

The logo for CONNECT BYP features the word "CONNECT" in a large, bold, white sans-serif font, with a horizontal red line underneath it. Below "CONNECT" is the acronym "BYP" in a smaller, bold, white sans-serif font. The text is centered within a circular graphic composed of two concentric arcs: a blue outer arc and a purple inner arc.

# CONNECT BYP

A group of about ten children are in a blue inflatable boat on a body of water. They are all wearing life jackets in various colors like red, yellow, and blue. The children are looking towards the camera and smiling. The background shows a bright, sunny day with some greenery.

## Annual Report 2024-2025

A group of seven children are posing for a photo outdoors on a gravel path. They are all smiling and looking at the camera. The children are dressed in casual clothing like t-shirts, shorts, and a backpack. In the background, there is a grassy field, some trees, and a wooden structure.

*“Supporting young people  
across Berwickshire”*

## OUR FUNDERS

Without the contribution of our funders, none of the work Connect BYP do would be possible. Thank you!



Registered Charity in England and Wales (802052) and Scotland (SC039557)



New logo 2025 designed by young people  
of Connect.

Special thanks to  
Jazime, Kelsie and Callum.

## STAFF

**David Shields**  
*Manager*

**Joan Stewart**  
*Office Manager*

**Ali Sim**  
*Youth Development Worker*

**Jason MaCkinnon**  
*Youth Development Worker*

**Bev Sprott**  
*Pathways Project Worker*

**Jackie Rose**  
*Volunteer*

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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*Trustee: Finance Sub Committee member*

## DIRECTORS REPORT

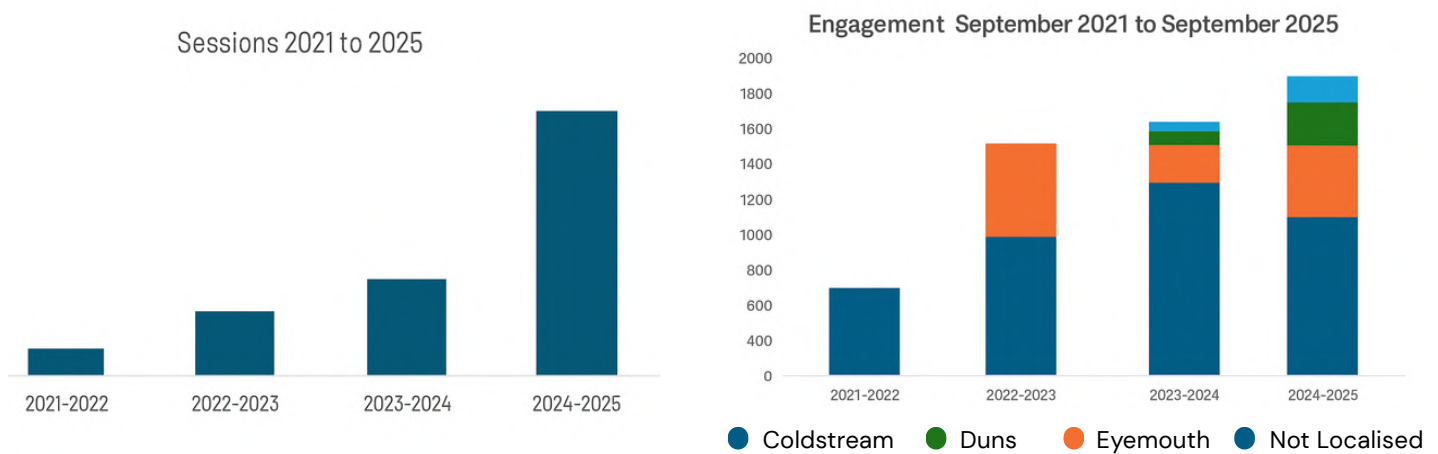
I would like to thank all the staff, volunteers and my fellow directors/trustees of Connect Berwickshire Youth Project (Connect) for another strong year for the charity. 2024 and 2025 to date has seen the charity continue to build its youth work delivery across our three centres in Berwickshire.

After a significant period of regrowth in 2024, 2025 to date has seen us face some issues in continuing our planned delivery due to recruitment and staffing challenges. Nevertheless, we have continued to grow, and the charts below show the continued positive trend of our youth work delivery across our centres over the past 4 years.

Although the numbers do vary across the centres we operate from, analysis has shown that this has been due to a shift in the number of sessions to manage staff availability – the Tides Reach Centre in Eyemouth has borne the brunt of this but where we have had staffing issues, we have generally managed to run fewer but longer sessions so our level of engagement with young people has continued to grow.

Staffing and recruitment have been identified as a priority area for the charity to address as part of its ongoing strategic review.





Thanks to ongoing funding from Scottish Borders Council, The Robertson Trust, the National Lottery Community Fund, The Gannochy Trust along with cooperation and assistance from charitable partners we were able to deliver our very popular summer programme across our centres.

We continue to work closely with funders to secure our activities for future years, and we are part way through a multifaceted, multi-year Recovery Plan designed to bring the charity finances to a truly sustainable footing for the long term.

This plan builds on the ongoing financial control exercised by the board in conjunction with the charity's manager and seeks to address the key financial pillars of the organisation by:

- Understanding the nature, size and drivers of any shortfalls in income versus needed expenditure
- Continuous review of ongoing expenditure – in particular overhead costs related to our operational sites where we have been successful in driving down utility costs
- Actively seeking and applying for grant funding that will address specific challenges or unfunded overhead costs
- Implementing active fundraising channels to allow and encourage receipt of direct donations
- Seeking to build a broad family of Patrons who can support the charity
- Actively seeking sponsorship or grant support from entities beyond our normal funding partners
- Establishing a review process to measure progress against our targets and a communication plan to ensure all stakeholders are well informed

I am pleased to say that this plan is being actively managed, and we are making some headway in reducing certain costs and making progress towards our goals.

## MANAGERS REPORT

I want to begin by saying a huge thanks to all the Connect Staff and Volunteers who have worked amazingly over the last year to provide high quality youth work and create safe spaces for all the young people that have engaged with us. None of it would be possible without you all.

This year has been about consistency and keeping Connect firmly at the heart of our communities. After the growth and expansion of the past two years, we have focused on delivering reliable youth work week after week across Coldstream, Eyemouth and Duns. Young people know they can count on us to be there, and that consistency has made a real difference in the trust and relationships we continue to build.

Recruitment in Berwickshire can be a challenge, and like many organisations we have felt that at times. But even with those pressures, our team has remained committed and creative, making sure services run smoothly. We go into the next year determined to raise the profile of Connect even further, showing the importance of youth work in rural areas and the impact it has on young people's lives.

Across Berwickshire, we often hear people say that young people have nothing to do. At Connect, we are working hard to change that, but we know we cannot do it alone. We encourage local residents, businesses and partners to get involved, whether through volunteering, sponsorship or sharing ideas. By working together, we can ensure that young people have access to safe, positive spaces where they feel valued and supported.

A highlight of this year has been our continued engagement with primary schools. We know how important it is to support young people before they move into secondary school, and we have been working with schools to make sure P7 pupils know about our services. Looking ahead, we want to strengthen engagement further, making sure every P7 pupil in our area is aware of Connect and feels confident to come along to our drop ins as they take that next step in their lives.



We have also worked hard to create youth spaces that are genuinely shaped by young people themselves. Their input has been invaluable in creating a sense of ownership. From the new kitchens in Duns and Eyemouth, to gaming PCs, consoles, and even the choice of colours on the walls, every detail has been influenced by the voices of the young people who use the spaces. Both of our buildings have needed serious revamps after many years without major improvements, and it has been exciting to see them transformed into modern, welcoming youth hubs that reflect the needs and ideas of those who use them most.



Young people often tell us that our drop ins feel different because they can share what is on their minds without judgement. When asked, they say it is a place where they feel listened to and supported. Our youth workers build on that trust by creating activities that are fun but also help develop life skills, resilience and teamwork. From cooking and creative projects to skills workshops and group challenges, these sessions give young people the chance to learn, relax and grow in ways that feel natural to them.

We are proud that more than ten young people are now working towards Youth Achievement Awards, Saltire and Dynamic Youth Awards. As more of these opportunities are taken up, they inspire others to do the same. Looking forward, we are also supporting the creation of a youth working group, giving young people a direct voice in shaping our services and even input into the board itself.

Looking ahead, we remain focused on providing free, accessible and high-quality youth work across Berwickshire. With a strong team, dedicated partners and the voices of young people guiding us, Connect is ready to keep moving forward and continue making a difference in the year ahead.



## COLDSTREAM DROP-IN

Coldstream Drop In has been filled with meaningful engagement and vibrant interactions. We've now fully settled into our new home at the Coldstream Annex, and it's been a pleasure working alongside the Coldstream Community Larder. Thanks to their assistance and funding, the room has been given a fresh coat of paint and new furniture, creating a welcoming and comfortable environment. The young people played an active role in the transformation, choosing the wall colours themselves during the consultation process. Their choices have brought a brighter, more energetic feel to the space. The larder, have generously provided weekly food donations that help fuel our activities. This collaboration has strengthened our sense of community and made the Drop-In sessions even more inclusive and nourishing.

Throughout the year, we've welcomed many new faces who now regularly attend our weekly sessions. Highlights have included a Halloween party, and our annual Christmas Chinese Night, which brought everyone together for a festive celebration. This year's Christmas was made even more special thanks to Lime and Co's generous public appeal for donations where several of our young people received thoughtful Christmas gifts through their kindness. In addition, every young person received a selection box made possible through a wonderful collaboration with our local Asda Berwick Community Officer, Shona. These gestures brought a lot of joy and warmth to the group during the holiday season.



Exploring arts has been at the heart of our sessions. We've tried tie-dye, clay modelling, and made great use of our new art supplies. Karaoke nights, pool competitions and countless games of Uno have encouraged self-expression and laughter, helping young people to connect and express themselves in fun, imaginative ways. Alongside these activities, we've also created a space for honest, open conversations between young people and our workers. This safe and supportive environment allows them to access advice, share concerns, and feel heard which is fostering trust and emotional wellbeing.



## DUNS DROP-IN



Our Duns Drop-In continues to be well attended each week, with a growing number of P7s joining us. This is an exciting opportunity to build on the support we already provide, and we are working hard to secure more staff and volunteers so we can increase the number of sessions in the year ahead.

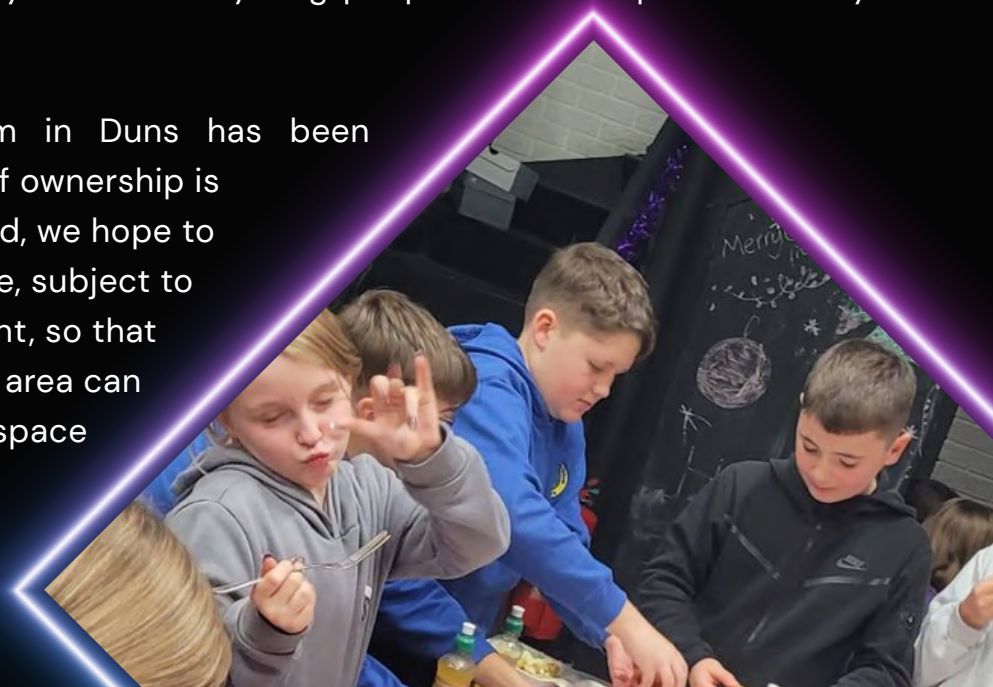
Like all of our areas, Duns has its own needs, which can differ from Eyemouth or Coldstream. Here, young people consistently tell us they prefer activity-based sessions,

and this year they have taken the lead in planning what those activities look like each week. Their ideas have shaped everything from games and group challenges to creative projects, ensuring that sessions stay fresh, fun and engaging.

The newly revamped building has been a real highlight. The colours on the walls, the kitchen layout, the sofas and the equipment have all been chosen by the young people. Parents have also played their part, with those working in trades stepping in to help with practical work, which has kept costs down and strengthened the sense of community ownership.

Young people are really making the space their own. They use it to relax, have fun and express themselves, while also encouraging their peers to come along. It has become a hub of support for those moving up to high school, with P7s telling us their transition was easier because they already knew older young people at the drop-in who they could approach in school.

The creativity and enthusiasm in Duns has been inspiring to see, and the sense of ownership is stronger than ever. Looking ahead, we hope to expand our offer to S2 and above, subject to funding and volunteer dependent, so that even more young people in the area can benefit from a safe, welcoming space that belongs to them.



## EYEMOUTH DROP-IN

From October 2024, our Eyemouth Drop-In has flourished in strength and variety. We once again hosted a Christmas meal for young people, which was warmly received and is now becoming an annual tradition. Each year we invite local businesses to support this event, helping us provide a festive experience that brings our community together.

Our Eyemouth sessions have thrived this year, with strong attendance and a programme shaped directly by the young people themselves. Activities are planned around their interests and abilities, ensuring everyone has the chance to get involved and feel included.

A focal point has been the introduction of cooking sessions during the school holidays. Designed with the young people, these sessions explored a wide range of recipes, including gluten free options, and ran on a booking system to give small groups quality time in the kitchen. They have introduced the development of practical life skills, and encouraged young people to try dishes they had never made before. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and we look forward to developing this offer further in the coming year.

The kitchen has become a central hub of the drop-in. Young people enjoy helping to prepare food for Drop In,, and developing their understanding of a healthy, balanced diet. We use the local Community Larder to plan our menus, reducing food waste while encouraging fresh fruit and vegetables. For many, the food we provide is the first meal they have had that day, making this work even more important. From cake decorating and pizza making, to a café-style ordering system for toasted sandwiches and paninis, the kitchen has been a place of creativity, learning and fun.

This year saw new events such as a quiz night with a bushtucker trial twist and a scavenger hunt across Eyemouth. Young people have also been actively involved in planning, from fundraising ideas to organising a Halloween party.



Technology has played its part too. The gaming PCs funded through CLLD YLAG have been well used, and a standout moment was when three Eyemouth young people used them to design Connect's new logo. This achievement shows the pride and ownership young people feel in shaping their space.

Although Connect has faced challenges in rebuilding a presence in Eyemouth after a gap in youth services, we have made steady progress and the drop-in is now becoming recognised as a safe and creative environment. There is still more to do, and it has not always been easy, but Connect will continue to be the voice for many young people across Berwickshire.

In the coming months, we will build on this foundation, further developing programmes, offering more opportunities for young people to lead activities, and ensuring Eyemouth continues to be a vibrant centre where they feel valued and supported.



## STEPPING STONES

The Stepping Stones Project continues to be a welcoming and empowering space for young people across Berwickshire. Now entering its seventh year, we've provided consistent one-to-one support, involved the young people in hands-on community initiatives, and offered a listening ear, helping young people build confidence, develop skills, and strengthen their resilience. This past year has been one of expansion and impact: we've connected with more young people than ever, formed new partnerships, and witnessed incredible progress from those involved.

We have individually supported 10 young people this year through a mix of one to one and group sessions, and community-based activities. Each experience was shaped around building emotional strength, practical life skills, and genuine connections, especially for those who sometimes feel isolated from their peers or community. The heart of our project lies in its flexibility where we don't work to a strict timeline, but instead shape our support around each young person's unique needs and goals.



A real highlight has been our collaboration with the Abundant Borders gardening project, taking place at their community gardens in Duns. One young person has got properly stuck in, spending time outdoors, learning how to grow food sustainably and care for the environment around them. With it still being early days for them at the gardens, they have also now started their Dynamic Youth Achievement Award and are making excellent progress.

*"Connect Stepping Stones has been great. It has provided the opportunity for my child to be involved in Abundant Borders which they are really enjoying. Ali is just a text away if I need any further advice. With my child not being in school, this is helping give them a second chance and hopefully ease them back into school slowly"*

**Parent of a Young Person attending the Stepping Stones Project.**

Stepping Stones has also been out in the community, sharing our impact and supporting youth transitions. We spoke at a Scottish Borders Council's Employability course, took part in transition days at Eyemouth and Berwickshire High Schools, and played host to a cross Scottish Borders youth services Beach Day. At every step, we've worked alongside young people and partners to ensure their voices are heard and their journeys supported.

**Mrs Kennedy, Berwickshire High School Acting Depute Rector, shared her thoughts on the project:**

***"We have been very lucky this year to have had support from Connect BYP through the Stepping Stones project. The Stepping Stones staff have helped in numerous ways and had a significant impact not only on our young people's attendance but also helping to rebuild trust and support young people to engage back to education."***

***We have worked closely with Connect BYP to:***

- support young people who are disengaged with education.***
- support mental health and general wellbeing, supporting to activities such as abundant borders.***
- support young people to have a voice with their education.***

***Connect Stepping Stones staff have been the safety net for a number of young people. This has meant as a team we have an "eyes on approach" on the young people, who would otherwise not engage. More recently we worked with the team around a child to share significant information around the wellbeing of that child. Without Ali we (the team) would not have had the level of information or detail around physical and mental wellbeing the young people we are supporting along side Connect.***

***Staff from Connect BYP have worked tirelessly to build trust and confidence in the young people and take the to a place they are ready to re-engage with school and life"***



Every journey is different, but they all share one thing which is progress. Whether it's planting seeds, starting a job, or simply opening up in a conversation, these moments matter and they're what Stepping Stones is all about. We couldn't do this without our amazing local partners. Huge thanks to Youth Borders, Berwickshire & Eyemouth High School, the Whole Family Support Team and School Link Workers at SBC, Abundant Borders, Skills Development Scotland and Community Learning and Development. Working together means we can support young people and their families in a way that's flexible, thoughtful, and truly helpful.

Looking ahead, we're excited to welcome even more young people through new referral pathways and continue growing the reach of our support. We're aiming to help more participants work toward their Youth Achievement Awards, while also guiding them into positive destinations, whether that's further education, employment, volunteering, or simply feeling more confident about their next steps.

# PATHWAYS

Thanks to renewed funding from the National Lottery Community Fund, our Pathways project has continued to make a real difference to young people and families across Berwickshire. The focus of Pathways is simple but vital: to provide both practical and emotional support around budgeting, money management and debt, helping people feel more in control of their day-to-day lives.

We believe it is never too early for young people to start learning about money. For some, that begins with thinking about how to spend five pounds of pocket money. For others, it means understanding wages, bills and rent as they move into independent living at 18. By tailoring support to the stage each young person is at, Pathways gives them the tools and confidence to make better financial choices.

Pathways also works directly with families who may be struggling under the pressure of the rising cost of living. Sometimes what is needed most is someone to listen and take time to understand. From there, we help identify what the family needs, where they want to go, and the right services to connect them with. We aim to cut through the confusion, avoiding unnecessary steps and making sure support feels accessible and achievable.

A key part of this work is recognising that not everyone is confident online or able to complete lengthy forms. Pathways bridges that gap. Whether it is applying for benefits, finding the right service, or simply getting the right information, we stand alongside families so they do not miss out on the opportunities and quality of life they deserve.



***"I was struggling to make sense of what help was out there and found the whole process overwhelming. Pathways made it simple. They took the time to listen, helped with the forms and showed me where I could get support. I don't feel so alone anymore, and I can see a difference in my child too because we are all less stressed at home."***

*Pathways service user*



A young person aged 17 came to Pathways worried about managing their first job and the bills that came with moving into a flat. Through regular sessions, they learned how to create a simple budget, set up direct debits and understand what money had to be set aside each month. They told us that before Pathways they felt anxious and unsure, but now they feel more independent and confident in managing their money.

The impact of this support is clear. Families have told us that having someone in their corner has reduced stress, improved their ability to budget and eased the pressure on family life. Young people have shared that the skills they learn through Pathways help them feel more independent and less anxious about their future.

Looking forward, we will continue to adapt Pathways to meet the changing needs of our community, keeping young people and families at the centre of every decision and making sure no one feels they have to face challenges alone.

# SUMMER PROGRAMME

Summer 2025 at Connect, we delivered a dynamic and inclusive programme across Coldstream, Eyemouth and Duns, creating meaningful opportunities for young people to connect, explore and grow. Over the course of the season we held 30 sessions and recorded 285 individual engagements, reflecting strong participation and community involvement.

One of the highlights was a series of three trips to Foxlake, with young people from each of our locations enjoying a full day of outdoor adventure. Thanks to our partnership with Community Learning and Development, transport and meals were provided, ensuring no barriers to participation. Special thanks go to Martin, who not only drove the minibus but supported staff and young people on the Coldstream and Duns trips.

We also hosted, for the very first time, the locality partnership beach day, bringing together Connect BYP, Escape, Cheviot Youth, TYA, TD1 Youth Hub, Beyond Earlston and Rowlands. This event celebrated collaboration across the region, with young people from different areas coming together to share experiences, enjoy food, games and music, and build connections beyond their own communities.



Being the host organisation was a proud moment for Connect, showing our ability to bring partners together and create a vibrant, positive space for young people.

Alongside these events, our weekly drop-ins continued to provide safe, welcoming environments where young people could take part in creative activities, share concerns and access support. A standout initiative took place in Eyemouth, where sessional workers and volunteers ran cooking sessions during the school holidays. These not only built practical skills and confidence in the kitchen, but also enabled young people to prepare nutritious meals to take home. This reduced pressure on families during the expensive summer months and encouraged healthier eating habits.

The summer programme highlighted what makes Connect unique: free, accessible youth work rooted in community partnership and shaped by the voices of young people.



## CONNECT HIGHLIGHTS

This year has been one of recognition and new opportunities for Connect Berwickshire Youth Project. We were proud to win an award for Climate Action and to be featured in a short documentary from the Scottish Rural Climate Network, showcasing how youth work and environmental awareness can come together to make a real difference. Connect was also nominated for Organisation of the Year, a recognition of the growth and impact we have achieved in recent years.



Partnership working remains at the heart of what we do. Through our Stepping Stones project, we are working directly with Berwickshire High School and hope to expand this further. We are also keen to build a stronger relationship with Eyemouth High School, ensuring that schools and youth services work hand in hand to give young people the best possible support. By recognising the value youth work adds, we believe we can make each part of the system stronger.

We continue to benefit from regular visits by Police Scotland officers, which provide a positive and informal way for young people to get to know local officers. These sessions help break down barriers and build trust, while also adding an extra sense of safety and support in our communities.

Community backing has also been vital this year. We are grateful for the generosity of Borders Competitions, who kindly donated £500 to support our work. Contributions like this, alongside the grants we receive, make it possible to keep all of our services free and accessible to young people across Berwickshire.

# DUNS AND EYEMOUTH RENOVATIONS

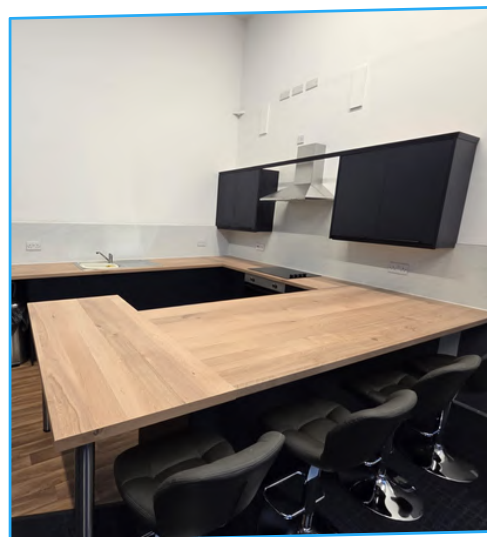
In 2025 we were awarded almost £66,000 from the CLLD YLAG Government Capital Fund, which allowed us to carry out long overdue renovations in both our Duns and Eyemouth centres. These improvements have transformed the spaces into more comfortable, sustainable and welcoming environments for the young people who use them every week.

The funding has enabled us to replace windows and doors, helping us tackle rising utility costs while reducing our environmental impact. New carpets have been fitted to improve insulation and give our centres a fresher look. In Duns, a new accessible kitchen has been installed, created using recycled and sustainable materials. This not only provides young people with a space to learn vital life skills, but also reflects our ongoing commitment to climate action. Across both centres, new sofas and seating have replaced well-worn furniture, giving the spaces a more inviting feel.

*Duns before renovations*



*Duns after renovations*

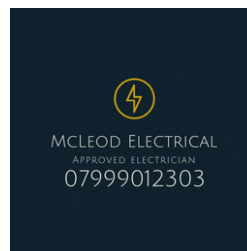


These renovations mark a significant step forward in creating modern youth hubs that meet the needs of young people today. They will also help Connect to reduce energy costs, support climate action, and provide safe, accessible spaces for years to come.

## SPECIAL THANKS

A key part of our renovation projects was our commitment to supporting the local economy. We worked with businesses from across Berwickshire and the Borders, ensuring that the investment stayed within our community wherever possible.

We are grateful for the expertise and support of Borders Windows and Doors, Howdens Berwick, Michael McLeod, East Borders Handyman, Drew Davidson Carpets, ARC Construction and Wojtek & Co Painter and Decorators. All who contributed discounts to the cost of our projects.



*If you are interested in becoming a Patron of the charity, we have established an easy donation system via PayPal where you can donate any sum you are able to either as a one-off donation or as a monthly subscription. Any amount that you can spare greatly helps the charity to cover its overhead costs and enables us to continue to deliver our important work. If you wish to donate, please follow this link [connectbyp.com](https://connectbyp.com) to our website and select the Donate button or speak to our Manager or a Trustee and we will be very pleased to help you make a donation.*

*If you are interested in becoming a Trustee of the charity, we would be delighted to welcome you to the fold! Again, please speak to our Manager or a Trustee or send an email to [info@bypconnect.org.uk](mailto:info@bypconnect.org.uk).*

*Please take time to look through our Facebook page and main web page to see what sort of activities we deliver for young people via our centres.*

<https://www.facebook.com/bypconnect>