also available



Our service is **patient, adaptable** and **versatile**. We offer a **holistic individual focused** service that is **not time restricted**.



**Accessible** parking and disability toilets available



Our **interview rooms** are on the ground floor with **easy access** and are designed to create a **homely atmosphere**.



We operate a **triage system** to identify clients with **urgent** or **vulnerable needs**.



We aim to **give** clients the time that they need and we are always ready to **listen**. All clients are treated with **respect** and **sensitivity** to their **needs**.



Every **client** has indicated a **personalised debt option** preference which our centre has **respected**.



All categories of **vulnerability** are recorded to ensure each client is provided with all **support** they need to avoid any risk of **additional harm**.



Regular **training** about **vulnerability** and **mental health** is offered to volunteers and staff.



Our service has strong **connections** with other organisations so our clients are often referred or signposted to places that can offer **additional support**.



Every **Financial Wellbeing** client has an opportunity to use our **Bridge Counselling** service **free of charge**.



**Our support service also offers a range of Practical Support which is focused on being person centred and will improve someones financial wellbeing. This has included**



- ✓ Budgeting packs and 1 to 1 budgeting advice
- ✓ Aldi Vouchers & Energy top ups
- ✓ Signposting for emergency support
- ✓ Volunteer opportunities and community connection
- ✓ Support with appointments
- ✓ Small community grants
- ✓ Support with warm home discounts
- ✓ Support for families

**We have developed a new group course that is focused on Cook Well on a Budget**

- ✓ 1 to 1 cooking & recipe bags
- ✓ Group cooking & recipe bags



**Classes include:**

- ✓ Easy to follow recipes
- ✓ Recipe cards to take home
- ✓ Money savings tips
- ✓ Time savings tips

**Classes cover:**

- ✓ 30- minute meals
- ✓ One pan wonders
- ✓ Family favourites
- ✓ Cooking for one



**We continue to deliver our Spend Smart, Eat Well group course which is focused on budgeting and healthy eating.**

**Group courses:**

Managing money  
Eat Well on a budget



**Exploring topics of:**

- ✓ Financial peace of mind
- ✓ Creating a budget
- ✓ Easy ways to save
- ✓ Tips to find the best deals
  
- ✓ Save on food shopping
- ✓ Meal Planning
- ✓ Understanding food labels
- ✓ Creating a meal plan

**CLIENT STORY:**

Fiona, participated in a two-part Spend Smart, Eat Well course delivered at the local organisation, which focused on budgeting and low-cost cooking. She thoroughly enjoyed the sessions and reported feeling more confident in managing her money, creating meal plans, and budgeting effectively.

During the course, she recognised the need to address her existing credit card debt, which had reached £11,218 across three cards. As a retiree, she had been using her savings to make repayments of £497 per month, but these funds had now been depleted.

Following the course, she made a self-referral to our Money Advice Service, where one of our advisers carried out a full financial assessment and recommended a pro-rata payment plan as the most sustainable option.

As a result, she now makes affordable monthly payments of £69.17. She has expressed immense relief and satisfaction, feeling that there is now “light at the end of the tunnel.” With a clear plan in place, she reports feeling relaxed, in control, and optimistic about her financial future.

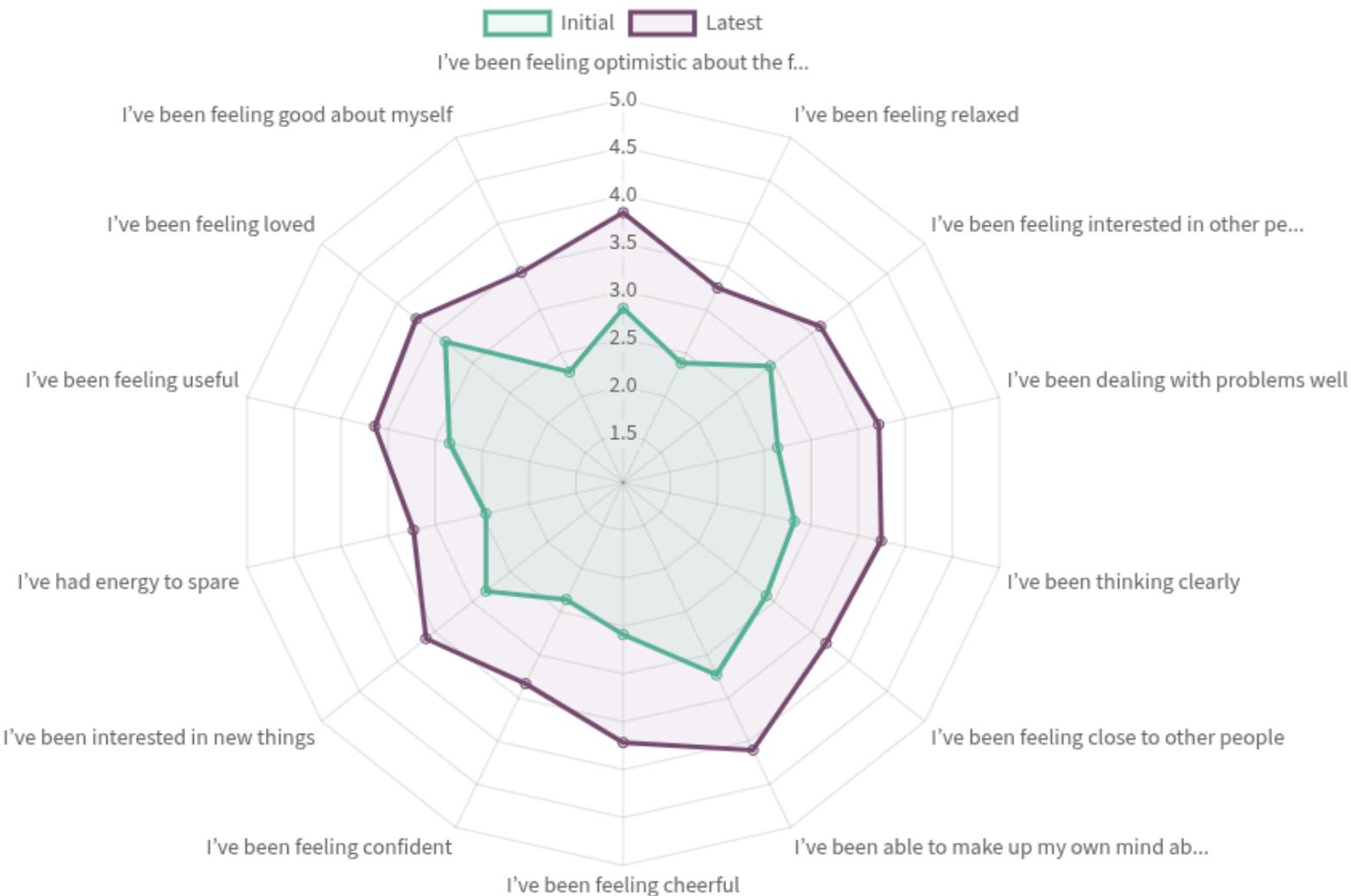


Our Counselling team have been able to support **235** individuals through an Initial Consultation further supporting **183** individuals to engage with the service enabling them to improve their emotional wellbeing while offering **2330** counselling sessions. Our service provides affordable mental health support in a safe environment.

### The most common presenting issues are

ANXIETY/STRESS    DEPRESSION    BEREAVEMENT    TRAUMA    SUICIDAL IDEATION

We used the Warwick Edinburgh Evaluation tool to measure a clients response before and after counselling. The results give a clear visual representation of the impact made.





**90%** of clients indicated an increase in their ability to cope with their emotions

**85%** of clients indicated an increase in being able to understand their own life circumstances

**74%** of clients indicated an increase in their resilience

**77%** of clients indicated an increase in their self esteem

“

I was very stuck following my divorce and a difficult situation at work and became very unwell. I was looking for a way out but didn't have the tools for this and I could only think I wanted everything to stop and couldn't be here anymore. Counselling helped me discover the tools I needed specifically for my situation and me personally that enabled me to start moving forward with my life. This was done in such a way almost like a journey, so I realised what I needed with guidance rather than someone telling me. I found that extremely helpful. If I every get stuck again those tools will be there when I need them.

”

“

I had an awful time prior to the Bridge with getting the right help and someone who actually heard me I was struggling with PTSD and my self esteem due to a abusive relationship but I feel so much better and able to manage my symptoms

”

“

I applied for counselling as a last resort due to feeling totally overwhelmed with life (especially family). I gained understanding on how adverse childhood experiences had impacted on how I thought, felt and responded to situations in my adult life and how it was negatively affecting my mental and physical health. Learning about boundaries, saying no and understanding the importance of acknowledging my own feelings and needs has given me the tools to improve my health and relationships with the people who are close to me.

”

“

I always put everyone before myself and down tools to help. Even though I knew I was struggling I would keep going until I realised I can't live like this being so depended on. I learnt to say no that I was busy and more so I make time for myself.

”

“

I came in as felt very lost in who I am and struggling with grief. But from the sessions learnt I had so much past trauma that was holding me back in life and we focused on these as grief was still too much deal with. There has been a huge shift in me although it's still a work in progress but learning to value myself and create healthy boundaries had made the biggest difference in my life. Will always be ever so grateful for these sessions with my counsellor who consistently encouraged me and understood me.

”

Our Stepping Stones to Wellbeing team offers groups and courses to support Emotional Wellbeing. This past year, the team has been able to support fifty-two individuals to improve their emotional wellbeing through participating in ten groups and courses. Due to a change in staff funding, we had to reduce the frequency of the groups. Going forward we have recruited new staff enabling an increase in course frequencies without affecting the integrity of course offerings.

## ***Our current suite of groups and courses:***



### **BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT COURSE - A SIX WEEK COURSE**

The purpose of the course is to provide a safe place for people living with loss to explore, in the company of others, their understanding and experience of bereavement. All these activities take place in a small group format, providing an informal and confidential environment. This year, four courses were conducted with a total of 17 participants.



### **ANXIETY MATTERS - A THREE WEEK COURSE**

The course explores anxiety and how it can affect our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. We keep course numbers small to reduce the anxiety of large groups of people, helping people to feel at ease and be able to learn and participate without fear. This session featured two courses that supported seven participants, helping them reduce social anxiety while learning new coping skills, psychoeducation, and practical information for everyday life.



### **LOOKING AFTER YOUR MENTAL WELLBEING - A FIVE WEEK GROUP**

This group discusses "Mental Wellbeing" and encourages participants to reflect on their experiences. We had one course with seven participants. The course helps build awareness and acceptance that mental wellbeing is a lifelong journey for everyone! We also aim to provide helpful stepping stones for participants to put in place moving forward.



### **EMOTIONAL LIFE JACKET COURSE - A ONE DAY COURSE**

Our Emotional Life Jacket course is a practical all-day course held at a local woodland retreat centre. Participants have the opportunity to discover ideas and resources to support emotional and physical well-being. These include ideas on improving sleep, gentle yoga for beginners, the benefits of aromatherapy and mindful walking. In the year to August 2025, we ran one course with ten participants.



### **READING FOR WELLBEING - A FIVE WEEK GROUP**

The newest addition to our offerings is the Reading for Wellbeing group, designed for those who love reading and want to use it as a way to learn about wellbeing topics like coping with anxious thoughts and nurturing self-compassion. Between September 2024 and August 2025, we ran two courses with eleven participants overall.



“ Getting to hear other people sharing experiences I relate to made me feel less alone. It motivated me to take a more active approach to feeling better and understanding my anxieties and habits I can build on to make them easier to deal with. ”

“ I have learned new things and have had a chance to share ideas, The course has given me more tools to help me with my wellbeing and I have felt connected to other people. It helped me enhance self compassion coupled with useful CBT techniques...self compassion will help me strengthen my resolve and distress tolerance. ”

**Reading for Wellbeing group**

“ It was nice that I was never forced to speak or share ideas/own experiences if I did not wish to. The environment we were in was also nice, and free of judgement. ”

It was especially lovely to speak to others and share similar experiences. It was also great that there was a wide variety of ages highlighting how anxiety affects us all in different ways and different times in our lives. ”

**Anxiety Matters Course**

“ I have gained an insight into the physical process in my body when feeling anxious and I think this will help my understanding of how to cope with my physical symptoms. ”

**Anxiety Matters Course**

*Thanks for the feedback!*



“ Being able to tell my story was challenging but very beneficial. Also hearing the guest speaker talk about her loss was very powerful and reassuring. ”

“ The course absolutely had a positive impact, so much so I'm going to miss my Monday evenings. It gave me a sense of purpose and it was lovely to be able to cry, laugh and talk about my husband without being judged or feel like I was 'boring' everybody. ”

**Bereavement Support Course**

“ I loved the aromatherapy and acupressure session. I knew smell was important to me but really highlighted it. ”

“ The “letting go” [mindfulness] activity was amazing to do in a group for moral support. ”

“ Everything is amazing. thank you for being so welcoming. ”

**Emotional Life Jacket Course**

## STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

None of what we have accomplished this past year would have been possible without the unwavering commitment, professionalism, and compassion of our staff and volunteers.

Our staff team bring expertise, resilience, and a deep sense of care to their work every single day, often going above and beyond to ensure those we support feel heard, valued, and empowered.

Alongside them, our dedicated volunteers generously give their time and skills, strengthening our services and enriching our community. In the past year our volunteers have contributed over 125 hours per week across all parts of our service. Together, our staff and volunteers are the driving force behind our impact and the heart of everything we do.

Over the past year, we have continued to invest in and strengthen our volunteer team across all services, made possible through Bank of Scotland Funding. Their support has enabled us to build greater capacity – particularly within our counselling service – increasing the number of clients we are able to support each week.

As we look ahead, we do so with confidence in the strength, experience, and dedication of our staff and volunteer teams. We will continue building on this strong foundation – investing in development, nurturing leadership, and creating opportunities for growth across the organisation. Together, our team is well placed not only to deliver high-quality services to our community, but also to warmly welcome, mentor, and integrate new volunteers as they join us, ensuring our impact continues to grow sustainably.

## PARTNERSHIP

We partnered with The Mood Project to secure funding from Advice UK, strengthening our collaboration to deliver tailored money advice through one-to-one sessions and group courses.

## SCOTTISH CHARITY AWARDS



We were proud to support our Chair of the Board of Trustees, Ken Brown, on his successful nomination as Trustee of the Year at the SCVO Charity Awards, and we extend our sincere thanks to him for his outstanding leadership and commitment to our work since the inception of the Bridge over 10 years ago.