

ANNUAL REVIEW 2019/2020



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CHAIR'S REPORT

In the chair's report last year, I emphasised two things. First, I spoke of the challenges that the project had faced in the past year, and would continue to face in the forthcoming one. Secondly, I described how, despite these challenges, the project continued to thrive. As regards the first matter, it seems incredible to look back and realise how little we knew about what lay ahead. As to the second matter, you only need to read the Manager's Report for this year – and see the emphasis on what the team have achieved – to see that once again, despite it all, Stepping Stones continues to deliver for the people of Edinburgh.

First to the challenges. In my time with Stepping Stones, I have come to learn the obvious truth that challenges can sometimes be better thought of as opportunities. I feel that the issues we have faced in relation to funding can be seen in this way. An immense amount of work has been done by Morag Wilson and by the board in discussions with and presentations to councillors and council managers, and in discussions with other stakeholders. In this work, an opportunity for building relationships and working in partnership has been taken. Through good communication, we have been able to ensure that we tailor services and applications for funding in line with funders' expectations. As a result of this, we find ourselves on a more secure financial

footing than we had anticipated, and better able to provide the services that people need.

The board of Stepping Stones continues to offer a range of vital support to Morag and her team. Each of them has been involved in a variety of projects all aimed at ensuring a solid foundation and direction for the project. I am very grateful for the range of expertise and experience that the members of the board bring, and for the unstinting support that they provide. The board, in turn, would wish me to express our gratitude to all our funders without whom none of the work of Stepping Stones would be possible.

Because our reports for the AGM are concerned with the period April 2019 to March 2020, there is no mention of the one thing that has been an ever present challenge for us this year: Covid 19. Like everyone else, our staff and those who depend upon them have been impacted by the pandemic. Through it all, insofar as possible, they have continued to support the community. We owe them a great debt of gratitude for what they have done, and for what they will unquestionably continue to do over the months that lie ahead.

Alastair Duncan
Chairperson

A group of young parents are seated around a large wooden table in a meeting room. They are engaged in a discussion, with some writing on papers and others looking at their phones. The room has a blue wall and a green chair. The text is overlaid on a blue rectangular background in the center of the image.

“IT WAS REALLY HELPFUL TO
LEARN THAT I NEED TO CARE
FOR MYSELF TO BE 100%
ABLE TO CARE FOR OTHERS”
YOUNG PARENT

MANAGER'S REPORT

As well as maintaining the breadth of our services across the community it has been great to see the development of some new pieces of work and to witness the achievements of families throughout the year. We supported the work of a health visiting team within the local medical centre, providing sessions on supporting new parents with sensory play, weaning, contraceptive choices and healthy sleep routines. Parents have got involved with consultation on new welfare rights, accumulating with a visit from the Cabinet Secretary for Social Security. Staff and parents have been part of a collaboration working on the 'All of Us' NSPCC campaign which sought to highlight the importance of families asking for help early in order to raise healthy, happy children. Six young parents completed their peer mentoring training so they could volunteer within our Introductory groups and support new parents to feel less isolated within their community. These are alongside the many personal goals that families achieve whilst striving to make positive choices for their children.

These achievements are in the face of unyielding poverty, a city wide housing crisis and often un-resolved trauma. We continue to see the daily impact this has on families' mental health and wellbeing and it's with this in mind that we strive

to ensure our services are truly person centred, responsive to individual need and flexible.

At a strategic level this year a great deal of time and investment has gone into establishing security within local authority funding streams due to the changing priorities of the Children's Service Plan and the place of the third sector within this. Fortunately we have continued to attract investment from a wide range of funders including new relationships which enabled us to increase our capacity to deliver support work within local primary schools.

The beginning of 2020 also saw investment from the Scottish Governments 'Investing in Communities' fund and has seen us start new partnerships with Port of Leith Housing Association, Manor Housing, Changeworks and Edinburgh Community Food to support families through our Link Up Leith project. We are excited to see how this work develops across the next year.

Morag Wilson
Manager

“THE PROJECT TAKES A NON-JUDGEMENTAL APPROACH, AIMING TO CONNECT WITH CHILDREN AND PARENTS HOWEVER LONG IT TAKES, BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS SLOWLY. THEIR OPEN-MINDED AND OPEN-DOOR POLICY SEEKS TO CREATE A SAFE SPACE, A LISTENING AND UNDERSTANDING ENVIRONMENT, AND A FOUNDATION OF TRUST”

INDEPENDENT EVALUATION,
ANIMATE CONSULTATION, 2019



EARLY YEARS

There have been lots of developments within the Early Years setting during 19/20. Across both of our settings we have introduced new routines such as circle time which helps to support the development of children's language and social skills. It's been a great experience for both staff and children to sit together and sing songs and talk about their experiences and learn about new things. The team have also focused on developing resources to engage children's literacy and numeracy such as introducing more visual aids and we have tried a variety of resources in different areas across the room to help children learn about numbers, shapes and sizes.

We have also focused on building connections with parents and have included them in activities within the early years room. This saw the parents and children take part in den building activities which everyone really enjoyed and go on outings together to local parks, the library and the museum. We have also been promoting children's independence by giving them opportunities to perform small tasks by themselves for example pouring water at snack table, trying to put their coats on themselves and helping staff to set up the snack table by serving plates and glasses to their friends.

Staff have been learning about different types of schemes and how to support schematic play in our setting and we have continued to develop other areas of learning by undertaking a variety of training such as Getting it Right for Every Child, Paediatric first aid and Keeping Baby in Mind.

Self evaluation continues to be a key part of the early years team and this year we have focused on literacy and numeracy rich environment toolkits and Building the Ambition toolkit. We will continue to use these documents to enhance our practice in the year ahead.

Our Early Years Practitioners continue to deliver a weekly peep group within the community. The group continues to thrive with new members joining all the time due to the welcoming and inclusive design of the group.

Naghmana Sajjad
Early Years Manager

Mubarra Ashfaque
Early Years Practitioner

Clara Massie
Early Years Practitioner



“I HAVE ENJOYED THE MENTORING GROUP. I FEEL THIS IS A GREAT THING BECAUSE I KNOW WHAT IT IS LIKE TO BE NEW TO THE GROUP AND FEEL A LITTLE ISOLATED BECAUSE I DIDN'T KNOW ANYONE ELSE. BEING A MENTOR MEANS THAT I CAN HELP OTHERS WHO FEEL THE SAME AS I DID, AND IT ALSO GIVES ME AN OPPORTUNITY TO MEET NEW PEOPLE AND MAKE NEW FRIENDS TOO.”

YOUNG PARENT

OUTREACH

The Outreach service is often the first point of contact for families and begins with home visiting to make plans for support which can include assisting with welfare benefits, housing issues, home safety and accessing social support. Alongside putting this support in place, our aim is to support the families to build their confidence and enable them to engage with the Introductory Group.

The Introductory Group is a welcoming space where families can start to build peer relationships and reduce feelings of isolation. We have encouraged the groups to try new activities and develop new skills while having fun each week. The activities this year have included floral art, relaxation and mindfulness art, child development, home safety for children, cooking on a budget and online safety. Our online safety session allowed parents to bring their devices along to the group where they were shown / supported to set up parental controls.

Families have also had the opportunity to enjoy attending a number of shows in the Edinburgh Festival. Group outings are really beneficial to families as it allows them to find and try new places where they can walk to with their children such as The Royal Botanical Gardens, Inverleith Park and Lauriston Castle.

We have had different services come along to our groups throughout the year helping to build community connections and also encourage parents civic engagement. The group very much enjoyed their visit from Shirley-Ann Somerville, Cabinet Secretary for Social Security. Parents were asked to share their views and thoughts about The Scottish Child Payment which is due to be introduced in 2021.

I also had the pleasure of working on our peer mentoring programme this year which has seen 6 young parents trained as peer mentors come into the Introductory Group and fulfil their mentoring role. The mentors support new young parents to feel welcome within the group and also support them to make other local connections. I would like to personally thank the mentoring group for their ongoing support and the great role they have provided within the introductory groups.

Joanne Findlay
Outreach Worker



“I VIEW STEPPING STONES AS A KEY AGENCY WHEN CONSIDERING ROBUST CHILD SUPPORT PLANS OR CHILD PROTECTION PLANS. I HAVE SEEN THEIR INVOLVEMENT TAKE AWAY THE NEED FOR ANY SOCIAL WORK INVOLVEMENT COMPLETELY.”

SOCIAL WORKER, 2020 CONSULTATION

GROUP WORK PROGRAMME

Our core group work programme aims to support young parents to grow as young people as well as in their parenting role. The group work is developed around member's interests, key parenting topics and current issues. Our aim is to support parents to become more confident and empower them to be active in facilitating change in their life.

The group work programme has been very productive this year, covering a range of creative and educational topics. Highlights have included our peer mentor project and Motherhood Special, a project carried out in partnership with Stellar Quines Theatre Company.

Motherhood Special supported parents to explore young motherhood, looking at what parenting means to them, the challenges and highlights they have experienced, how they feel they are viewed by society and their aspirations for the future. From these topics the group were supported to write short monologues. An actor was then brought in to voice the characters they created. The group took on the role of director with decisions being made about setting, make-up and costume for their actor and what music would be used for filming. The outcome was six short film clips that gave a voice to the young parents in the group. The short films were shown at our AGM with parents presenting their work.

Our peer mentor project was created in response to our group members wanting to support other young parents to come along to groups. Attending a group for the first time can be a nerve-racking experience, especially for young parents with low

confidence and self esteem. The mentor training programme covered group work skills, managing challenging behaviour, confidence building and child protection responsibilities. Trained mentors then worked alongside staff to welcome parents, facilitate conversations and provide peer support. This project has had a double benefit in increasing the skills and confidence of the mentors as well as welcoming the newer parents into the group.

Throughout the year we have been approached by organisations carrying out research and creating media campaigns. Parents took part in filming for #SideBySideEdin, a campaign ran by EVOC highlighting the importance of work delivered by the third sector, contributed to The Poverty Alliance's research on poverty through focus groups and participated in the filming of a short video clip for the NSPCC's campaign –All of Us, encouraging parents to get support when they need it.

Through group trips we have support families to reduce feelings of isolation to visit local spaces such as Lauriston Castle, Cramond beach and the Botanic. A highlight this year was attending the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, seeing shows such as The Amazing Bubble Man and Shark in the Park. Another engaging, successful and fun year for our core group.

Kerry Riddell
Programme Development Worker

Watch our video here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AuFC8nOAsvk&feature=youtu.be>



GROUP WORK TOPICS

MENTOR PROJECT

RAISING CHILDREN
WITH CONFIDENCE

MOTHERHOOD PROJECT
WITH STELLAR QUINES

SQA EMPLOYABILITY

PEER EDUCATION

WRITING BOOKS FOR
YOUR CHILDREN

YOGA AND BARRE FITNESS

COOKING

PAPER CUTTING

JEWELLERY MAKING

AROMATHERAPY

CAKE DECORATING

BUMP START

This year Bump Start has continued to work with families in both the North West and North East of the city. The Bump Start workers support women and their families on a one to one basis in their homes, in the local community and at relevant health appointments. The team also facilitate two local Pregnancy Cafés for pregnant women and new mothers.

This year the Bump Start team have accessed additional training and events to ensure they can continue to provide the best possible support and up to date information for families. This has included NHS Weaning Training, Breastfeeding and Relationship Training and Child Protection Training. We have also been engaging with the Lothian Perinatal Mental Health Forum and have attended the Improving Perinatal Mental Health Pathway across Lothian event held this year. Both the forum and the event have allowed Bump Start to be more involved in the shaping of perinatal mental health services, and have highlighted ways in which the voluntary sector can support women's mental health during their pregnancy and journey into motherhood.

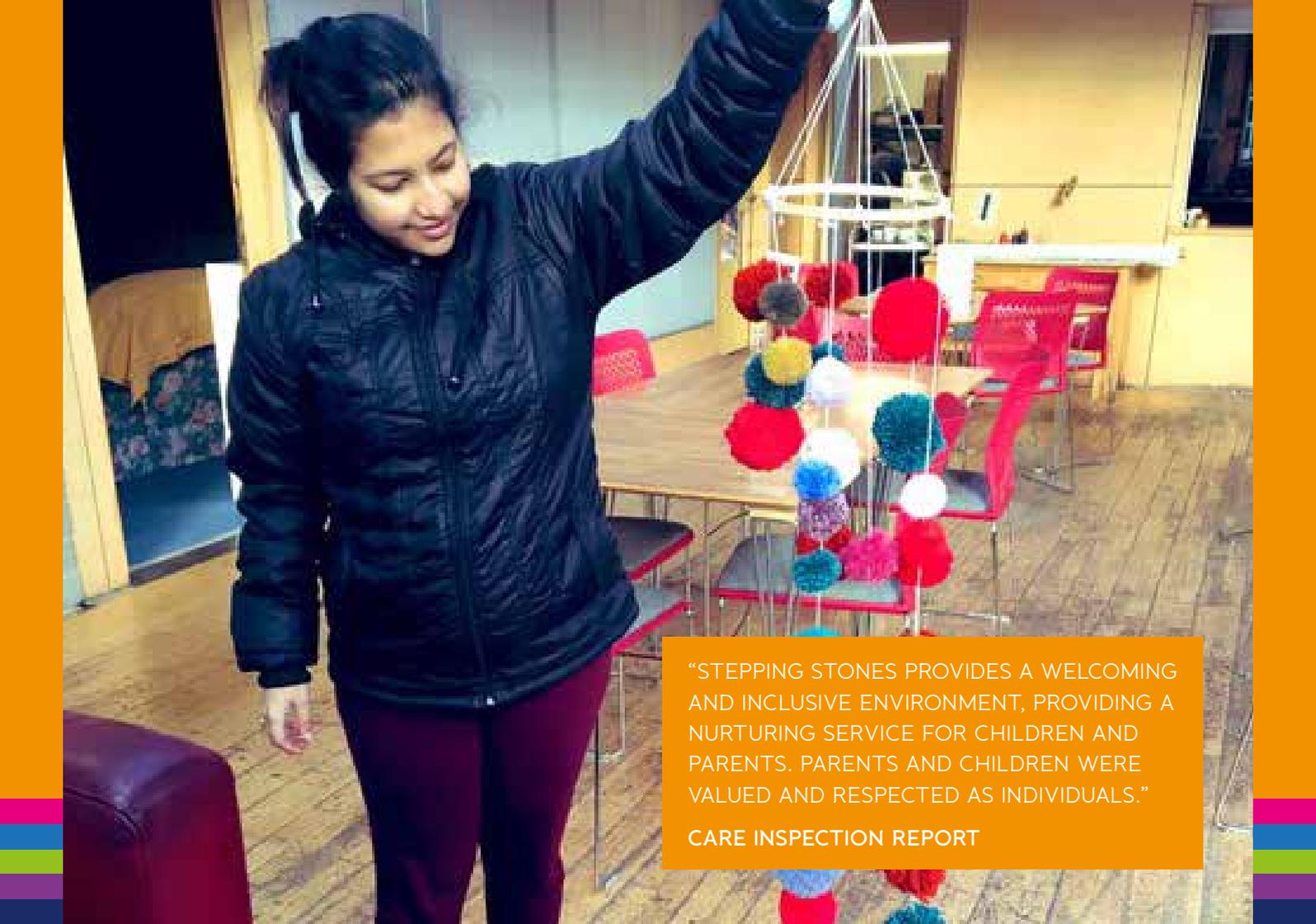
Bump Start workers have been continuing to support women to apply for Best Start Pregnancy and Baby Payment and the new Healthy Foods Card, which have been a welcome support for families in terms of preparing for their new baby. We have also been continuing to support women with their Universal

Credit applications and have completed Universal Credit Training with One Parent Family Scotland to further our understanding of the new benefit and ensure our support is accurate. Where necessary, Bump Start refers families to more specialist advice agencies, such as Granton Information Centre, and Citizens' Advice, and we appreciate the excellent support they provide.

This year has seen the return of the North East Pregnancy Café which had previously been suspended due to funding and staffing constraints. The new Café takes place in the Out of The Blue Drill Hall's lovely Café, and we have been enjoying delivering relaxing activities with the pregnant women and new mothers. This has included making pompom mobiles, homemade bath bombs and baby sensory bags. We also value the on-going input of the Infant Feeding Team, who visit the Café regularly and are on hand to answer women's breastfeeding, bottle feeding and weaning queries.

As always we want to thank all the local services and professionals who continue to support Bump Start women and their families, and thank you to the women who engage with us; we are very privileged to be involved during such an important time for them and their families.

Claire Chalmers, Nicola Milne & Louisa Heaney
Bump Start Worker



“STEPPING STONES PROVIDES A WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT, PROVIDING A NURTURING SERVICE FOR CHILDREN AND PARENTS. PARENTS AND CHILDREN WERE VALUED AND RESPECTED AS INDIVIDUALS.”

CARE INSPECTION REPORT

FAMILY SUPPORT

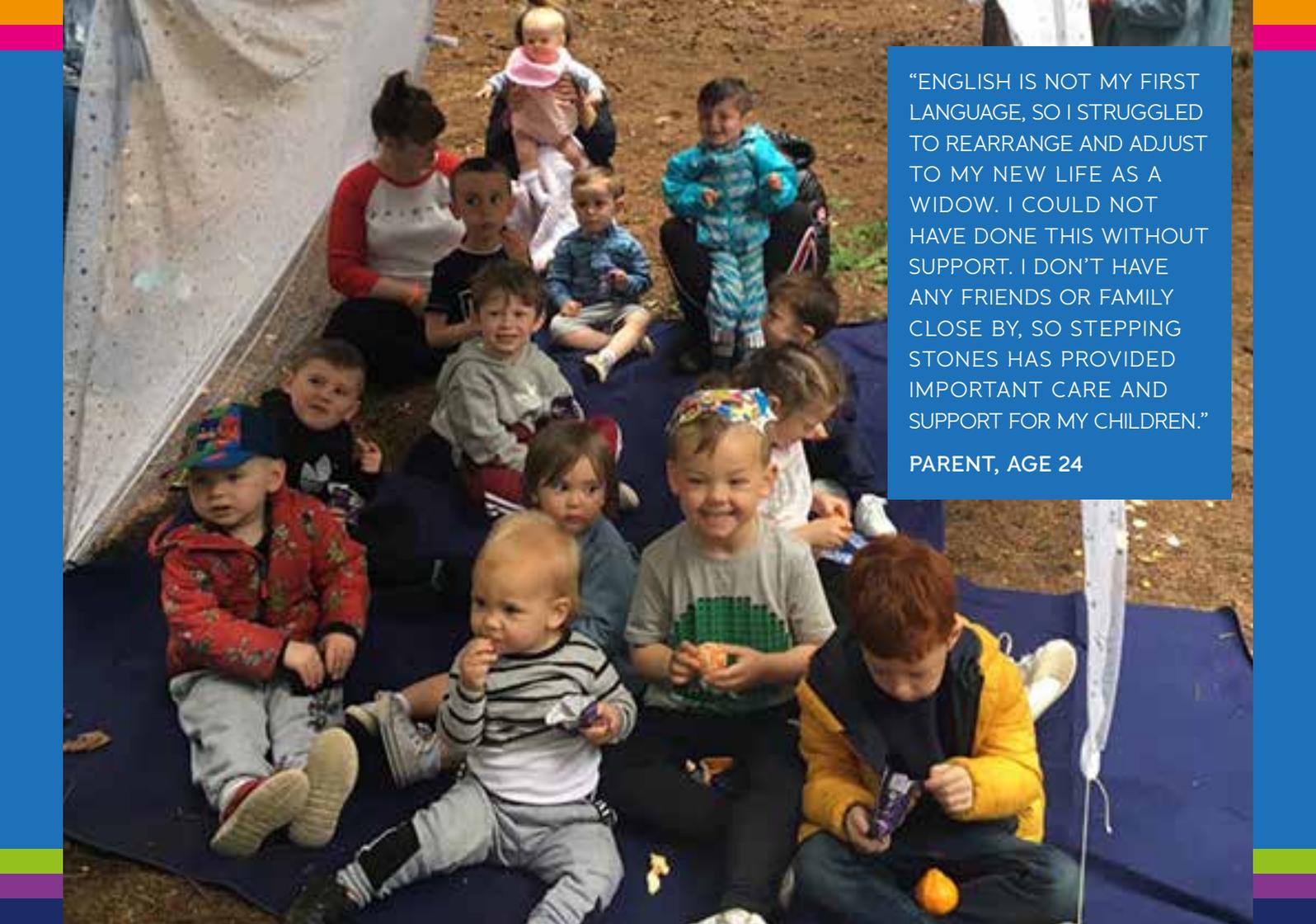
Family Support continues to provide an important and valued service to young parents in North Edinburgh. The service encourages parents to think about areas of their life that they wish to make positive changes in. My role is to provide an encouraging and supportive environment where parents can talk about their experiences and feelings without fear of judgment. I work closely with parents and their families to support them to achieve their goals and build their confidence in parenting and the challenges it brings.

Family Support is a flexible service that works to the needs of the individual. This means that support can be offered on a short or long term basis; can include weekly home visits or phone calls; as well as support to attend appointments or formal legal proceedings. I offer support and guidance on a variety of issues. The most common themes this year have been: housing issues, support with child protection proceedings, improving mental health, improving confidence and self-esteem, budgeting advice and support applying for benefits or grants. I often work closely with other professionals, such as social workers and health visitors to provide a holistic and inclusive package of care to parents and their children.

Food poverty is an issue that is becoming more prevalent in Scotland, with 1 in 10 families living in food poverty or insecurity. Many of the families that I work with are living in some form of food poverty and this can cause a great deal of distress. Across the team we make regular referrals to local agencies such as the Basics Bank at Granton Church and FreshStart, as well as nationwide agencies such as The Trussell Trust. These agencies are a vital lifeline for many families on low incomes who would struggle without their support and we are grateful that are such resources that we can support families to access.

Despite such challenges parents continue to grow and progress, creating positive change for their children and it has been rewarding to witness these changes throughout the year.

Charlie MacFarlane
Family Support Worker (Maternity Cover)

A group of approximately 15 children of various ages are sitting on a blue tarp outdoors. Some are eating snacks, and one child in the foreground is holding an orange. A woman is visible in the background, sitting and watching the children. The scene is set in a natural, outdoor environment with trees and a white tent-like structure visible.

“ENGLISH IS NOT MY FIRST LANGUAGE, SO I STRUGGLED TO REARRANGE AND ADJUST TO MY NEW LIFE AS A WIDOW. I COULD NOT HAVE DONE THIS WITHOUT SUPPORT. I DON’T HAVE ANY FRIENDS OR FAMILY CLOSE BY, SO STEPPING STONES HAS PROVIDED IMPORTANT CARE AND SUPPORT FOR MY CHILDREN.”

PARENT, AGE 24

PARENTING OUTREACH SUPPORT SERVICE

The parenting Outreach Support service has continued to offer a wide range of services to families across the community. New developments within the service have centred on our work within local primary schools. This has seen the team expand on the work of the Nurture Group into a wide range of one to one support and group work in schools. The work has been tailored to the individual needs of pupils and schools with a different approach being tested within each school. Common themes within the work have been to support children to have successful transitions, build confidence and peer relationships and to support the mental health and wellbeing of pupils. Staff undertook a variety of new training to develop their skills and equip them to build successful and meaningful relationship with the school children.

One to one support for families through home visiting and outreach work continues to be the foundation of the parenting outreach support service. The range of needs is diverse within families although there are commonalities such as the impact of poverty, trauma and poor mental health and wellbeing. The team continue to recognise the importance of building strong trusting relationships with families in order to be able to put in place an effective support plan for families that will result in meaningful changes.

Alongside offering emotional support and space to reflect the team also help to action practical supports such as budgeting, establishing routines within the home, healthy sleep patterns and accessing material support to mitigate the impacts of poverty. The team see how these small changes can positively impact the overall wellbeing of all the family.

The service has also continued to be involved in a partnership approach to delivering multi-disciplinary training to practitioners. This focused on providing training to support meaningful engagement with fathers and is now being developed to tackle wider engagement with all parents. We look forward to completing the development of this and hopefully delivering the new training in 20/21.

Anna Chrystal

Parenting Outreach Support Worker

Ali McIlhone

Early Years Parenting Practitioner

Mubarra Ashfaque

Early Years Practitioner



FINANCIAL REVIEW

Stepping Stones (NE) has had a successful year financially, with a reported surplus of £29,537 for the year to 31 March 2020 (2019: surplus £10,388).

The reason for the surplus is an increase in incoming resources of £389,925 (an 8% increase from 2019), partially offset by an increase in expenditure. As per previous years, Stepping Stones continues to receive the majority of its funding from the City of Edinburgh Council & National Lottery Fund totalling £255,317 (2019: £252,449) which represents 65% of total income (2019: 70%). However, we have seen an increase in the total income received from new funding sources such as Chance to Flourish and KPE4 Charitable Trust. We are very grateful to all funders that enable us to continue to provide an invaluable service to the local community.

From a cost perspective, total expenditure has remained stable circa increasing by 3% from £351,042 in 2019 to £360,388 in 2020.

Despite concerns as to future funding earlier in 2020, Stepping Stones has been successful in securing additional funding and is now budgeted to receive income of £380,429 for 2020/21, projected to result in a surplus. The budget will be closely monitored, against actual results by the board throughout the year.

Roy Craig
Treasurer



TRUSTEES AND STAFF

TRUSTEES

Alastair Duncan
Chairperson

Pat Haikney
Secretary

Roy Craig
Treasurer

Ian Moir

Fiona Gray

Russell Bradley

Amanda Young

Sandra Cumming

Ailene Preston

STAFF

Morag Wilson
Manager

Jackie Souness
Business Administrator
(left September 2020)

Zoe Jordan
Business Administrator
(appointed September 2020)

Naghmana Sajjad
Early Years Manager
(left August 2020)

Mubarra Ashfaque
Early Years Practitioner

Clara Massie
Early Years Practitioner

Anna Chrystal
Parenting Outreach
Support Worker

Ali McIlhone
Early Years Parenting Practitioner

Joanne Findlay
Outreach Worker

Tiam Lithgow
Family Support Worker
(Maternity Leave)

Charlie McFarlane
Family Support Worker
(Maternity Leave Cover)

Kerry Riddell
Programme Development
Worker

Claire Chalmers
Bump Start Worker

Louisa Heaney
Bump Start Worker

Nicola Milne
Bump Start Worker



“I HAVE BEEN SUPPORTED
TO DEAL WITH MY
MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES
AND SUPPORTED TO
LEARN HOW TO BE A
PARENT TO A CHILD WITH
COMPLEX NEEDS.”

YOUNG PARENT, AGE 20



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