



Family Supporters Edinburgh

1 April 2024 - 31 March 2025

Annual Impact Report

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Foreward

This report covers the work of Volunteering Matters Family Supporters Edinburgh project from April 2024 to March 2025. Over the last year we have seen a significant increase in the number of families seeking our support, reflecting the challenging times that many are currently facing.

Despite the demands on the project, we are delivering bespoke volunteer-led support to each family, finding ways for them to feel connected and included in their community. This includes providing additional support during school holidays and over the festive period when demands are particularly high.

The project has been fortunate to benefit from sustained interest from volunteers, many of whom bring invaluable life experience, skills, networks and a genuine desire to give back to their own community.

We remain deeply grateful to everyone involved in this project from our dedicated volunteers, to the families who place their trust in us, and of course our funders the National Lottery and Walter Scott & partners, without whom this project would not be possible.

Arlaine Barbour, Project Manager
Family Supporters Edinburgh



Project Overview

Family Supporters Edinburgh offers practical, social, and emotional support to families across all North, West, South and East localities of Edinburgh, empowering them to face a range of life challenges and barriers. We recruit, train, support and match dedicated local volunteers to help families every step of the way, spending 1-1 time together on a personalised set of goals chosen by the family for the family.

We provide help in many ways, such as support to improve living standards, with housing, budgeting, healthier eating, routines, improved school life and behaviour, access to health and wellbeing support, and introducing parents to community resources, to name but a few.

Themes of support include:

Health and Wellbeing

- Improved mental health
- Making healthier choices
- Self-care and nurturing
- Access to health Support

Education, Employment and Training

- Improved school life and behaviour
- Parental support and education
- Further opportunities
- Equality and accessibility

Housing & Finance

- Suitable living Standards
- Financial independence
- Housing stability
- Access to housing and finance Support

Our **Impact** in 2024-25

45%

improvement in living standards

63%

improvement in financial



50%

improvement in accessing housing and finance support

18%

improvement in housing stability

33% improvement in equality and accessibility

71%

improvement in accessing further opportunities

44%

improvement in school life and behaviour



45%

improvement in parental support to education

58% improvement in making healthier lifestyle choices

47% improvement in accessing health supports

70%

improvement in self-care and nurturing skills



76%

improvement in mental health

Each parent/family completes a journey travelled questionnaire before, and then regularly during their engagement. This allows us to track the impact of our service on each individual family, in real time.

Our Families in 2024-25



62% Children with
“Challenging Behaviour”

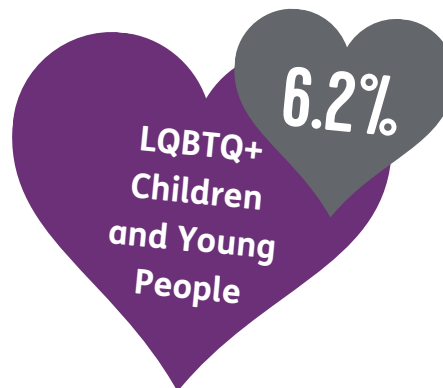


Children with Disability
or Neurodiversity

68%



43% Parents with Health Issue
or Neurodiversity



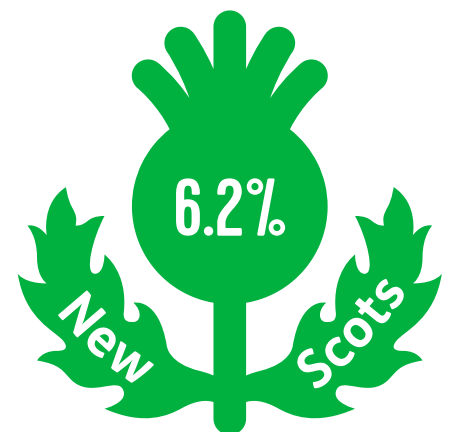
25%

Victims of
Domestic
Abuse

12.5%
English as a
Foreign Language



62% Single
Parents



Our Partnerships



Partnerships are a vital part of how we support families holistically. Working alongside other organisations allows us to extend the impact of our work, offering tailored support to meet families needs beyond our direct support.

Over the last year, we have promoted Family Supporters to Children and Families Social Work staff across all 4 localities of Edinburgh. We have also attended all EVOC Voluntary Sector forums, helping to build links with the Locality Organisational Groups.

In 2024–25, we developed and strengthened several key referral pathways to ensure families receive holistic, joined-up support that meets their needs.

New referral pathways include:

- [Edinburgh Council's Learning & Development Team](#): Enables families to access a range of accredited parenting programmes
- [Kids Love Clothes](#): Charity providing high-quality clothing for children in need

We have also strengthened existing partnerships with:

- [Edinburgh School Uniform Bank](#): Vital support for families navigating the pressures of the cost-of living crisis
- [Community Food Banks and Pantry Services](#): Offers emergency and ongoing support with dignity and flexibility
- [Edinburgh Leisure](#): Families have accessed discounted or free activities, supporting wellbeing, routine, and family connection

We continue to make referrals into services offering:

[Housing support](#): For families experiencing overcrowding or at risk of homelessness

[Mental health and wellbeing support](#): For both adults and young people

[Employment and training services](#): Helping parents work toward financial independence and sustainable futures

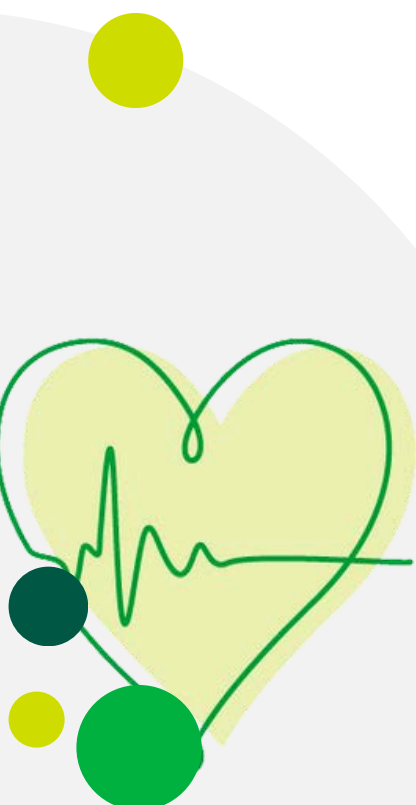
Trends Emerging

A growing need for **practical support**—such as clothing, food, and help with utility bills

Short-term wellbeing support, often through peer-led groups or early intervention mental health services.

These supports are especially valued by families dealing with stress, isolation, or life transitions.

Our partnerships ensure families receive **timely, appropriate, and dignified support** through trusted local networks. By working together, we reduce stigma, build community trust, and make sure no family feels they are facing challenges alone.



The Promise

Our Commitment to The Promise and Whole Family Support

Our work is closely aligned with **The Promise**, particularly in delivering the vision of **Whole Family Support**—support that is wraparound, relational, and available **when it's needed, for as long as it's needed**.

In line with this, we are committed to:

- **Keeping families together where it is safe to do so**, by providing preventative support that reduces the need for crisis intervention
- **Listening to what matters to families**, not just what services think they need, and shaping our response accordingly
- Offering support that is **non-stigmatising and easy to access**, including flexible referral routes and self-referrals
- **Recognising the interconnected needs** of children, parents, and carers—supporting the whole household, not individuals in isolation
- **Collaborating with other services**, to make sure families experience joined-up support and aren't left to navigate systems alone

Our approach is rooted in the belief that **relationships are the key to change**, and we continue to invest in the people and partnerships that make this possible. As part of this, we are expanding our volunteer support, improving referral processes, and embedding co-production in all aspects of our design and delivery.

We will continue to reflect, adapt, and advocate—ensuring we not only **keep the Promise** but **live it** through everyday practice.

Scotland's promise to care experienced children and young people is that they will grow up loved, safe, and respected.

Everyone involved in the lives of children and families must know that their primary purpose is to develop nurturing, patient, kind, compassionate, trusting and respectful relationships that keep children and families safe.



Our Commitment and The Promise

National Framework Principles of Holistic Whole Family Support:

Needs-based

Timely

Underpinned by
Children's Rights

Community-based

Non-stigmatising

Whole Family

Families Voice

Skilled and supported workforce

Promoted

We are committed to United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)



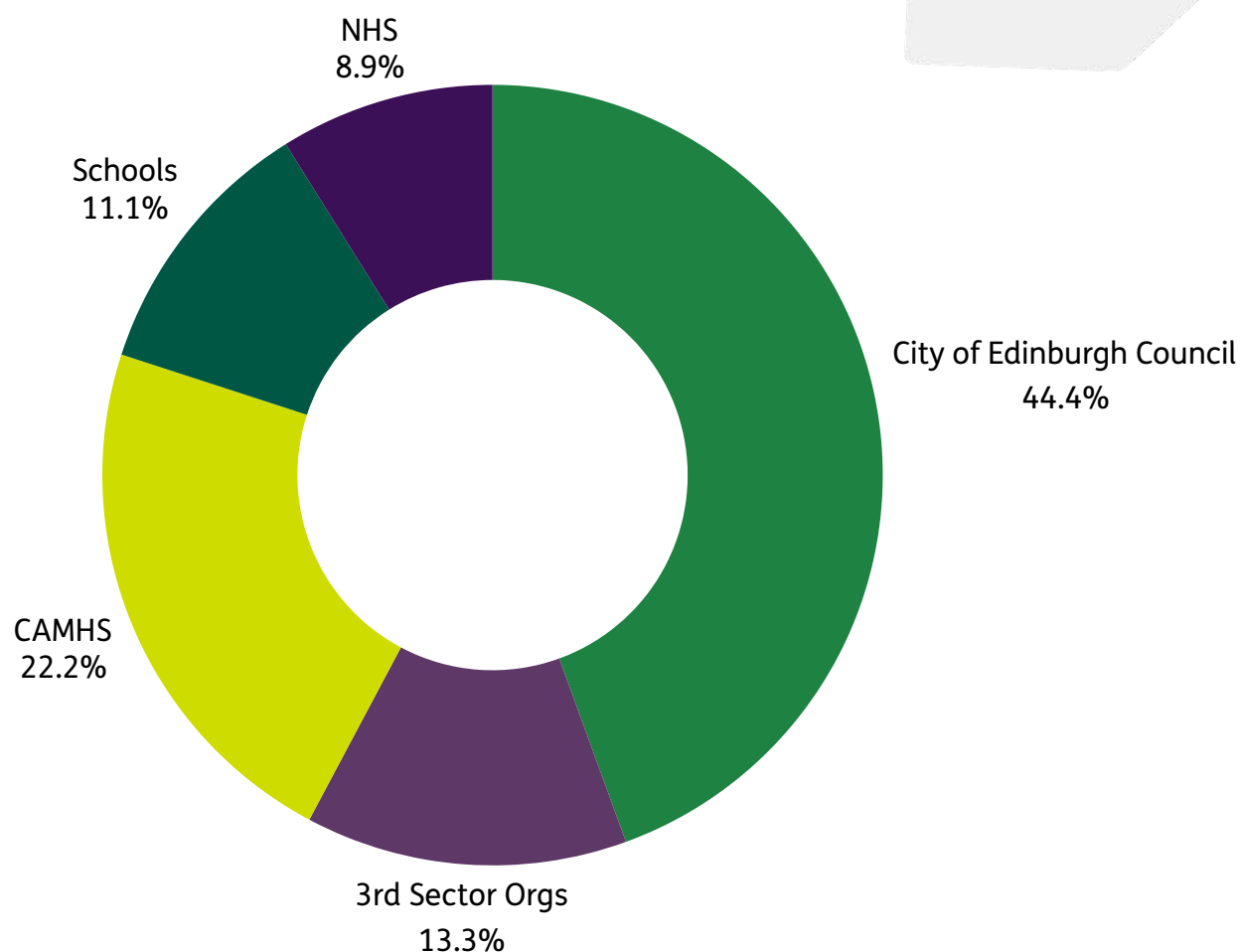
Scotland has a vision to be the best place for children and young people to grow up. Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) is Scotland's national approach to improving outcomes for children and young people.

Recognising that children's individual growth and development is experienced in the context of their family and care networks, local communities, and wider societal influences.

This ambition means we are working towards a Scotland where wellbeing will flourish, every child's rights are upheld and where young people grow up loved, safe and respected, able to realise their full potential.

Our Referrals in 2024-25

49 Referrals



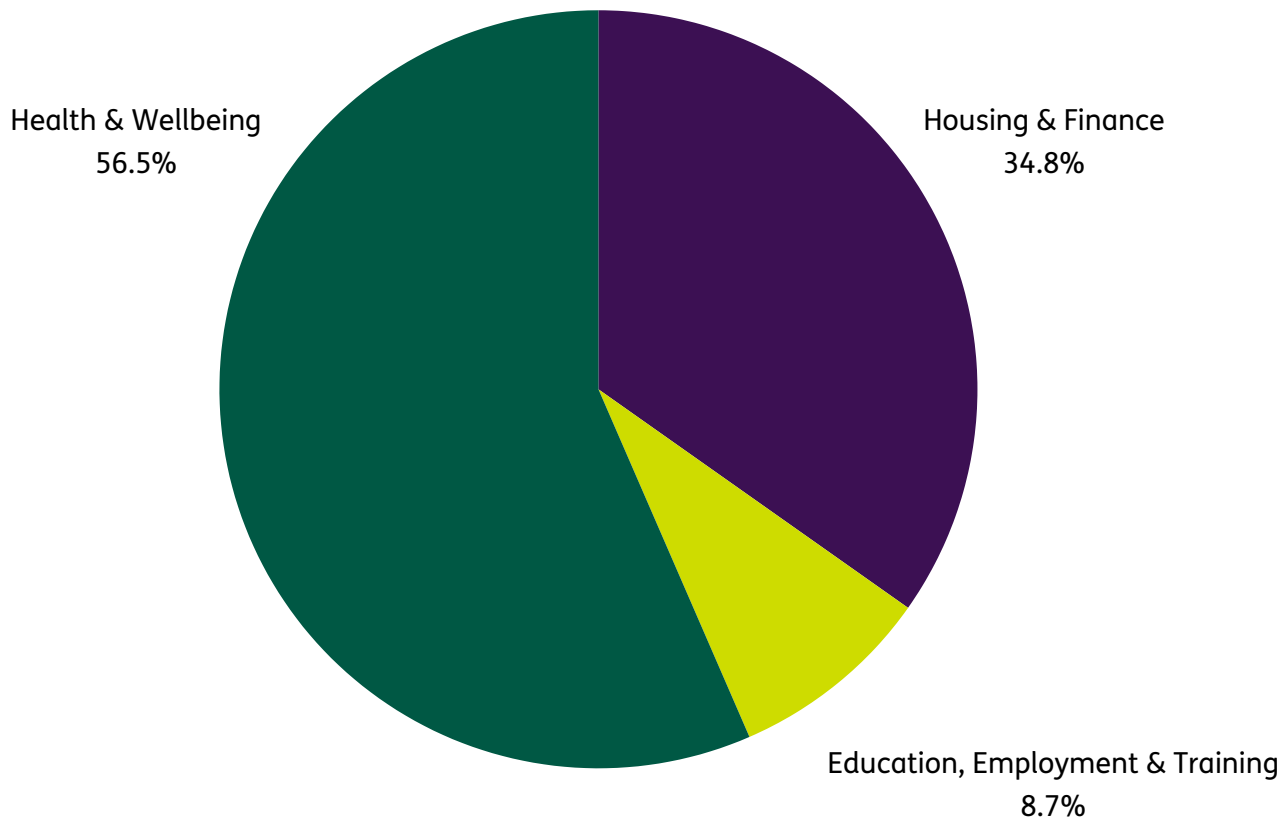
Family Supporters Edinburgh has strong referral pathways and these continue to strengthen, particularly with City of Edinburgh Council.

As our data shows, we have a positive working relationship with partners within the City of Edinburgh Council with almost half of referrals from this source. Over the last year we have strengthened our referral pathway with CAMHS, seeing an increase in referrals from last year.

We have also created new partnerships with both hospitals and primary schools, notably Frogston Primary and the Royal Children's Hospital.

Our Referrals in 2024-25

41 Families supported



The chart shows a clear picture of the themes in which families are seeking the most support. Notably, more than half of all referrals relate to **health and wellbeing**, highlighting how prevalent this need continues to be across our caseload.

This includes both physical and mental health concerns, with many families experiencing stress, anxiety, and social isolation.

Education, Employment, and Training (EET) referrals remain **lower than other categories**. Families can feel less in need of EET support due to caring responsibilities and instability factors at home.

Families prioritise basic needs first (e.g., food, housing, wellbeing) before they are ready to engage with employment or training.

Our Volunteers in 2024-25

35 Volunteers trained



Our volunteers have found us through Volunteering Matters Website, Volunteer Scotland, Volunteer Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Student Association, word of mouth and Facebook.



We have a diverse team of volunteers, people from all backgrounds and walks of life. Between them, our volunteers speak 16 different languages!

Safe Volunteer Recruitment

Volunteer Selection - each volunteer completes an Application Form, and an informal face-to-face interview which allows us to consider if the volunteer is right for the role, and if the role is the right one for them.

Character References - we ask each volunteer to support us in obtaining 2 character references to accompany their application. This process helps us to ensure we recruit volunteers who have appropriate experience and skills, to carry out the role successfully.

PVG (Protecting Vulnerable Groups) check – each volunteer completes this process, ensuring they are suitable to work with children and adults.

Induction Training - all volunteers complete our comprehensive training package which includes interactive discussions, group work and case studies to ensure they fully understand their role, with a strong emphasis on The Promise and GIRFEC, as well as training on Boundaries, Safeguarding, Trauma, Child Protection, Equality & Inclusion, Safety and Assessing Risk. This process also embeds a good awareness of each volunteers skills and experience.

Rigorous Matching process – volunteers are carefully matched to families whose situation is appropriate for the identified volunteer, helping to ensure a successful relationship for both parties, and that each family receive the best support possible



Volunteer Training

We recruit local people to become volunteers, ensuring they are fully equipped to become a unique source of support to each family, and have a good understanding of support available, networks, and services.



“Training was very engaging and informative. The food and coffee was a bonus!”



“Environment was friendly. Everything was well explained. The use of examples and teamwork were extremely helpful and engaging. Queries were clearly answered.”



“Very supportive and I have more clarity now”

“The training exceeded my expectations: it covered everything and more. I’m really excited to get started in the volunteering role now!”



Volunteer Celebrations

Volunteer's Week Celebration



Volunteer Christmas Celebration



Volunteer Voices

“

A few years ago, I made the decision to join Volunteering Matters, and that was really one of the best decisions ever.

I started volunteering as I wanted to give something back to the community and help families who are struggling and need a friendly hand. Volunteering not only changed the lives of families but also mine.

I learned lots of things about myself and chose what kind of work I want to do in my life. It is no better feeling than helping somebody in need and their appreciation of you. I loved the time with every family I had a chance to help, and they will always stay in my heart

Ewelina



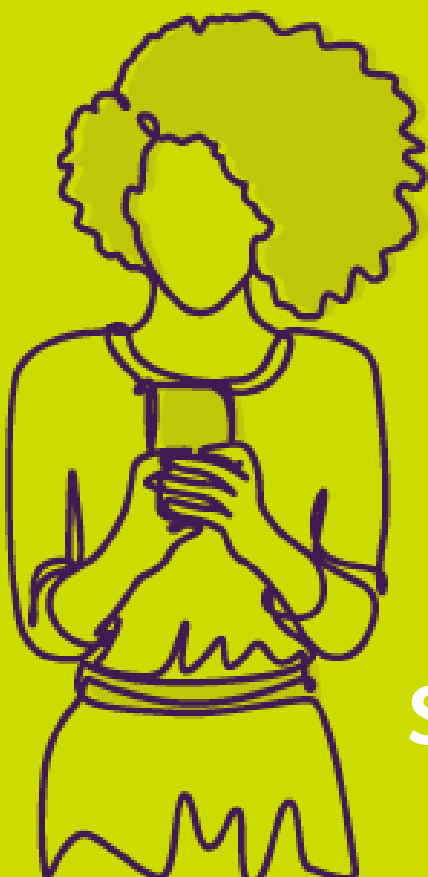
”

“

I enjoyed getting to know the family and being able to get them to a point where their morale and confidence was boosted, it was good to see that.

I definitely achieved being able to help the family feel more confident to go out by themselves and feel more focused and organised

”



Saika

“

Being a volunteer at Volunteering Matters gives me a lot of satisfaction because I can help families solve small daily problems

”

Jake



Titti



“

Volunteering with Volunteering Matters has been a great way to feel more connected to the city and meet people outside my usual circles.

It's also challenged how I think about empathy—not just feeling for someone, but actually trying to understand their world as they experience it.

It's made me rethink what support really is, too. Sometimes, it's not about advice or solutions but just showing up, listening, and being present.

”



“

It has been such a meaningful experience volunteering with Family Supporters! It's incredibly encouraging for me to see the positive changes in the family I support. At first, I was a bit nervous about starting. I worried that growing up in a completely different environment—and communicating in my second language—would make it difficult to connect with the family. I feared that cultural differences and language barriers might hold me back.

From the very beginning, I received strong support from the staff team. Even before I started supporting the family, they made sure I felt prepared and confident. Whenever I faced challenges, the team was always there to guide and support me, and I truly appreciate that.

The family I was matched with has been under significant pressure, as both the single mother and her daughter are facing mental health challenges. It was heartbreaking to see the mother sacrificing her own well-being to support her daughter as much as she could, while she herself was in need of support.

Simply being there to listen made a real difference. The mother once shared with me that she had become so used to living solely as a mother that she no longer felt like herself. She constantly felt judged for not being the “perfect” mother. Now, having someone there for her—someone caring and supportive—has made her feel so much better. She has become more open to talking about her feelings and seeking help without feeling embarrassed. This positive shift in the mother's behaviour has also improved her relationship with her daughter. She now finds it easier to be more understanding and patient than she used to be.

The feedback from the family has been incredibly rewarding and encouraging. I genuinely look forward to visiting them each week. I truly enjoy our time together, and we've developed a strong, trusting connection.

I'm deeply grateful for the opportunity to volunteer with Family Supporters and to contribute to the well-being of this family. I believe this programme not only supports individual families but also strengthens the wider community by fostering understanding and connection.

I believe that what we do as volunteers is like spreading that same warm sunshine to families in need. I look forward to continuing this journey and supporting more families in the future.

”

“ I have referred few families to Volunteering Matters and each time the experience was excellent. Staff members are lovely and caring. They kept me updated on the process. Feedback from families referred was also great. I've heard the matching process of volunteers with the family is very accurate and families find it very supportive.

I will be very happy to use the Volunteering Matters in the future and I feel I leave the families in good hands.

-Joanna (Community Link Worker)

“ I had a discussion with a team member about my potential referrals to explore what the support might look like, and that informed my referral. It was straightforward and I was kept informed about progress.

It's quite early days, but already the parent I referred is reporting she feels supported and very much appreciates the sense of someone being alongside her.

There is a reduction in her feelings of isolation, she is beginning to look forward, and consider her options and plans to improve her personal circumstances, and knows someone is there to encourage. She also feels there is a mutuality to the relationship

-Liz (Social Worker)

“

It was straight forward and easy. Staff very helpful with queries too.

-Yukti (Locality Co-ordinator)

“

I have been so impressed with the service received from Volunteering Matters. I referred a family who were experiencing domestic abuse and social isolation. Staff took time to understand the needs of this family and came up with a perfect volunteer match. This volunteer has been a listening ear and huge support for the family.

She has helped them to become more integrated in their community and encouraged them to reach out to old friends. Most importantly, she has been a regular, caring contact and the family look forward to her weekly visits. I have recommended Volunteering Matters to my colleagues for any families in need.

-Emma (NHS)

“

Positive, valuable, helpful

-Linzi (VOCAL)

“

The support Volunteering Matters has given has been life changing; offering emotional, financial and practical support to families in critical need.

I see the positive effects this help has on the children whose education may be detrimentally affected by the pressures of living in poverty with enormous parental stresses.

- Kirsty (Education)

Tanya and Julie



Tanya and her son Derek faced a challenging time, juggling housing issues, school concerns, health issues and the pressures of everyday life. Feeling overwhelmed, Tanya turned to Family Supporters for help. That's when she was matched with Julie, a volunteer committed to making a difference.

Developing a connection

What began as weekly visits soon blossomed into strong rapport. Tanya and Julie built a connection grounded in trust and mutual respect. Tanya felt comfortable opening up, and their relationship progressed immensely.

"Tanya is brilliant and incredibly open. We've gone from meeting weekly to her phoning me often for a chat. The chemistry is there, and she trusts me, which means a lot." - Julie

Practical Support and Achievements

Together, Julie and Tanya tackled a wide range of challenges, from preparing for a house exchange to supporting Derek's education. The house exchange—a long-time goal for Tanya—was successfully processed, providing her family with a fresh start in a better home. Julie also noticed and shared concerns about the poor ventilation in the old house, which has now been resolved with the move. Derek, who had struggled with school attendance, now goes to school most days and seems to enjoy it—a significant milestone for the family. Julie provided practical help every step of the way:

- **Decluttering and Organising:** Julie helped Tanya clear out the house in preparation for the move, including sorting clothes and packing items
- **Charity Donations:** Julie took items to charity shops on Tanya's behalf, easing the burden of decluttering
- **Emotional Support:** Whether making a cup of tea when Tanya felt overwhelmed or chatting through calls to social services, Julie was there to support and empower her.

"I can tell when Tanya is overwhelmed and adjust from there, asking her what she wants to focus on that day."

Julie

Tanya and Julie Continued

A Shared Journey of Growth

The relationship was transformative not only for Tanya but also for Julie. Through their time together, Julie gained new insights into the social strains families face and the complexities of working with social services.

"My eyes have been opened to how difficult social services can be and the challenges families like Tanya's go through. She's a voice that needs to be heard," Julie said. Despite the challenges, they often found moments of laughter and joy during their meetings, creating a comfortable and supportive environment.

Outcome

The impact of this "match" has been profound. Tanya achieved many of her goals, including the house exchange and Derek's improved school attendance. The move has provided the family with a healthier living space and a renewed sense of stability.

For Julie, the experience reinforced the value of connection and the difference volunteers can make in people's lives.



Anna and Andrea

When Anna fled domestic abuse as a single parent with her young daughter Julia, she faced a daunting and uncertain future. Rebuilding her life after 8 house moves while providing for her daughter was no small challenge. It was during this difficult time that she was matched with a volunteer, Andrea, through the Family Supporters project—a connection that became transformative for both Anna and her daughter, as well as the volunteer.

From the very beginning, their bond was clear. Anna and the volunteer quickly discovered shared interests: a love of sparkles, cats, and a deep appreciation for their German heritage. This connection brought comfort and familiarity to Anna's life. Over Christmas, they exchanged messages and photos, sharing festive moments in a way that felt like family.

“It really couldn't be better,” said Andrea. “We message all the time. It was so wonderful over Christmas to share photos and stories. We both love sparkles and cats!”

A Bond Beyond Mentoring

The relationship grew stronger as the two discovered they had much in common. As a fellow single parent, the volunteer empathised with Anna's struggles and triumphs. She shared her own experiences of raising a child alone, offering a unique perspective on the challenges—and freedoms—that come with it.

Anna, in turn, opened up about her journey and expressed immense gratitude for the support. She told her volunteer, “You feel like family. I trust you 100% and even think of you as Julia's honorary auntie.”

Speaking German together added another layer of connection. Julia, only two years old, began to associate the language with fun and warmth, repeating words, and sentences as they played. The volunteer even sourced German educational resources to support Julia's bilingual development, gifts that were gratefully received and cherished by the family.

Anna and Andrea Continued

Milestones and Moments of Joy

One of the highlights of their “match” was the time spent together in the local cafe, which Anna fondly referred to as “our café.” They would play with Julia, speak in German, and discuss the journey towards securing a safe and welcoming home. The volunteer provided encouragement when Anna hesitated to move into a flat due to concerns about asbestos. After doing research, she reassured Anna, giving her the confidence to take the step.



This support extended to practical help as well. The volunteer suggested local resources like a German church and playgroups, which could help Julia connect with other bilingual children. These efforts highlighted the volunteer’s commitment to not only supporting Anna but also fostering Julia’s intellectual and emotional growth.

Impact on both lives

The “match” has been mutually rewarding. For the volunteer, seeing Anna’s resilience and Julia’s development has been a source of joy and fulfilment. “I feel we’re building a genuine friendship,” she shared. “Visiting their warm and welcoming home, seeing Julia play and learn—it’s been an incredible experience.”

Anna, too, has found strength and encouragement through the support. “Having someone who understands my journey and believes in me has made all the difference,” she said.

For Anna and Julia, this match has been a beacon of hope in their journey toward a brighter future.

Sarah and Lizzie

Sarah, a single mother of three, has faced immense challenges. Balancing the demands of caring for her 7-year-old daughter who has quadriplegic cerebral palsy, her energetic 4-year-old son, and the arrival of newborn baby in July. Compounding this was the emotional toll of recovering from a caesarean section during the summer holidays and coordinating court-ordered visitation with her abusive ex-partner.

A Volunteer's Support: Lizzie's Role

From their first meeting, the bond between mum and volunteer was undeniable. The volunteer, a single parent herself with a daughter who also has additional support needs, saw parts of her own journey reflected in mum's life. "We just clicked," the volunteer said. "She is a lot like me. She has gone through a lot of the challenges that I went through."

A typical meeting between the two involves a warm, supportive rhythm. The volunteer usually arrives around 10:30 a.m., sharing a cup of tea and a chat before jumping into tasks. "I tell her to put the kettle on, make her a cuppa, and ask, 'What do you need me to do today?'" These sessions are not just about practical help; they are about sharing stories, offering advice, and providing emotional support.

The Ripple Effects: Mutual Impact

Improved Mental Health: Having someone who listens without judgment gives mum a voice. She shared, "Even though I have family and my ex-partner, I feel like no one hears me. But when I talk to the volunteer, I feel like I am finally heard."

Access to Community and Support: With the volunteer's encouragement, mum has accessed more resources, giving her children opportunities for play and learning and easing her daily responsibilities.

Emotional Resilience: The volunteer's friendship has lifted mum's spirits, helping her feel less isolated.



Sarah and Lizzie Continued

Shared Experiences and Support

Volunteer's daughter and mum's daughter share similar challenges, creating an opportunity for them to exchange advice and prepare for future experiences. For example, the volunteer once felt anxious about her daughter attending a medical appointment, but mum's guidance reassured her. Similarly, mum now feels better prepared for when her daughter faces similar milestones. The volunteer also marvels at how mum lifts her spirits, even when she is down.

"Sometimes I come to volunteer feeling a bit low," she said. "But mum's personality is infectious. When I leave, she has a smile on her face, and I've got a smile on my face."



"It's helped me as much as it's helped mum," the volunteer admitted. Volunteering built her confidence, empowering her to pass her driving test and secure a part-time job. "I would never have been able to do that if I never walked through that door that day," she said.

-Lizzie

A Match That Was Meant To Be

Reflecting on their journey, the volunteer said, "It is amazing how good a match this was. Maybe it was meant to be." Their connection has created a sense of stability for mum and her children while giving her a renewed sense of purpose and achievement.

Today, the two are more than just volunteer and parent; they are friends. She even jokes, "You're not getting rid of me," and mum responds, "You're not going anywhere." Their bond shows the profound, mutual impact of a well-matched volunteer-parent relationship—a connection that goes beyond logistics to transform lives.

As the volunteer summed it up: "It's worked for me, and it's worked for her, to be truthfully honest."

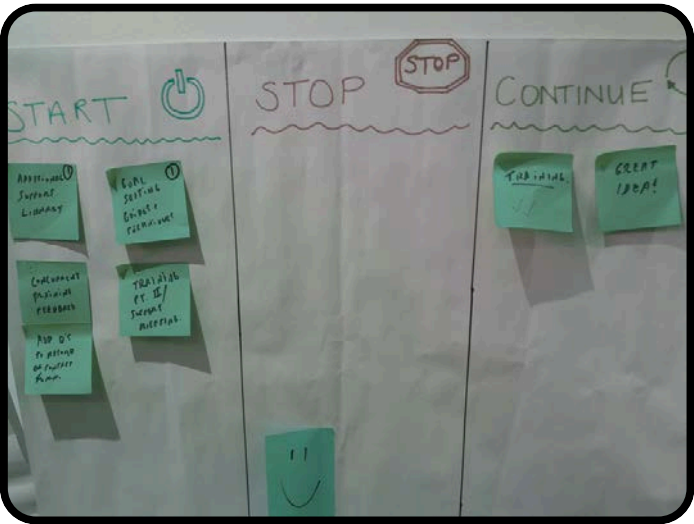
Steering Group

We have established a steering group to provide insight, guidance, and lived-experience perspectives to help shape and improve our service delivery.

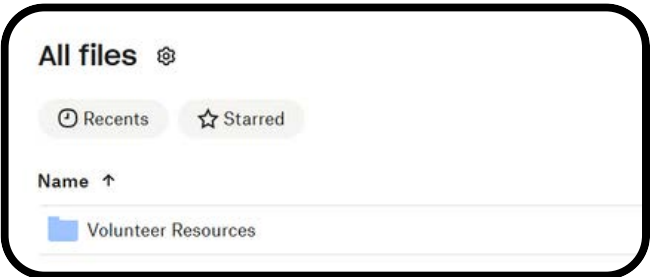
This approach ensures the voices of our volunteers and their feedback is central to the project’s ongoing delivery and development, with volunteers suggesting improvements, ensuring the project is more effective.



Two of our active volunteers sit on the Steering Group and meet bi-monthly with Family Supporters staff to provide ongoing input into the delivery of the project, ensuring that Family Supporters Edinburgh remains responsive to volunteer and community needs.



Using the Stop, Start, Continue, method we brainstorm suggestions and prioritise these before adding them to our Action Plan. For each key area identified, an objective is specified and the Action Steps needed to achieve this with Target Dates. Our first completed Actions are the introduction of a Support Library of Resources for Volunteers and also a bank of Goal Setting Guides and Techniques, all easily accessed through DropBox.



VOLUNTEERING MATTERS					
FSE Steering Group Action Plan - Meeting on 3 rd March 2015					
Key areas identified	Objectives Specific details and examples of what you plan to achieve	Action steps What will be done to achieve objectives	Support Do you need any support to achieve this objective?	Review date and Review/progress notes	Completed date
1. Additional Support Library for Volunteers	Provide volunteers with access to a variety of support tools and resources to support families	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Identify the best medium to host the Support LibraryIdentify the moderator of the Support Library and clarify their roleIdentify key topics and add to Support LibraryAdd relevant links and materials to the Support LibraryCommunicate with volunteers as to how they access this Support Library		May 2025	
2. Goal setting Guides and Techniques	Provide volunteers with Guides and Techniques to help families work towards identifying and setting their personal Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Identify relevant materials to enable families to reflect on themselves, their support network and		May 2025	

Our Challenges

Throughout the period of 2024-2025 we received a large number of referrals that related to poor mental health, low attendance in schools, and suitable living standards. We have also seen an increase in referrals where families have children with Autism or other additional support needs.

In response to this, our staff have undergone additional training on Autism so we can be better equipped to support our families.

We have also received referrals that were not suitable, for example referrals for Befriending, Respite Care, or help with school drop offs.

In turn, we now take the time to take calls and meetings with referrers, making it our mission to spread the word about our services. This past year, staff have attended online and in-person meetings with organisations to deliver a presentation on Family Supporters.

There has been a recurring theme of high-risk referrals — many involving domestic abuse, where families are seeking refuge in Women's Aid shelters or have been relocated due to serious safety concerns, including exploitation. In these cases, the remaining parent and children are often coping with the emotional impact of trauma, instability, and fear.

These experiences highlight the urgent need for holistic, trauma-informed family support that responds not only to the individual but to the wider emotional and practical needs of the whole family system.



How we helped during Winter

Our JustGiving Winter Appeal encouraged people to skip their coffee, meal deal or beer to donate. Providing 15 families with £50 food vouchers, helping spread joy and make Christmas that little bit easier

“That would help massively financially. The pressure over Christmas to provide more food can be very challenging as a single parent.”

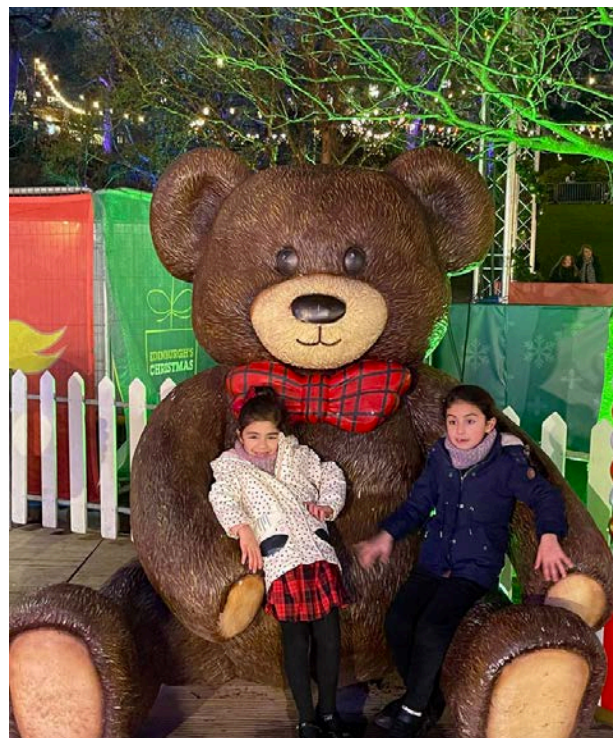
“Oh what a wonderful call to receive a few days before Christmas, I am so grateful for this. As a single dad this isn't an easy time. My daughter will be delighted”



Through our referral to the Salvation Army Toy Appeal, we made 2 family's Christmas really special, and 6 children were absolutely delighted with their new toys



Providing tokens for Christmas rides and tickets for the Big Wheel at the Edinburgh Christmas Market



Community Grants

We have received £1085 in Summer Grants from the City of Edinburgh Council for family activities.

Our families have been able to visit:

Almond Valley Heritage Centre

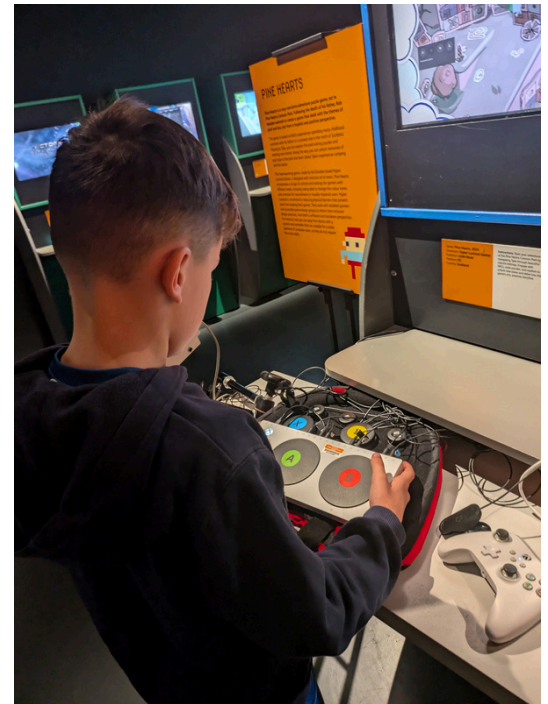
Game On exhibition at the National Museum of Scotland

Dynamic Earth

The Edinburgh Dungeon

Camera Obscura

Edinburgh Zoo



Community Grants



Impact of Community Grants

Funded by
♦ EDINBURGH ♦
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

“

"My son has not been able to go out for almost a year due to his autism. He is fascinated by gaming, and when he heard about this exhibition, it was the first time in a long time he felt excited to go outdoors. Thanks to this grant, that moment became possible — it meant the world to us to see him engage with something he loves in a setting that felt safe and welcoming."

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Going to Dynamic Earth was a really positive experience for our family. It gave us a much-needed break from the everyday routine and helped us focus on something different for a while. Just getting out of the house made a big difference. We both genuinely enjoyed it — the planetarium film *Are We Aliens?* was a definite highlight. Having something new to talk about made our conversations flow more naturally. It was a brilliant experience, and we're really grateful for the opportunity.

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A recent trip to a petting zoo was a much-needed break for this single father and his daughter. The experience allowed them to spend quality time together in a fun, environment. The day also gave this single father a chance to connect with other parents and feel part of a community, something he has been missing. Stepping out of his daily routine helped boost motivation and well-being, reinforcing how important these moments can be for parents in similar situations.

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Next Steps

Looking Ahead: 2025–26

In 2025–26, we aim to support 50 families across Edinburgh, with a continued focus on whole family support that is flexible, relational, and rooted in the needs of each household. We will actively encourage self-referrals, ensuring families can access support directly and at the right time for them.

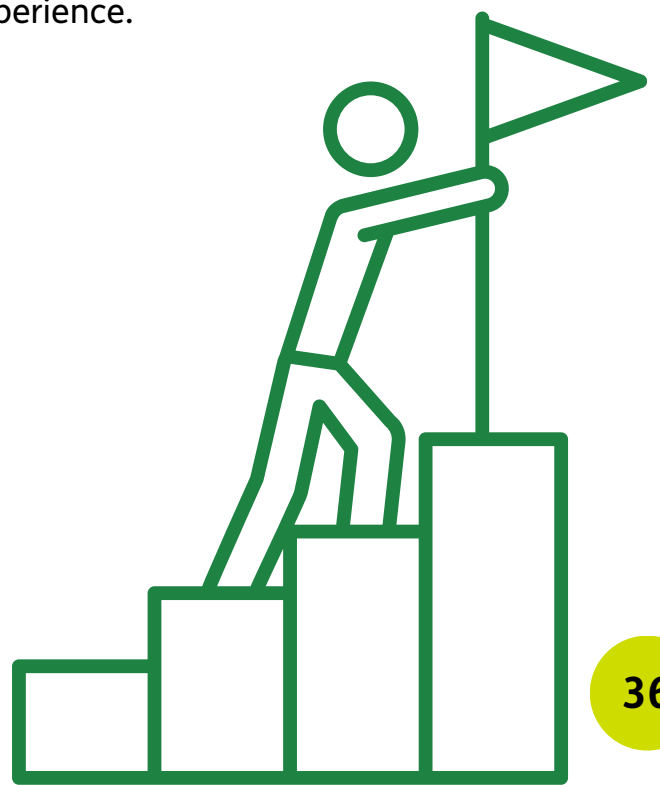
Our key priorities for the year ahead include:

An ongoing commitment to trauma-informed practice, ensuring all interactions with families are safe, compassionate, and empowering.

Expanded volunteer recruitment and improved matching, with a goal of recruiting volunteers aged 30+ to meet the growing and varied needs of families.

Improving referral quality by building stronger relationships with referrers and introducing in-person visits where appropriate so they better understand our service.

Placing families and volunteers at the heart of service design and delivery—so that what we offer is genuinely shaped by lived experience.



Building a better future for everyone

Volunteering Matters is a registered charity in England and Wales no. 291222 and in Scotland no. SC039171. Volunteering Matters is a company limited by guarantee no. 1435877.