



ANNUAL REPORT

2022 / 23



STAFF

David Shields

Manager

Joan Stewart

Office Manager

Mark Wardle

Stepping Stones Youth Worker

Laura Mitchell

Pathways Worker

Chrissy Caley

Youth Worker

Bethany Paterson

Youth Worker

Jason Mackinnon

Youth Worker

Elizabeth Meenagh

Youth Worker

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(Resigned 15.08.2022)

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CHAIRPERSONS REPORT

I would like to thank all of the staff, volunteers and fellow directors/trustees of Connect Berwickshire Youth Project (Connect) who have worked hard to sustain and grow the charity through another year of operation.

The last 12 months have been a year of recovery and regeneration for Connect. We began the consolidation by reopening our Youth services at centres and we have been busy strengthening and renewing our network across various partners in Berwickshire, in particular with the Two High Schools in Duns & Eyemouth as part of the Stepping Stones project.

It was very pleasing to see the variety of activities delivered, in particular the growth of the youth sessions in Eyemouth & Coldstream as well as the re-start of youth work in Duns.

These activities were complemented by our After-School Club running at Coldstream Community Centre, however, the Trustee board had been concerned about the ongoing viability of the After School Club for some time and a formal review of the ASC was conducted, beginning in mid-2022.

The main output of the review was a confirmation that the underlying demand and capacity to support the ASC through attendance and increased fees alone just does not exist at present in Coldstream.

Despite the generous support of many providers during the pandemic period, we were forced to conclude that such funding was not sustainable for the long term and moreover, even with this very considerable support, the ASC continued to run at a significant loss.

The board reached out to all the major stakeholders amongst the Council, local politicians and Youth service providers, including Coldstream's councillors Donald Moffatt & John Greenwell, John Lamont

MP, Rachael Hamilton MSP, South of Scotland Enterprise, Scottish Out of School Childcare Network and directly with the School Age Childcare team within the Scottish Government amongst many other contacts. Despite these extensive discussions, no substantial or sufficient funding was identified and sadly, the Trustee board had to take the decision to close the ASC as of the 31st January 2023.

Despite the ASC closure, we were able to redeploy our staff to other posts to use their enthusiasm, skills and knowledge to continue to deliver youth work across our locations. <https://bypconnect.com/asc-coldstream>

We are also really pleased to see new members of staff joining us to facilitate these drop-ins and the restart of our Stepping Stones project and our newly developed Pathways post which evolved from work done previously working with families and children in need of additional support.

All of these activities show that there is a fundamental need for Youth services within Berwickshire and that Connect Berwickshire Youth Project is very well placed to deliver these services.

The Trustees continue to consider that we have a strong board and they remain committed to doing their utmost to ensure that Connect can continue to make a difference - if you think you have something to offer our board, please do not hesitate to get in touch.



MANAGERS REPORT

Since my appointment in April 2022, Connect has been on a journey to imbed ourselves within the communities that we cover. We have spent the last year re developing and rediscovering.

Over the last year Connects journey has been focused on re introduction to the community and young people, with our new vision of youth worker that has been focused very much around young people and their needs and wants from us.

Connects focus has been re engaging with community and young people, ensuring that we are able to deliver youth work provision in all 3 main areas that Connect covers within Berwickshire.



Coldstream has remained consistently open the last year since my appointment with the excellent hard work and dedication from our staff team. I would like to take this opportunity to thank each one of them as this has truly been a team effort.

With the appointment of Mark Wardle our new Stepping Stones worker, we were able to reopen Eyemouth consistently to two nights a week, along with its counterpart in Coldstream.

We continue to work and deliver sporadic sessions in Duns when we can, and we aim to source funding to commit to opening once each week to match up with our delivery plan.

Over the last year, Connect is proud of the number of young people we have engaged with through various different projects we have delivered: Summer Programme 2022, October Programme 2022, Drop ins, Easter Break 2023, Summer Programme 2023, Stepping Stones and small partnership group work with various organisations.

Working alongside the young people that we have engaged with, built relationships with, Connect now has focus and an aim to ensure that we are able to source funding to deliver projects that fit the needs of the young people of Berwickshire. We look to the young people as a partnership so that their involvement within Connect shapes our service.

Connect will continue working with partners across Berwickshire to continue to provide opportunities to young people by supporting them from where they are at, supporting them with opportunities within the area and to continue growing our service.

I am extremely excited to see what the future holds for Connect and with this new vision and approach, we truly have young people at the core of our service to deliver youth work provision guided and lead by the young people.

We would like to thank our funder who support us, weather their grants are big or small, these contributions are vital to the work we do, to continue to support young people in Berwickshire. Our funders can be found later in the report.

DROP INS

Eyemouth

Drop-Ins were re-established in Eyemouth in April 2023. The Tide's Reach facility, formerly known as Tedda, was set up to create a relaxed and safe environment for Young People to access and have a sense of belonging. Additionally, through both an Easter and Summer Programme, Young People from the area have been allowed to build resilience and understand responsibility through a series of organised activities. In conjunction, the Stepping Stones role was reprised which allowed for increased liaison within the community and the establishment of rapport with those attending the Drop-Ins and Easter/Summer Programmes.



Community Impact

The measures taken since April have had a significant impact on Young People's perception and outlook. Parents/Guardians have commented on observing how their children have broadened their horizons and become more confident. The activities conducted thus far have empowered our Young People and afforded them the opportunity to develop and respect others in an often-challenging environment. During activities we endeavour to cover the 4C's of Teamwork; clarity, commitment, contribution, and concerns. This is then interwoven with how these principles can influence their own Community.

Planned Future Activities

It has become increasingly evident throughout recent programmes that outdoor physical activities provide the biggest attraction to our Young People. We are currently in negotiation with the Sir Bobby Robson Foundation which offers activities stretching the imagination physically and mentally, this is something we are looking to achieve during the school half term in October 2023, pending the necessary funding.

Feedback

None of the above has any relevance without the feedback from the Young People who have engaged in activities ranging from bowling, paintballing, kayaking, and travelling to other parts of the Scottish Borders and wider environs previously unseen. The main question we get asked is “When’s our next trip and what are we doing?”, which is hopefully a measure of success. Our Young People have been encouraged to discuss what they would like to do next and how it could be achieved, eg. Paid for through self-raising funds.

Summary

Whilst still embryonic, the collective effort closely follows National Youth Agency guidelines to ensure we seek to develop Young People’s skills and attitudes and support their development whilst respecting and valuing differences. Our Young People are encouraged to explore their beliefs, ideas, and current issues, ensuring they are allowed a voice. Going forward they will begin to understand their place in society allowing them to realise their full potential.

Coldstream:

With the support of young people, we can identify the need for a service in the area. Young people have told us they come along for the following reasons.

- To be able to chat with their friends in a non-judgemental environment “folk deh judge you here”
- To get away from the pressures of home life
- Loneliness
- Isolation “because I don’t go to school I don’t get out much”
- Let off steam “ I feel safe”



It is very clear from the feedback we receive from our young people, that there is a real need for this space in Coldstream.

The young people have asked us if they can keep coming when they get older; they thank us for what we have provided.

With many young people who have come to our Coldstream service from their early days through the After School Club, They have strengthened relationships with our staff members and value and respect the youth work they provide.

During the summer programmes and activities we have put on through the year, we are confident that the young people gained a lot from these. Continuously building up confidence and social skills with their peers. From the feedback we received, they enjoyed travelling in the mini-bus; they liked going to Eyemouth; they loved the bowling, the rib trip; they learned a lot at Fox lake and they have thrived on being put out of their comfort zone in new environments and new experiences. This is something to build on and a programme of holiday activities throughout the year would be great as feedback from the young people.

As an organisation I think we can be sure that what we offer helps build social skills and gives the young people a chance to be away from social media, out of their bedrooms and being with each other and adults.

Whilst not every youth service we deliver in the Berwickshire area is the same, due to the evaluation process we are able to identify what works for each area. Coldstream thrives on projects and activities; they love to get involved in things. Over the next year, We will be looking to work in partnership with projects in the surrounding area and local to Coldstream to identify opportunities where young people can thrive in this environment. We welcome the partnership work in Coldstream to allow young people to flourish where they live.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY BASED YOUTH WORK

Over the past year, Connect has worked hard re building relationships with partners and community members throughout Berwickshire. The value in partnership work is overwhelmingly powerful, especially for young people. Partnership working can show young people that there are multiple people there to support them and not just one organisation.

Over the last year we have worked in partnership through various projects with the following:

- Eyemouth High School (Placemaking)
- Splash (Beach trips, group work, police sessions)
- Police Scotland (Visits to the sessions, Police Session Delivery and identifying young people to work with through Connect)
- LINKS (Rented our space to provide suitable space for delivery)
- Youth Borders
- Stepping Stones
- Mens Shed
- RIB Trips
- Nature Rocks
- ROCK UK
- Berwickshire High School
- Local Food businesses
- Berwickshire Alliance
- Community Larders
- Local Councillors
- Coldstream Community Centre
- Hirsell
- Local Primary Schools
- Eat Sleep Ride (Inc)
- Berwickshire Housing Association
- Scottish Borders Council
- Live Borders
- Splash Volunteers
- Rotary (Beach trip)

We will continue to work with partners across Berwickshire to identify positive opportunities for young people in the area. We hope that through this partnership work that we are able to pathway young people to destinations that are right for them. By building this network of communication, we believe young people over the last year have become more aware of what is happening in their local areas.

High Schools

Connect as mentioned has been on a journey to re-engage with its community and young people, though some aspect of this have been challenging, Connect are really pleased with the progress we have made on re engaging with partners.

We have several meetings with Eyemouth High School and Berwickshire High School, to look at ways on how we support young people who perhaps are finding the school environment challenging and possibly need that extra support.

Through our stepping stones work, we are now working with the school to identify the needs of young people, working with them in small groups and offering 1:2:1 support. Through our drop ins, we have been able to build up excellent trusting relationships with young people who have perhaps been identified by the Schools and Partners that may need this added support.

Police Scotland

Our relationship with the community Police has been fantastic, with members of Police Scotland paying us regular visits to our drop ins, to play pool or ping pong. This allows the young people to see the other side of our police and hopefully provides supportive dialogue when faced with issues in the area. At current, our young people are winning in the "Connect vs Police ping pong".



Splash

Connect recognises the importance of working with community groups, and have been delighted at the support and partnership work over the last year that we have done with Splash. Splash is a community based organisation that is embedded within the Eyemouth community. Splash and Connect have linked up to support young people with opportunities through various projects.

Splash and Connect are in regular contact with one another, finding ways to link up to provide experiences, activities and opportunities for young people of Eyemouth. Over the past year we have linked up to deliver the following sessions:

- Summer Programme 2022
- October Halloween Party
- Working with Young Volunteers
- Easter Break 2023
- Summer Programme 2023
- Police Scotland delivery sessions 2023

We would like to thank Splash for their continued partnership working with Connect and look forward to the future to work together to impact the lives of young people in the community.





ACTIVITIES AND SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAMME

SUMMER PROGRAMME 2022

Connect worked with young people and a limited budget to ensure that a summer programme was delivered in 2022. With an activity or trip on each week, we were able to provide enjoyment and opportunities throughout the summer.

Connect provided meals on each of these days to ensure we were tackling the food poverty that is being experienced up and down the country.

It was also important for us to provide a summer programme that removed barriers that may prevent young people attending, this is why our summer programme came at no cost to families or young people.

Activities delivered:

- Pizza Making
- Badminton
- Slime Making workshop
- Nature Rocks boat trip
- BBQ Beach trip
- Tye Dye sessions
- Nail tech workshop
- Bowling
- Stem Workshop (Delivered by CLD)

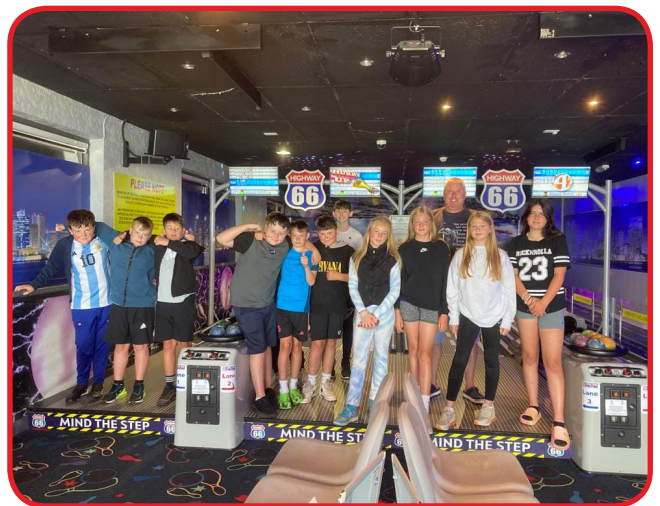
EASTER BREAK 2023

Connect usually closes during the small breaks however it was important for us to continue building relationships with young people across our areas to best improve our service delivery around all 3 areas.

We decided to run the following sessions

- Coldstream Monday 10th April (3 hour) Trip to the Hirsell Estate , picnic and outside games
- Eyemouth Wednesday 12th April (3 Hours) Drop In, Police Station visit, Bowling, Chippy (Pool and Xbox was also available)
- Eyemouth Thursday 13th April (2 hours) Drop In, Pool, Xbox, Table Tennis, Tye Dye and Food
- Duns Thursday 13th April (2 hours) Info Drop In, Tye Dye, Pool, Food and Darts

Through these activities our focus was building and maintaining relationships with the young people. Young people told us how much they enjoyed something to do over the break and enjoyed the opportunity to hang out with friends during these activities.



SUMMER PROGRAMME 2023

As this was our second Summer Programme in a year from when our Manager was appointed, we were able to deliver a bigger summer programme than last year.

With money received from Scottish Borders council through Youth Borders, 6.5K we broke this down for each area.

We worked with over 180+ young people across Berwickshire, through our activities, drops, trips and stepping stones projects. Our summer programme was planned by the young people to ensure they're voice was heard in activities they wanted to do.

#YouthWork

- 36 Drop in Sessions with activities
- 4x Eyemouth Rib Trips
- 4x Foxlake Adventures trips
- 2x Beach Trip with Splash
- 1x Police Scotland Scottish Borders session with splash 1x PaintBall trip
- 1x Cinema Trip (Thanks to Eat, Sleep, Ride, CIC)
- 1x Rock UK - Whithaugh Park - Trip
- 100+ Maccies
- 90+ Giacobazzi's

Our summer programme this year was crucial to our stepping stones work. since establishing the Eyemouth drop ins, we would use our relationships to understand the needs to of the young people better.

When on trips and activities, young people are able to open up more with workers in general conversation, this allowed us to identify more issues that young people may be impacted by outside of Connect.

With this piece of work, Staff were able to support young people to greater lengths than previously through various issues identified:

- Issues at home
- Family unit breakdown
- Young people in care
- Social work involvement
- Drug related issues
- Bullying
- Alcohol related issue
- Mental Health
- New work/employment
- College starts hopes and fears
- High school starts hopes and fears

From the information gathered, our organisation can tailor our drop in sessions to include a small activity that can address various issues and needs that could be happening to many young people throughout Berwickshire, It is our hope that through our sessions we will be able to challenge stigma and deliver opportunities through our sessions.



PATHWAYS SUPPORT:

Connect has identified a need for families across the Berwickshire area who perhaps are being the most impacted by the Cost of Living crisis.

The aim of the project will be a support for families who just don't know where to turn to, with this new post we hope to support families to thrive in these struggling circumstances, even if it just means to knowing there are others also struggling and just an ear to listen to or making vital links to organisations that can be that continued support.

Through the SBC Whole Family Wellbeing Fund we are also able to provide identified families with crisis voucher help to ensure that families across Berwickshire remain connected to their social circles through means of internet and data.

The Pathways worker will look at supporting the families to access other benefits they are entitled to, work on budgeting and look at how to stretch the vouchers as best they can, utilise online shopping or local shops. We are hoping to create a resource which will help families with budgeting through this project. Support will be tailored to ensure families are listened to, referred or signposted to relevant local services to suit their needs. Building relationships with the pathways worker and improving their connections to services which can alleviate poverty locally.

FUTURE OF CONNECT

Connect will continue to work with partners, source funding and deliver youth work provision across Berwickshire.

We are confident that young people are engaging with us in a positive way and have guided support to lead the delivery of our service.

Please keep up to date with our delivery to the community through our website and social media.



OUR FUNDERS



To access all our funders please visit www.bypconnect.com

