BRIDGES PROJECT

A company limited by guarantee, registered in Scotland

Impact Report

2022 - 2023

Company number SC277102 Charity number SC036976

Service summary



2022-2023 was a year of change for Bridges Project. As well as marking the first full year of returning to face-to-face service delivery after the Covid-19 pandemic, the charity underwent a major restructuring process in August 2022. We went from three practice teams to two large teams; the Education & Employability Team and the Skills for Life Team. The latter team includes the two strands of Independent Living and Mental Health & Wellbeing. These changes were a result of all the additional provision Bridges Project were able to offer in the second half of 2022. One of these additions is the new educational support service Support2Thrive, which prepares young people to move on to a positive destination through a particular focus on vocational and industry specific accreditation and training. We also launched the Spark Your Future employability service, which helps young people gain the confidence and skills required to secure a job, modern apprenticeship or a volunteering post or to enter further education. Furthermore, we expanded our employability service Way2Work 16+ and the peer mentoring programme Listening Peers, enabling both services to support twice as many young people as in the previous year. With a new Group Programme for young people in Musselburgh and a new Young Carers Service also starting in 2023-2024, it therefore continues to be an exciting time for Bridges Project's service provision.

Even though there were a range positive developments for our services, this was still a year characterised by the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic and the continuing cost-of-living crisis for our young people. There was a significant rise in referrals made for young people with mental health issues as well as an increased number of young people self-harming and experiencing suicidal thoughts. The disruption during the pandemic also left a lot of young people without work experience and qualifications, making it harder for them to enter the job market. This shows the significant and negative impact the crises of the last few years have had on young people and this is likely to continue in the coming years. The increase in young people struggling has also led to an increase in referrals and growing waiting lists for services across the board - both within and outside of Bridges Project. As a result, more young people than ever are in a desperate situation of waiting to access vital support, leading to an unprecedented demand for our services.



Despite their struggles, young people have with the support of Bridges Project impressed us with their resilience in 2022-2023. Our newly developed Bridges Foundations workbooks have helped young people in this regard, supporting them in areas such as managing their anxiety and developing vital life skills. Young people have also completed a large number of qualifications and work experience placements, which have helped them develop skills and confidence, build their CV and ultimately become more competitive within the labour market. Coupled with their participation in the wide range of groups Bridges Project have been able to offer this year, such as the construction industry employability programme Build You Up and the #GetAJob employability group, a significant number of young people have managed to overcome barriers to moving on to a positive destination.

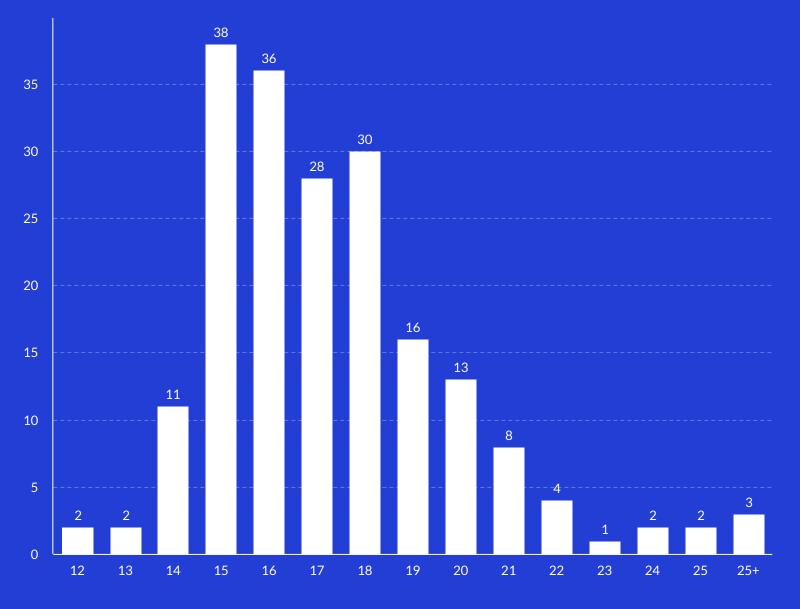
Bridges Project has also been working towards easing the pressures young people have been facing by distributing a series of grants aimed at supporting them through the cost-of-living crisis. These have included grants from Cash for Kids and STV Children's Appeal for food and basic essentials for those struggling the most. Our new GetConnected IT & Education Suite, launched in July 2022, is another initiative that has helped young people cope with the unprecedented financial challenges of recent times through providing them with the digital skills and access needed to apply for relevant support online. The Suite has also given the charity a new dimension in our wider provision to young people as it has allowed us to integrate digital into group and one-to-one sessions on a whole new scale. We are confident it will make a lasting impact on young people for years to come.

Bridges Project provided support to 299 young people in 2022-23. 196 young people received intensive, one-to-one support and 136 secured or maintained a positive destination.

Key 2022-2023 numbers



Age of young people supported



Where young people* supported live



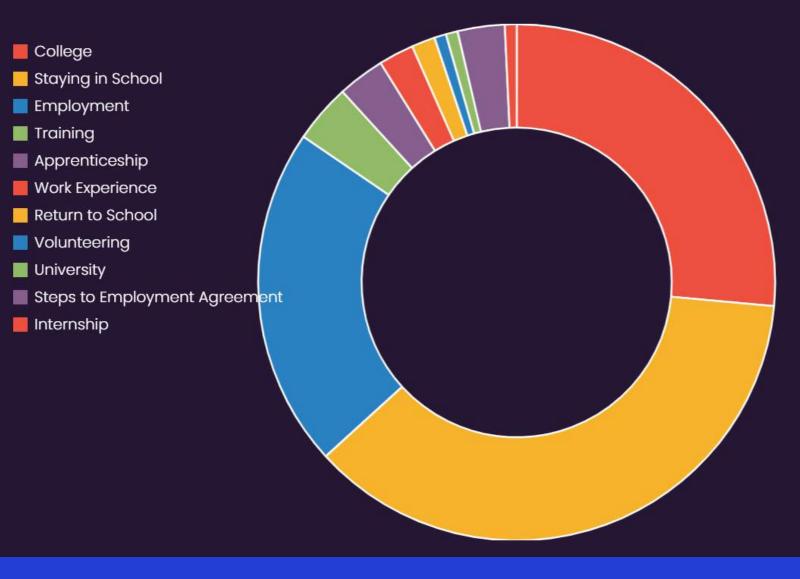
Location	Young people
Musselburgh	42
Prestonpans	29
Tranent	28
Dunbar	19
Haddington	12
Port Seton	11
Wallyford	8
North Berwick	7
Gullane	4
Whitecraig	4
Macmerry	3
Edinburgh	3
Ormiston	2

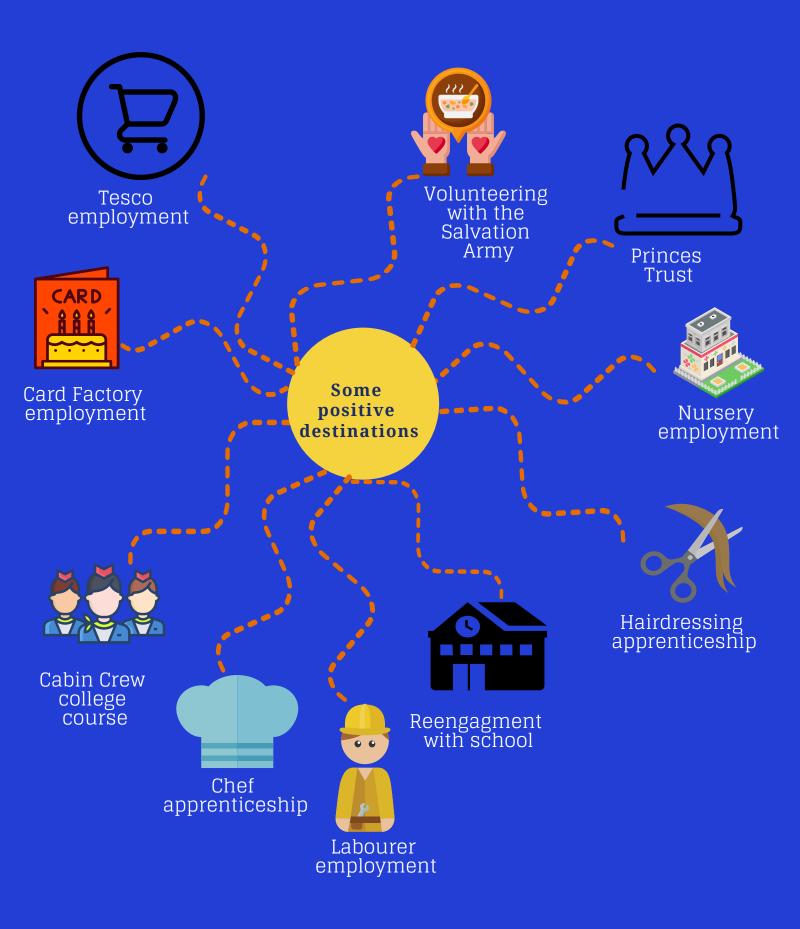
Location	Young people
Bilston	2
Gorebridge	2
Dalkeith	2
East Linton	2
Penicuik	1
Gifford	1
East Saltoun	1
Athelstaneford	1
Innerwick	1
Bonnyrigg	1
Pencaitland	1
Meadowmill	1
Elphinstone	1

Location	Young people
Longniddry	1
Spittal	1
Roslin	1
Loanhead	1
Cockenzie	1
Seton Mains	1
Other	1

Positive destinations

136 young people secured or maintained a positive destination





Some of our referrers

- Beeslack High School
- Knox Academy
- Musselburgh Grammar
 School
- Preston Lodge High School
- · Penicuik High School
- Ross High School
- Social work
- Edinburgh College
- Cyrenians
- East Lothian Council Housing Services
- · Jobcentre Plus

Some of our partners

- East Lothian Works
- Morrison Construction
- Get Lashed
- CAPS Advocacy
- Blue Triangle
- Changes













Our services

Homemaker Service

- For young people aged 15-25 in East Lothian
- Support for young tenants and prospective tenants to develop independent living skills and maintain and sustain tenancies
- Delivers the SQA accredited Tenancy Award qualification

Stevie's work with Melanie has been nothing short of extraordinary. Not only has he provided her with skills, but has been someone Melanie has opened up to about her mental and emotional wellbeing, which has had such a massive impact on the support and understanding we can provide for Melanie.

Stevie goes above and beyond expectations, organising Melanie with an extremely promising work experience, looking at travel, safety online and work around substance use.

- Guidance Teacher of young person supported by the Homemaker Service

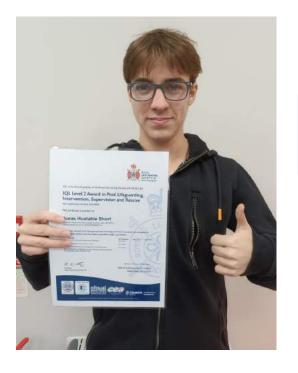
Key statistic

Helped 14 young people secure or maintain a tenancy



Inclusion Support Service

- For S2 to S6 students in East Lothian who are not engaging with mainstream school
- Offers learning opportunities, emotional wellbeing support and practical support to help young people progress into positive destinations
- Delivers in house accredited learning opportunities and social activities



Key statistic

Young people worked on 7 different qualifications

I feel since meeting Clair, I have come out of my shell a lot. She has been wonderful and made me feel comfortable and has made me actually look forward to my future. I honestly don't know where I would be without her. She has done more than I could have asked for.

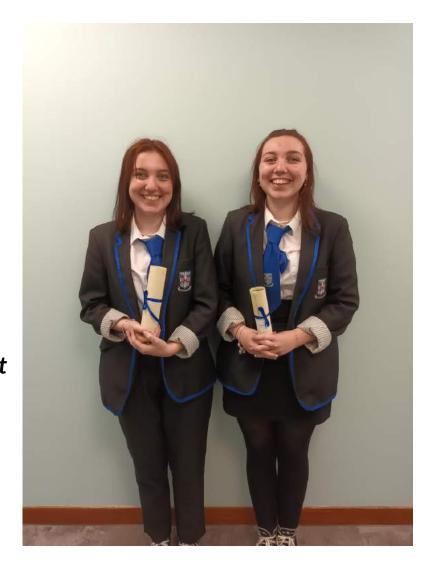
- Young person supported by the Inclusion Support Service

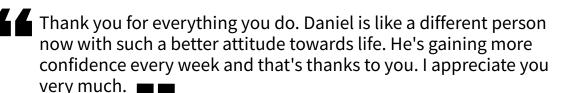
Education & Employability Coordinator

- Supports young people aged 12-21 in East Lothian
- Supports young people to progress into opportunities such as employment, further education and training
- Works closely with agencies such as social work, schools and Skills Development Scotland

Key statistic

100% of young people felt more confident about their future after receiving support from the Education & Employability Coordinator



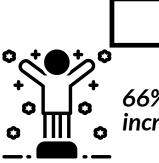




 Parent of young person supported by the Education & Employability Coordinator

<u>Personal Development Worker</u>

- Supports young people aged 12-18 in East Lothian and Midlothian
- Provides emotional and practical support to increase young people's confidence, selfesteem and resilience and help them develop coping strategies
- Works closely with schools, social work and mental health services



Key statistic

66% of young people increased their confidence



(Before being supported by Bridges Project) I felt kind of like lost, floating, existing in life. I felt like I had no control over myself. I didn't feel like I knew what I was doing with my life. I was just going through the motions of being alive.

(Now) I feel pretty good! I'm having a good time now, I'm thriving. I'm on the road to living my best life.

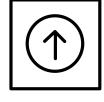
I've had someone to talk to, to help me through the hard times. I've been able to discover who I am and who I want to be. I have found a new job that I wanted to do for the rest of my life.



<u>Employability Support Worker</u> (<u>Schools)</u>

- Supports S4 students in East Lothian
- Provides employability skills programmes at all six East Lothian high schools
- Helps young people with areas such as CVs and interviews, college applications and personal life issues

Key statistic



100% of young people who completed a Where Am I Now skills self-assessment more than once increased their score



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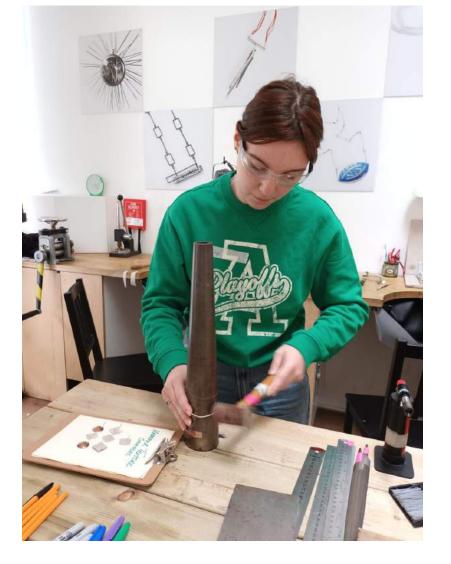
Ewan was able to forge a relationship with Oscar really quickly despite him starting the group later than others. He attended all the sessions and is much more positive about his prospects after school. Ewan was very sensitive to Oscar's needs given the amount of things Oscar had going on in his personal life but had the perfect balance between support and challenge.



-Pupil Support Leader of young person supported by the Employability Support Worker (Schools)

Support4Tomorrow

- Supports young people aged 14-19 in East Lothian and Midlothian
- Supports young people to cope with the mental health effects of the Covid-19 pandemic
- Assists young people to transition to adult responsibilities by helping them acquire the skills needed for managing everyday life



Key statistic



100% of young people improved their wellbeing

I am so grateful for the work you have done with Jenny. She really has improved so much since seeing you and I see a huge difference in her confidence.

-Parent of young person supported by Support4Tomorrow

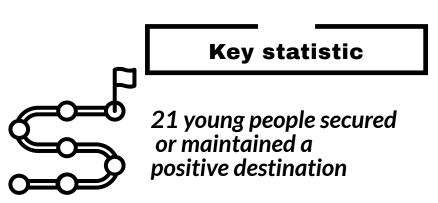
Young Carers Service

- Supports young people aged 13 and over who have caring responsibilities
- Works in partnership with East Lothian Council colleagues to raise awareness of young carers and shape service delivery across East Lothian for young carers
- Supports young carers with personal development, employability, skills development, the financial and emotional aspects of being a young carer and respite opportunities



<u>Way2Work East Lothian</u>

- For young people aged 15-21 in East Lothian
- Provides young people with employability support, skills development, work practice placements and support to achieve and sustain positive destinations
- Delivers the Build You Up construction and employability course





My girls love their time at Bridges. They have really settled well there and get on fantastic with the staff. They find Mhairi very easy to talk to and get on with and have been able to share their anxiety and concerns with her. They have completed a couple of workshops, which they thoroughly enjoyed too. They find the new skills they are learning and developing are realy helping them in their everyday life too. Keep up the excellent work.

-Parent of young people supported by Way2Work East Lothian

<u> Way2Work 16+</u>

- For young people aged 16-21 in East Lothian and Midlothian who have left school without a positive destination in place
- Provides young people with employability support, skills development and work practice placements and support to achieve and sustain positive destinations





83% of young people who completed a Where Am I Now skills self-assessment more than once increased their score



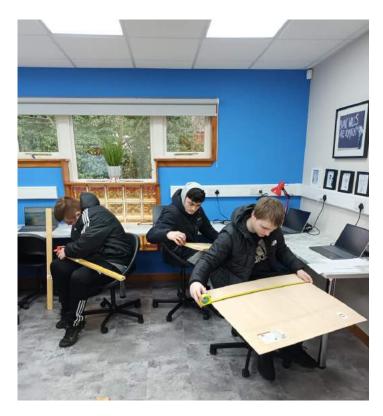
(Before being supported by Bridges Project) I felt unhappy, not sure which direction I was going.

> (Now) I feel happy, have a clear idea of what I am doing, less stressed. (Bridges Project) helped me through creating a CV, job hunting, getting a job, which then led to connections which made me less isolated. They supported me every step of the way through the job process and even after my case is closed, if I ever need help again, their door is still open.

-Young person supported by Way2Work 16+

<u>Spark Your Future</u>

- For young people aged 16-24 in East Lothian
- Supports young people to gain employability skills and life skills and progress to meaningful opportunities
- Provides vocational and industry specific accreditation and training



Key statistic



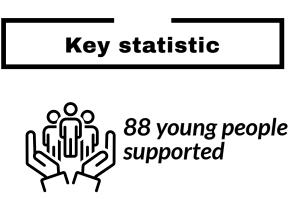
89% of young people secured a positive destination

The sessions have helped me make substantial decisions about my future and helped me get back into regular life after years of struggling. I have noticed an increase in my confidence in both myself and in interactions with others, and I'm now looking forward to my future rather than dreading it.

-Young person supported by Spark Your Future

<u>Support2Thrive</u>

- For young people aged 13-18 in East Lothian and Midlothian
- Supports young people to gain employability skills and life skills and progress to meaningful opportunities
- Delivers industry-specific courses such as the construction industry employability programme Build You Up and the beauty industry employability programme Glow Up





"

Sam is fab! She's been able to offer really valuable support to Katie at a time when there was little else available and she didn't have a clear plan of what to do next from school. She's set the support at the right level and pace for Katie and has been a key part of the reason we were recently able to recommend Katie come off her compulsory supervision order, which is what Katie wanted.



-Social worker of yung person supported by Support2Thrive

<u>Listening Peers</u>

- For young people aged 13-25 in East Lothian who have been affected by the alcohol and drug use of others
- Peer mentoring led by young people with lived experience
- Provides young people with respite, support, help to tackle feelings of stigma and discrimination and advice on overcoming challenges and other support services

14 young people mentored



It has been good having a Mentor, as I can't talk to any of my family as they just don't understand. I can say what I want to my Mentor and he listens to me about how I feel and what's going on in my head. My Mentor is also helping me to get my life sorted so I can get a job and have some money. I don't know what would happen to me if I didn't have a Mentor to talk to.

-Listening Peers Mentee

Case Study- Lilly

Lilly's Story

Lilly was originally referred to my service at Bridges Project by her Guidance Teacher at Knox Academy. The referral form mentioned that despite having a lot of potential, negative factors affecting her life were preventing her from reaching this potential. The referral form went on to explain that Lilly was experiencing low mood and anxiety, which was weighing her down and significantly affecting her ability to engage with school and various aspects of her life. Her school attendance was very low and she was eager to leave school as soon as possible.

Lilly grew up in Haddington and lives at home with her mum, two young siblings and their two dogs. Lilly enjoyed her first year of high school and attended activities such as rugby and gymnastics. During this time, she had good attendance and was doing well in class.

However, the COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020 and learning online had a negative impact on Lilly's ability to keep up with school work. This then led to her experiencing low mood and anxiety when faced with returning to school. Lilly's attendance dropped significantly and the more school she missed, the worse her anxiety became. She lost all motivation in terms of school work and life aspirations.

One-to-one Work

I met Lilly for our first one-to-one workshop in September 2022. This was in person at Knox Academy. We quickly built a good rapport through talking about her love of animals and sharing stories about our dogs. I introduced myself, Bridges Project, and the workshops programme. I also explained that Lilly would be deciding what we would be working on. Lilly expressed that she liked the idea of this and would like to focus on planning what she was going to do after school and developing some skills that would help her as she left school.

Together we completed a 'Where Am I Now' survey, which looks at 20 key indicators of wellbeing and employability skills. Through looking at the results of this survey, Lilly was able to identify areas that she would like to work on and improve. These were career planning, motivation, self-confidence and applying for work.

During the next two workshops, Lilly and I worked on her career plan through discussing her interests at length and working on the Career Planning Bridges Foundation. This work included:

- Knowing what your ideal job might look like
- Having some specific ideas about what you could do for a career
- Knowing how to research a career
- Knowing different ways to get stared in your career
- Completing a full plan A and B for your future

After completing this work, Lilly decided that getting an apprenticeship in childcare was the route that she wanted to go down after school. We therefore started the Applying for Work Bridges Foundation. During this, we looked at where to look for apprenticeships and wrote Lilly's CV from scratch.

I suggested 'Azilo Training' as somewhere that I knew could potentially facilitate Lilly with an apprenticeship in childcare. I explained that they would support her with all aspects of this process, including finding a suitable nursery and one-to-one support with any of the assessments during the apprenticeships. Lilly was keen on this idea and I scheduled a meeting with Azilo, Lilly and myself, to discuss potential routes into an apprenticeship. This will take place in May 2023.

In addition to the career planning work, Lilly also wanted to use the Bridges Workshops to work on self-confidence and motivation. This was to prepare her for life after school and motivate her to increase her school attendance and gain the school qualifications she needed. Lilly created this action plan by herself, with only a few coaching questions from myself to clarify her goals.

By the time college applications were opening for 2023/24, Lilly decided to apply for childcare at college as a backup to her getting an apprenticeship. Together we researched suitable courses. Lilly decided that Childhood Practice Level 5 was best suited to her experience, ability and ambitions. I supported her through the application process, including guiding her on how to write a good personal statement. Since then, Lilly has received a conditional offer for this course, which she has accepted. This has only increased her motivation to gain the National 4 qualifications she needs.

Future Activities

I plan to continue supporting Lilly towards the positive destination of a childcare apprenticeship. Lilly has also applied for college as back up option and this will also be part of the future activities. I am scheduled to support Lilly until the end of August 2023, and hope to support her to:

- Achieve the positive destination of a childcare apprenticeship by facilitating a meeting with 'Azilo Training' and preparing for any potential interviews.
- If unsuccessful in achieving a childcare apprenticeship, ensure a successful and sustainable transition to college, through attending Bridges Project College Summer Group.
- Continue to build her confidence and skills in areas Lilly would like to develop.

Outcomes

The key outcome of the Bridges Workshops will hopefully be Lilly's projected destination of finding a childcare apprenticeship or going to college to do Childhood Practice Level 5.

Over the course of the year, Lilly tracked and reviewed her progress by completing employability and wellbeing focused 'Where Am I Now' (WAIN) surveys. She also rated herself against the Scottish Government's SHANARRI indicators.

From the results of her initial WAIN, Lilly identified that her strengths were digital skills, using numbers and concentration and focus. As previously mentioned, the areas she wanted to develop were career planning, motivation, self-confidence and applying for work.

Throughout the year, Lilly's self-reported WAIN scores improved. She initially rated herself at a total of 63 out of a possible total of 100. This then increased by 28.57% to 81 out of 100. Lilly achieved this by continuing to build on each of her strengths and making improvements in areas such as career plan, self-esteem, selfconfidence, communication and motivation.

In terms of SHANARRI indicators, Lilly increased her score over the course of the year from 30 out of 40 at the start of the school year, to 36 out of 40 at the end of the school year.

This increase was based on Lilly reporting that she felt she was more included in her community and was achieving more in school and outwith school.

Feedback

In her own words, Lilly described her experience of Bridges Project's Workshops as follows:

"Before Bridges I was so shy and anxious to come to school and was never in and had no confidence about my future. I thought I wouldn't get anywhere. Now I feel able to come to school more often and go out and about with friends and even travel myself. I now know that I have a good future ahead of me."

"Bridges helped me get back into school and get the qualifications I need and boost my confidence to be able to do things by myself. Also applying for college, writing my CV and helping me look for an apprenticeship in something I enjoy."

Lilly's Guidance Teacher shared the following feedback about the work we carried out together:

"Lilly has spoken several times about how much she has enjoyed working with Ewan. Her attendance at school has improved over the time she has been working with him."

Her Guidance Teacher also believed that, during the workshops, Lilly had improved in the following areas:

- The young person's confidence has increased
- The young person is willing to try new things
- The young person's aspirations have increased
- The young person feels more confident about their future
- The young person's wellbeing has improved positively
- The young person's communication skills have improved



From getting into trouble with the police to working in a nursery at 16



With support from Bridges Project, Brogan Grieve has gone from constantly getting into trouble with the police to working at a nursery and having a close to 100% attendance rate at college.

This was almost unimaginable when the 16-year-old from Musselburgh started receiving support from Bridges Project's Transitions Service Coordinator Natasha McInninie, part-funded by the Gannochy Trust, in late 2020.

"I was going the wrong way and didn't like going to school because I just sat on my phone and I didn't get any help or anything. I felt like I didn't want to ask for help and that's why I didn't go," said Brogan.

This situation resulted in her attendance rate at school dropping to 41%. Having no motivation to be at school, the teenager ended up in the wrong social circles, started drinking a lot of alcohol at parties and often did not come home at night. As a result, the police became involved on a regular basis.

"It got to the stage where I was almost on first-name terms with the police officers!" said Brogan's dad, David Grieve.

"She was getting into trouble all the time and I thought I was fighting a losing battle at one point," he added.

Everything changed once Brogan started receiving support. From her fourth year up until she left school, she was supported by Sheila Laing, Virtual Head Teacher for Care Experienced Children and Young People, and Clare Hindle, Principal Teacher (GIRFEC). The teenager also started working with Natasha, who helped Brogan explore college courses as a post-school plan to build her confidence and raise her career aspirations. Brogan successfully applied for a Level 3 Entry to Learning course at Edinburgh College and received support from Natasha, Sheila and Clare with her transition from school to college. As well as this, Natasha helped the 16-year-old apply for a college bursary and the Young Scot NEC free bus travel card.

"The one-to-one support I received really helped me to understand things and it helped me feel more prepared for going to college," said Brogan

At the beginning of this year, the Musselburgh teenager expressed an interest in undertaking some work experience in a nursery to pursue her career ambitions of working in the childcare sector. Natasha helped Brogan approach Musselburgh Private Nursery and arranged an informal interview.

The 16-year-old was welcomed by the nursery and started her placement at the end of March. She works there two days a week and is receiving great feedback from the nursery staff.

David Grieve credits much of his daughter's impressive progress to Natasha and Bridges Project.

"The support has been tremendous. If you said 18 months ago that we would be where we are now I wouldn't have believed it. Brogan hardly attended school and now she has 100% attendance at college. She really enjoys having money in her pocket now and being more independent," he said.

Brogan is now looking forward to her next steps.

"I will move up to a Level 4 course at college in August, Skills for Work. After finishing college, I hope to secure an apprenticeship with a nursery", she said.

Brogan is definitely on track to securing this goal and, having turned her life around, the future is looking bright for the Musselburgh teenager!



"I found it hard to leave the house and I couldn't see how my life could change. Asking for help from Bridges Project was the best thing I did."



In just a couple of years, Erin Richardson has gone from being overwhelmed by anxiety and not wanting to leave her room to working as a Childcare Practitioner and being a key part of Bridges Project's Young Ambassadors team.

Erin, from Longniddry, has been struggling with anxiety ever since she was diagnosed with dyslexia whilst at school.

"Every day at school was very challenging, making me feel tired and feeding into my anxiety. In my head, I just wanted to be 'normal' like my school peers," says the 20-yearold. "I found myself not really showing interest or engaging in life. I was lonely, sad and my life was very small. I found it hard to leave the house when I was having really bad anxiety days. I couldn't see how my life could change. All I could see was negativity and my barriers."

It all changed when Erin was referred to Bridges Project by her Guidance Teacher at Preston Lodge High School in late 2019 and was introduced to Sam Lamond, who at the time was working for the charity's Way2Work service.

"Sam was so kind, supportive and understanding about how difficult I found things. She gave me strength which I hadn't had before. She gave me strategies to keep fighting my anxiety and keep thinking positively about my life and future," says Erin.

"Sam is really easy to talk to. She has never not been available to talk to me. She never lost hope in my potential, even though I couldn't see it. Sam helped me understand that dyslexia is a part of who I am, not something to be embarrassed about, and that is gives me strength in others areas."

Erin and Sam worked on anxiety management, mindfulness and confidence building before moving on to employability training. This paid off, as in the summer of 2021, Erin secured a Childcare Practitioner apprenticeship with Fenton Barns Nursery in North Berwick. She is now fully qualified in SVQ in Social Services (Children and Young People) and currently works as a supply Childcare Practitioner for East Lothian Council.

Alongside her job of helping children get the best possible start in life, Erin has also become a key part of Bridges Project's Young Ambassadors team. The Young Ambassadors is a group of young current and past Bridges Project clients who assist the charity with its strategic planning and develop youth-led events and services.

"It got to a point where I felt I would be able to give back to other young people. For instance, I am going to co-deliver a health and wellbeing course to young people, which centres a lot around personal development and allows me to use the journey I have had myself to help others," says Erin. The fact that she works as a Childcare Practitioner and helps other young people through volunteering just demonstrates the incredible progress Erin has made since she first started engaging with Bridges Project. When asked about how she would have reacted if someone had told her back in 2019 what her life would look like in 2023, the 20-year-old just smiles.

"I would have laughed at them!" she says.

"I am really proud of what I have done. Receiving support from Bridges Project and now volunteering for the charity has helped me grow and find skills I wouldn't have thought about before," says the Young Ambassador.

Sam is also proud of Erin's achievements

"It has been a joy to watch Erin's confidence grow. The fact that she decided to become a Young Ambassador because she feels it is important to 'give back' really sums Erin up. She wants to help others understand that things can get better with the right help and support. I know Erin is at the start of an exciting new chapter in her life and I look forward to celebrating all of her future achievements," says Erin's support worker.

Erin has now become a proper advocate for Bridges Project.

"Bridges Project is an amazing organisation with such a fantastic team who help young people and gives them strength and hope that things can change. Support is personalised for what you need help with and the fact that support can be longterm is a key success factor," she says.

Erin hopes that other young people in East Lothian and Midlothian who need support do not hesitate to reach out.

"Without Bridges Project I would be such a different person. The support I received was life-changing. My advice to anyone who is struggling is not to be scared or worried, just ask for help. It was the best thing I did."

Published 31 January 2023

Thank You!

We would like to say a heartfelt thank you to all our funders and supporters for enabling us to continue to inspire young people to build a confident future:



Anonymous donations







Other highlights



Bridges Project receiving a tree from the Tree of Trees created for the late Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee



Bridges Project's Young Ambassadors being consulted by the Musselburgh Area Partnership's Children and Youth Network



Launch of the GetConnected IT & Education Suite



2022 Bridges Project Open Day



Edinburgh College trialing new online application system with Bridges Project clients in GetConnected



Bridges Project staff and friends finishing the 2022 Edinburgh Kiltwalk

Financial statement

<u>Income</u>

Item	Year to 31 March 2023 £
Income from investments	3,452
Donations and legacies	14,266
Income from charitable activities	621,686

Total income and endowments 639,404

Expenditure

Item	Year to 31 March 2023 £
Expenditure on raising funds - grant applications	38,877
Expenditure on charitable activities - Service development and strategy	50,679
Expenditure on charitable activities - Skills for Life	175,533
Expenditure on charitable activities - Education/Employability	190,361
Expenditure on charitable activities - Independent Living Service	141,844

Total expenditure 597,294

Balance

Item	£
Net income Year to 31 March 2023	42,110
Funds at 31 March 2022	638,008

Funds at 31 March 2023 680,118