

Fund report

November 2023



The Essentia Foundation



Headlines

- Over the course of the Summer, The Essentia Foundation relaunched its highly popular multi-year awards programme. 9 organisations were supported with 3-year grants to provide long term impact to young people living in Scotland. A wide range of thematic projects were supported, and we look forward to monitoring their progress over the coming years.
- It is notable that as a direct response to the current cost of living crisis, The Essentia Foundation decided to provide an uplift to all 2022, multi-year awards. This signalled a growing commitment to helping third sector organisation during this difficult time and helped to ensure that projects will be able to run to their original scale.
- 2023 has seen the launch of the '**Journey to ...**' series which has taken a deep dive into the issues that impact young people across different geographies in Scotland. At present, the East, North and South has been covered by this series and it is anticipated that the West and Central Belt pieces will be released by early 2024. The series has proved to be an effective way of showcasing how the Foundation is able to address the different geographies across Scotland.

Overview

This impact report aims to provide Trustees with an update on several projects that have completed activities in the last 6 months. Foundation Scotland has also provided an analysis into the various ways in which your Fund is helping to alleviate the plight of young carers in Scotland.

The Essentia Foundation and Young Carers

In Scotland young carers play a vital but often hidden role in supporting family members or loved ones with health conditions or addictions. These young individuals, typically under the age of eighteen, take on significant responsibilities in caring for their relatives, and their commitment to this role is nothing short of admirable. This profile delves into the lives of young carers, exploring who they are, whom they support, and some essential statistics that shed light on the challenges they face.

Who Are Young Carers?

Young carers are children and adolescents who find themselves in the unique position of having to provide care and support to family members, often parents or siblings, who may have a range of health conditions. These conditions can include physical disabilities, mental illnesses, substance abuse, chronic illnesses, and more. Despite their early age, young carers take on various caregiving tasks, such as helping with personal hygiene, administering medication, cooking, cleaning, and providing emotional support. The responsibilities of young carers often arise from necessity, as there may be limited access to external support services or other family members available to provide care.

Whom Do They Support?

Young carers support a wide range of individuals within their families, but the most common care recipients are parents and siblings.

Parental Care: Many young carers take on the role of caring for one or both of their parents. This could be due to a parent's physical disability, mental health issues, substance addiction, or chronic illness. In such cases, young carers often help with household chores, cooking, and emotional support.

Sibling Care: Some young carers provide care for siblings who may have special needs, disabilities, or chronic illnesses. They assist with daily activities, such as bathing, dressing, feeding, and transport to appointments.

Extended Family: In some cases, young carers may also support other family members, such as grandparents or aunts and uncles, who require care.

Statistics

Understanding the scale and challenges of young carers' responsibilities is crucial to providing the support and resources they need. Here are some essential statistics regarding young carers in Scotland:

Population: According to the Scottish Health Survey, around 7% of young people in Scotland (93, 000) have caring responsibilities. Another estimate suggests that there are 29,000 young carers in Scotland, which is 4% of the child population (aged 4-15).

Hours: There are over 171,000 carers aged 16+ caring for 35 hours a week or more in Scotland.

Gender: Young carers are equally distributed between genders, with both boys and girls taking on caregiving roles.

Educational Impact: Young carers often face challenges in education. They are more likely to experience higher rates of truancy, lower academic attainment, and increased stress due to the dual responsibilities of caregiving and schooling.

Mental and Physical Health: Young carers are at a higher risk of experiencing mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression, due to the added stress and responsibility they shoulder. They may also suffer from physical health problems because of their caregiving tasks.

Financial Strain: Data indicates that many young carers come from households with lower socioeconomic status, which can exacerbate their caregiving responsibilities and create additional challenges.

Support and Recognition

Whilst the 'cost of living crisis' is negatively impacting youth across Scotland; it is also promising that the third sector is actively mobilizing to help this demographic. Thanks to the Essentia Foundation 26 projects have been supported in the last 6 months, all of which will aim to enhance the lives of children and teenagers across the region during this testing time. The following pages in this report will capture some of the impact stories from 2022 projects.

Despite the limited number of community groups operating which exclusively support young carers in Scotland, over the years, The Essentia Foundation has gone some way in supporting this demographic.

One such example is **Caithness KLICS**, an organization which has been supported several times over the years. Operating in the Northeast of Scotland, this charity supports young carers living in Caithness, the majority of whom are based in Wick and Thurso. Due to the highly rural nature of this region, access to healthcare and social services is difficult and the burden on young carers is substantial. Projects supported by the Foundation have included after-school care clubs and peer support groups.



Further South in Strathmore, **The #c200 Fund** was supported by The Essentia Foundation. The c200 fund has been operating in the Perth and Kinross area only as a fund before it was officially established as a charitable group. The charity provides vouchers for care-experienced young adults aged between 16-25, who are starting to become independent or those who are already living alone. These vouchers are usually in the form of Tesco vouchers, which allow these individuals to feel as though there is someone there for them, since most do not get any help from friends or family members. The charity hands out these vouchers directly to the recipient through the help of their social workers. A project grant was awarded in 2022 to

support the continued distribution of these vouchers to 150 young carers and this proved to be popular with carers who stated that practical, financial help is often what is missing within the sector.

Last but no means least, **TYKES** in East Sutherland was supported by an Essentia Foundation grant to ensure that young carers could receive respite care from their caring responsibilities. Grant monies went on to support a residential weekend for a group of young people and enabled them to embrace their childhood, build friendships and discuss the difficulties of caring for a parent or sibling in an open and supportive environment. A case study on this project can be found in this report.

In summary, the Essentia Foundation has taken significant steps to raise awareness of the challenges faced by young carers and to ensure that these individuals are provided with the necessary support to lead normal childhoods and teenage lives. This includes facilitating access to funding, financial assistance, and opportunities to address the stress and trauma they experience. The foundation remains committed to these efforts and will continue to champion the cause of young carers in the future.

Impact Story: Twist and Hit Cheerleaders

Grant awarded = £800.00
Location = Renfrewshire

Twist and Hit Cheerleaders was set up by a local resident with many years' experiences working as an athlete and

sports coach in the region. She established the club with the help of community volunteers to address the lack of local resources for the growing number of young people interested in cheerleading. With no local council gymnastic facility and no suitable equipment in Paisley, those interested in cheerleading were only able to participate if they could travel to clubs in other areas. The Club is based in Ferguslie Park which is one of the top deprived areas in Scotland as noted by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). At least 75% of their members are from the Paisley and Renfrewshire areas. However, it is open to children from outside the local area with three members traveling every week from Cumbria to take part.

In 2022, The Essentia Foundation awarded the organisation a grant to cover the cost of weekly ASN classes for six months to offer them free to participants to ensure there are no financial barriers to attending. The club wanted to offer free/subsidised classes to vulnerable groups. Those with disabilities are often excluded from mainstream sports which can lead to a lack of physical exercise, social interaction, and friendship building. The club knew there was demand

ASN classes as they have run trial sessions with the local Active Schools team and work closely with Jones & Us – a social enterprise that focuses on sports and fitness for those with disabilities. It was hoped that around 15 young people with additional needs would stand to directly benefit from project activities.



The organisation commenced activities in early 2022 and we able to extend support to its ASN (Additional Support Needs) group by subsidizing class fees, thereby removing financial barriers to participation. Volunteer coaches also underwent training to enhance their understanding of how to assist individuals with additional needs in the sport. These efforts resulted in a significant boost in the group's confidence, culminating in a successful showcase performance at the Armadillo Arena (SEC) in Glasgow. The project benefited 15 children.

The grantee expressed great satisfaction with the progress made by the ASN group and the positive impact of this project. Notably, in October 2023, the group received a nomination for a Positive about Youth Award from Renfrewshire Council, recognizing their inspirational work and unwavering commitment to inclusivity. Currently, the organisation is actively seeking funding to sustain the program's continuation. They have forged a partnership with RiverBrae ASN school in Renfrewshire and collaborated with the local Sports Coordinator to introduce ASN Cheer within the school, marking a historic milestone in Scottish sports history.



Case Study

Ben*, a 16-year-old male with Down's Syndrome and complex learning difficulties, embarked on his journey with cheerleading three years ago. At the outset, he grappled with the apprehension linked to the 'stigma' often associated with cheerleading on social media platforms. However, his love for dancing coupled with the

unwavering support of the team helped him break down these barriers.

With time and guidance from the dedicated team, Ben began attending weekly sessions, where he eagerly embraced the opportunity to learn new skills and participate wholeheartedly. His transformation was truly remarkable, as he evolved from a hesitant newcomer to a confident and enthusiastic cheerleader.

A pivotal moment in Ben's cheerleading journey came when he had the chance to attend a cheerleading competition. Notably, Ben was the only male participant at the time, a testament to his courage and determination. However, his participation in this event, held at the prestigious Armadillo Arena, marked a turning point in his journey. Ben and his team, known as the RAINBOW team, delivered an outstanding showcase that left the audience in awe. This transformative journey and BT's remarkable progress have not only inspired those around him but have also sparked interest from others who now wish to partake in cheerleading. His story has brought about positive change, breaking down stereotypes and fostering inclusivity within the sport.

For a glimpse of the RAINBOW team's performance, please refer to the following video link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qGPPlen22u0>

Impact Data

- Number of people reporting increased skills and knowledge = 15
- Number of people taking up work or volunteer placement/experience opportunities = 8
- Number of people reporting improved physical health or wellbeing = 15

Impact Story: Countryside Learning Scotland

Grant awarded = £3,000.00

Location = Perth and Kinross

Countryside Learning Scotland is the only countryside education charity in Scotland specialising in the secondary sector and it works across all rural industries. Whilst

there are many organisations delivering quality education in the rural sector to nursery and primary age groups, there is a gap in service provision within the secondary age group in Scotland. The primary project of the organisation is the Pathways to Rural Work outreach programme. The programme delivers in-school engagement sessions, hands on rural career days in the workplace, teacher and industry staff training, residential experiences, and rural industry partnerships for further work experience. The benefits of engaging young people with the countryside are numerous. The project empowers and supports young people to develop the knowledge, skills, confidence, and creativity needed to make positive life choices in relation to the countryside; encourages economic growth and enhancing health and wellbeing through outdoor learning; and provides training and career opportunities in all areas of rural life.

In 2022, the charity was awarded a grant of £3,000.00 to support the development of the core P2RW delivery model, including Teacher Resource Packs, reinvigorating the Youth Advisory Group, and taking the Rural Volunteer Award programme to a wider audience, coaching regional 'hubs' where CLS has outreach staff and engaged partner schools/businesses. Through the ADHD pilot project, the Co-ordinator, in partnership with Perth Grammar School, would work with a select group of neuro-diverse young people to develop a 10-month outdoor education programme, incorporating a focus on each participant's proprioception, ongoing involvement in building their understanding of the barriers they might have had to overcome.



With Essentia's funding, the organisation successfully launched the ADHD Rural Connect initiative for neurodiverse young people. A key focus was the collaboration with Perth Grammar School, fostering relationships to support these young individuals. Staff at the school identified students who could benefit from the project and engaged them through various sessions, both in school and with professionals.

These sessions aimed to ease anxieties, explore the program's areas of interest, and accommodate the students' schedules without hindering their ongoing courses. Notably, this year's pilot initiative saw 12 students participating in structured, yet flexible sessions tailored to individual progress. The students engaged with rural professionals and specialists, developing skills and self-awareness.

Furthermore, the initiative recognized the importance of involving parents and guardians in the students' journey, offering online sessions for their participation. Although attendance was limited, efforts are underway to enhance engagement as the project continues. This project represents a significant step in providing essential support and development opportunities for neurodiverse youth in the community. The initiative maintained its commitment to building vital connections with local businesses and organizations eager to support its mission. Notably, Lantra, specializing in rural sector training and qualifications, has joined forces, expressing a keen interest in aiding the young participants. The collaboration extends to providing work placements, offering valuable hands-on experience in these environments.

The program's partnership with Perth Grammar School remains strong, with interest expressed by other schools keen to engage in similar initiatives. Feedback from teaching staff at school-related events underscored the positive impact of the pilot program, with notable changes observed in participating students.

Testimonials

A parent of a participant in the ADHD Rural Connect initiative expressed their heartfelt gratitude, stating:

"I just wanted to thank you for allowing my child to participate in the ADHD rural group. He thoroughly enjoys it and gets so much out of it. Aside from enjoying spending time with the animals and participating in the activities of the day, he comes home equally fuelled by the positive interactions he's been having with the staff both from the school and the others on the project. Because of his obvious challenges, a lot of his interactions within the school can

be negative. It's been good for him to have something positive to participate in. The whole project is clearly very well run with a lot of thought put into making it engaging for the kids involved. He told me on Monday that he was so happy and lucky to have been given a place. His Dad and I couldn't agree more. Please pass on my thanks to everybody involved."

Please check out the following link to a project video - [Pathways to Rural Work | CLS \(countrysidelearningscotland.org.uk\)](https://countrysidelearningscotland.org.uk)

Impact Data

- Number of people reporting increased skills and knowledge = 12
- Number of people reporting increased resilience and/or self-care = 10
- Number of people whose engagement in education/learning has improved = 10

Impact Story: Capall Dorcha Theatre Company

Grant awarded = £2,871.92
Location = North Ayrshire

Capall Dorcha Theatre Company is a Registered Charity. Since 2015, this organisation has facilitated arts and cultural engagement for over 3000

individuals in North Ayrshire. Their commitment extends to providing accessible arts and cultural experiences and education for people of all ages, with a particular emphasis on reaching those most affected by poverty and inequality.

In 2018, the organisation launched two Youth Theatres catering to young people in Primary 4-7 and S1+. These theatres have showcased their talents through various productions, including the notable inclusion of 'Brainstorm,' chosen to perform at the Gaiety as part of the National Festival of Youth Theatre. Further, the organisation has enriched the lives of children and young people by delivering creative workshops during school holidays, even providing meals. These workshops have not only engaged participants in positive and healthy activities but have also resulted in at least 40 children attaining an Arts Award. The creative work of these young individuals is showcased through film or performance, fostering their artistic growth. Additionally, they have organised a National Play Day event for Primary 1-3, contributing to the community's overall well-being and cultural enrichment.



In 2022, The Essentia Foundation supported the charity with a grant to fund an Alice in Wonderland production. The initiative would be divided into two teams:

- The Production Team: This team's goal aimed to nurture essential life skills, including communication, teamwork, and leadership, while offering young people the creative freedom to actively shape a production.
- The Performers: The second team would comprise performers who would delve into acting, singing, and dancing, fostering stage etiquette, teamwork, and building self-confidence.

The project would unfold as a professional training opportunity, with guidance from theatre practitioners, a musical director, technical theatre production teams, and a choreographer. The Junior Youth Theatre group would engage in two eight-week rehearsal blocks, with a spring break in between, culminating in a performance at the Harbour Arts Centre. It was hoped that over 30 young people would stand to directly benefit from project activities.

The performance took place in June 2022 with Disney's 'Alice in Wonderland Jnr.' The production prioritized community support and sustainability by sourcing resources locally and adopting eco-friendly practices. The grantee found that the aftereffects of the pandemic impacted participant attendance and caused performance-related anxieties. To address this, the organisation simplified the show and introduced support mechanisms, emphasizing the well-being and confidence-building of the participants. The local venue accommodated an audience of over 150, including families, friends, and community members, furthering the goal of expanding access to the arts in an area with limited engagement.

Case Study

F joined the project at its inception, initially displaying shyness and reserve. During auditions, F delivered an exceptional performance, securing their desired role. Rehearsals began with F consistently demonstrating mastery of lines and choreography. However, as the performance date neared, they grappled with increasing nervousness, particularly performing in front of an audience, including family and friends.

Facilitators worked closely with F to boost confidence, create a safe space, and bolster self-esteem. Just days before the performance, F expressed doubts but received unwavering support from facilitators, leading to the final rehearsals. On the performance day, F's anxieties lingered, but with facilitators' support, they summoned the courage to perform in front of an audience of 150 people, including loved ones.

After the show, F's parent expressed immense pride, highlighting F's journey. They noted that F had been quite anxious and found it challenging to make friends, both at school and outside. However, participating in the project allowed F to flourish, fostering increased confidence in school and within a social group. The experience provided a transformative outlet for F, revealing a more confident and expressive side that had previously been less visible.

Impact Data

- Number of people reporting increased skills and knowledge = 33
- Number of people taking up work or volunteer placement/experience opportunities = 3
- Number of hours of education/training provided = 60

Impact Story: Fairview School Parent Council

Grant awarded = £3,000.00
Location = Perth and Kinross

The Fairview Parent Council is run by parents who volunteer for Fairfield Primary School in Perth. The school itself caters to children and young adults who experience

hardship in communication and who face a variety of disabilities, both social and physical. The Council serves to further extra-curricular projects for the school population.

The Essentia Foundation supported the Council to fund the school's outdoor play area to make it more inclusive for those who have additional needs and suffer from complex social communication difficulties. Fairview parent council have already been involved in activities and fundraisers with the community to transform the outdoor space of the school to make it more accessible. The project focused on putting in a trampoline. The project would take place in the outdoor play area of the school with pupils able to benefit from it year-round and for many years to come. Putting in this trampoline would allow for a more 'sensory-rich' play experience for those who face social barriers.

Soon after receiving the grant, the organisation quickly got to work and installed the trampoline before the summer holidays. The trampoline project not only introduced fun but also brought substantial health and academic benefits to the school playground and classroom. Beyond being a pastime, trampoline activities have contributed significantly to developmental play and growth, particularly for ASN (Additional Support Needs) children who may encounter challenges in processing sensory information.



Impact Data

- Number of people reporting improved physical health or wellbeing = 76
- Number of people participating in sport, exercise, and leisure activities = 76

Impact Story: TYKES

Grant awarded = £2,730.00
Location = East Sutherland

TYKES is a Registered Charity based in East Sutherland. The charity provides support for young carers dealing with parents who have health conditions or addictions. They offer a confidential space for discussions and peer supported activity. During the pandemic, the charity delivered food hampers and collaborated with local resilience groups and village hubs. Their services include

respite activities, a drop-in centre, peer support, one-on-one guidance from TYKES support workers, and group therapy. They also raise awareness of young carer issues in schools, health services, and social work.



In 2022, the organisation received an award from the Essentia Foundation to support respite and activity-based sessions for young carers living in the Highlands. The grant aimed to pay for two sessional staff for 10 weeks over a 12-week period (£2,400), and travel costs (£330), including minibus transport for

collecting children who live in remote areas. This is an ongoing project, and the Essentia Foundation grant will enable them to deliver activities during the 12 weeks of school holidays during 2022. The project aimed to benefit 50 young carers living in and around Sutherland aged between 5 and 18 years.

Project activities got underway in 2022. The project was originally planned to be a series of activities; however, it was decided to switch this to a residential based programme. If their home situation allows, TYKES offers Young Carers the chance to get away for a while. These opportunities can be day trips or extended, week-long breaks which provide respite for the Young Carer to have a break from their caring role at home.



Considering this, TYKES selected a group of 12 young carers from Sutherland for a 2-night respite break, considering their needs and ability to handle time away from their caregiving roles. They chose an Outdoor Centre for its accommodation, meals, and activities. Before the trip, the organisation arranged meetings for the young carers to get to know each other, plan menus, allocate rooms, set rules and bedtimes.

A week before the trip, one young carer became anxious about being away from home. The organization, along with the young person and their mother, devised a plan. The young person opted for a day trip with a support worker, with the option to stay overnight. This helped to ensure that this young person could participate despite the various hurdles they faced. The initiative has had a profound impact, providing young carers the opportunity to enjoy a rejuvenating holiday among their peers. Looking ahead, Tykes is actively pursuing fundraising objectives to secure the resources necessary to sustain these valuable trips for young carers.

Impact Data

- Number of people reporting improved physical health or wellbeing = 12
- Number of people reporting increased resilience and/or self-care = 12