



Annual Report 2023 - 24

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For those of you who would like to see moving pictures
You can check out some of the stories of who was involved
and why, just go to.....

The four part documentary <https://socialaction.scot/let-the-people-sing/>

This documentary comes in four parts. You can engage with the YouTube playlist of all four parts or with the individual parts linked below. (if you are reading this online)

- [Part 1 – The Bothy](#)
- [Part 2 – The People](#)
- [Part 3 – The Past](#)
- [Part 4 – The Challenge](#)

BREIF HISTORY

Background to Let the People Sing: A group of local people in recovery from addiction in the Craigmillar area of Edinburgh, were alarmed that most of the services for people with addictions and problematic substance use had been withdrawn from the local area during Covid19. There had been no consultation, meanwhile drug deaths had been spiraling in the area and the rest of Scotland.

A Three Point plan of action: was established with support from Connecting Craigmillar a community development project in the area. A forum, collective advocacy and a recovery community Centre were proposed.

Craigmillar and Niddrie Recovery Forum was set up to gain support and seek out solutions. People with lived and living experience of addictions then set up a charity called Let the People Sing, named after the first book written by Craigmillar Activist Helen Crummy.

Collective advocacy was also initiated with the help of the charity 'Advocard' the 'collective recovery advocacy in Craigmillar' or '**CRAIC**' group was formed and pressure was put on Local Authorities and NHS get services returned to the local area.

Recovery Commnity Center: LtPS then raised funds and set up **The Bothy** a recovery community center on the main street in Craigmillar with the purpose of making recovery visible and offering opportunities to volunteer and assist local people to begin their own recovery journeys.

Local people, many who had lost loved ones and family members or who were currently losing them to addiction and substance use, assisted in setting up and furnishing the nascent recovery center. This included local businesses whose owners had also lost loved ones.

Partnerships and collaborative working has also been set up to bring in additional resources and expertise. Turning Point Scotland, Edinburgh Community Yoga, Advocard and Recovery Coaching Scotland are just 4 of the many organisations engaged at the Bothy on a regular basis.

Finance and Funding support came through the local community fundraising, the Social Action Enquiry Scotland who gave vital 'seed funding' to open the Bothy and employ a Coordinator. Much support-in-kind was supplied by Connecting Craigmillar and the Thistle Foundation who provided much needed Community Development and Financial advice and support through their banking set up. In terms of funding LtPS became a project of the Thistle for its first year.

As one senior CEC officer put it. ***“The recovery community provided the passion and the knowledge for what was needed, and many organisations were willing to help”***

What's been achieved for all this effort?

From a 'standing start' in 2022 the following are some of the achievements to date:

- Three **autonomous** mutual aid groups, led weekly by people with lived experience: Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and Cocaine Anonymous now operate in the area. These **independent groups** were set up in the area by local people and regularly attract more than 20 people to each group, drawn here through the local recovery activity.
- **A Recovery Community Centre** 'The Bothy' has now been running in the area since September 2022 (unofficially) and then officially since Jan 2023. (see grand opening video link above on the contents) it is situated on the Main Street in Craigmillar two doors from the busiest Chemist and 100 meters from the Medical Practice.
- **Bothy drop-in** three times a week for people struggling with substance use averaging 24 visits per week, many attendees have gone on to rehab, sought help and been assisted to tackle their problematic substance use. Others come for company and connection and may decide later to engage in recovery.
- **Volunteers recruited:** 14 trained with access to training and personal development support e.g. Mental health first aid, Naloxone training, Community engagement and Recovery coaching. 8 volunteers from these initiatives have since gone on to full-time education or paid employment in the sector.
- **Volunteer peer supporters** and staff have taken people to appointments who would not otherwise have had the courage to attend.
- **Groups meeting in the Bothy:** A SMART recovery group, mental health first aid training, individual and collective advocacy work provided by Turning Point Scotland, Health in Mind & Advocard. Turning Point also has a drop in running. Men's, Women's and 'Yoga for health' groups running weekly. A Memorial Quilting Group is also running to remember those who lost their lives to drugs and alcohol.
- **Link working:** LtPS has developed valuable connections with local GP Link Workers (including a weekly information desk in the largest practices) as well as local mental health nurses, housing support workers and local councilors.
- **Campaigning:** all the services which were withdrawn through Covid 19 have been returned to the area and the group successfully campaigned for the dispensing of Buprenorphine in the local area. (a hybrid longer-lasting medicine for opiate addiction along with psychosocial support which helps some people tremendously)
- **A community leader** summed-up what the past two years has meant to the recovery communities in Craigmillar and Niddrie:

‘With Connecting Craigmillar’s help, we have achieved a number of wins in gaining a return of services and the re-provisioning of vital prescribing services in the area which desperately needs it, and most importantly we made recovery visible’

Chairs remarks

I don't think I've ever been more proud of a group of activists as I have been with the people of Craigmillar, who took on this dire situation in the midst of an ongoing drug and alcohol epidemic.

I've personally been involved in community activism for nearly 40 years and I was astonished, heartened, and humbled to see the effort these people in recovery have made to extend the hand of friendship and support each other and to their fellows who still suffer from addictions.

From the start they seemed to know that by making recovery visible it would encourage others to attempt their own recovery journeys in what academics call 'recovery contagion'.

As a result of all this activity and action by these people and our colleagues in other agencies, recovery is now visible on the Main Street in Craigmillar, access to services and support is a bit easier to engage in. Scores of people have come forward for information, help and support.

Following in-house and outsourced training, many of the volunteers in early recovery from their addictions have felt empowered to move on to full-time and part-time employment or education. These jobs and positions are often in Alcohol and Drug agencies, also in health and social care fields where their lived experience is now an asset to their organisations and clients.

Whilst we have seen many people die in our community and our families during the short time we have been in operation, we have seen lives saved through our community being trained in spotting the signs of overdose, administering Naloxone and calling in the emergency services. In the longer term many more people are attaining and sustaining their recovery, or are coming back from relapse which will prevent future premature deaths by returning people to health.

More people are engaging with Health and Social care services. GP's, Mental Health Nurses and others are referring people to the Bothy or bringing them along to engage in our activities. Family members have come in for advice and support including professionals from other support services.

The Mutual Aid Groups are thriving with new local people and their families coming along after engaging with the Bothy.

But most of all we have made recovery visible and brought back critical services.

John Arthur 2024



Future:

The Bothy is currently open 5 days and 2 nights a week, we only have one part time member of staff. Whilst we recognize the achievements we have made, we are under no illusions that we require more staff and regular intakes of volunteers to fully realize the potential of Let the People Sing. This will require finding sources of funding.

Longer term we have to find permanent premises, as the building the Bothy is in will be knocked down as part of a 'redevelopment' of the area. We want to campaign and gain some planning benefits for our community from the developers to ensure a place for recovery is included in the redevelopment plans for the area.

Following a trial period, outreach onto the streets and into other agencies was judged to be a great success and is an area we want to develop to get the message out there that people can and do recover from long term addictions.

Financial explanation

Procuring seed money of £40k from the Social Action Inquiry Scotland allowed us to rent premises and hire a worker in the role of a Full-Time Project Manager for a year through the employment agency 21 Health and Social Care, which assisted us to source Lisa MacMillan as our first coordinator.

Money raised from the local community through a crowd funding scheme helped us in the first year too. As did a grant of £25k from the Edinburgh Alcohol and Drug Partnership in 2023. Support from local businesses and community members provided us with carpets and furniture that allowed us to open the premises at the Bothy quickly.

The Thistle Health and Wellbeing received the money for LtPS, this meant LtPS became an autonomous project of the Thistle, overseen by Connecting Craigmillar, allowing missives, project insurance and power contracts to be signed in order to set up the Bothy. Fair to say that without this support from Connecting Craigmillar and the Thistle, LtPS would have taken much longer to get operational.

By December 2023 Let the People Sing had become a SCIO, set up its own bank account, and began transferring money over from the Thistle account and has set up its own insurance, power contract and paying the Part-Time Coordinators wages to Rebecca Firth who is the new Bothy Coordinator from January 2024

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

LtPS was a community-led, Connecting Craigmillar Project hosted by the Thistle Foundation until December 2023 When LtPS became its own charity which had set up its bank account. Connecting Craigmillar was responsible for funding and finance up until this point

This worked well as the Thistle are a well-established and respected charity in the local area and were a perfect partner for us. This allowed LtPS to operate until we could set up and register as a Charity in our own right and operate our own business account in December 2023. The funding spent up until that point, followed the Thistles policies and procedures and effectively ran through their accounts. Therefore the moneys spent until that time will be noted in the Thistles accounts for 2023-2024

The following is LtPS accounts run from Dec 2023- March 2024 when the first money was transferred from the Thistle Health and Wellbeing account to LtPS, the remaining funds in the Thistle account are due to be transferred over to LtPS by May 2024

Financial Statement Let the People Sing Accounts Account Activated 14th December 2023

Money transferred in from Thistle on 14th December 2023.

Income Source	Amount	Outgoings	Amount	
Thistle Health and Wellbeing	£15,000	Roller Shutters	2,147.63	
Edinburgh Community Yoga	£378.00	Coordinator s Wages	4261.20	
		Feminine Hygiene	282.36	
		Insurance	375.26	
		Bothy running costs/sundries	1008.23	
Total	£15,378	Total.	8074.68	

Balance Carried Forward to 2024-2025	7303	
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Let the People Sing would like to thank the following people and organisations who have supported us.

Organisations:

Thistle Health and Wellbeing & Connecting Craigmillar
Social Action Inquiry Scotland
Turning Point
Edinburgh Alcohol and Drug Partnership
Carr Gomm
Richmond Craigmillar
21Health and Social Care
Health in Mind
Change Grow Live
Advocard
JLS Ltd
Ideal Flooring Solutions
Ragged University
Amanda Wooton
Harry Johnston.

Local folk: George, **Mikey, Susan H, Susan C, Will, Angela, Chrissy, Elaine, John,** Stevie B, and Stevie W., Vikki, Davie, **Kelly, Gail,** Darren, Jaimie-Leigh, Daniele, Lisa W, Lisa Mc, Monty, Denise C. Denise L., and Mark.
*Board members in **Bold***