



Grassmarket Community Project

SOCIAL IMPACT REPORT 2024



grassmarket
community project

INTRODUCTION

Grassmarket Community Project (GCP) is an open, inclusive, and diverse community, enabling the most marginalised people in the city to flourish.

Founded in 2010, GCP is an award-winning charity and social enterprise. Today and every day, we continue to change the lives of the city's most vulnerable citizens, reducing social isolation and improving quality of life by providing opportunity, experiences, skills and connection.



DID YOU KNOW?

The home of GCP is the Grassmarket Centre, in the heart of Edinburgh. We are a community of over 600 people and a lifeline to many.

While Edinburgh has much to celebrate, it is important to remember that in Scotland's capital 1 in 5 people are living in poverty. This means they don't have the money to feed themselves let alone the essentials to live. They will be socially isolated and a significant number suffering with mental health issues.

Throughout the year, GCP provides a safe, welcoming space and support for hundreds of individuals, many dealing with multiple complex issues including homelessness, health problems, learning difficulties, poverty, substance misuse, physical abuse and more.

GCP's innovative approach combines social purpose with social enterprise, helping individuals reconnect with their community, gain confidence and self-esteem, feel valued and build positive aspirations for their future.



HOW WE DO IT

Everything we do supports people most marginalised by society, including:

- A year-round Members Programme of activities, training, and events
- Opportunities for skills development, work placements, and pre-apprenticeships
- Weekly Open Door Meals for anyone in the city
- A trail-blazing Volunteers Programme
- Community Cinema and Events
- Inspiring Corporate and Community Partnerships
- Award-winning Social Enterprises

MEMBER SERVICES


This year has seen an unprecedented rise in demand for our services, against a backdrop of a challenging funding landscape.


However, through our rigorous methods of evaluation, talking to our members, continuously gaining their feedback and that of our fantastic volunteer and staff teams, we can show you the significant difference we enable our members to make in their lives – we really do transform lives. Heartfelt and extensive thanks to everyone who makes this possible - we stand proud in supporting our community now and in the future.




*Concerts, Citizen Science, Minibus Tours, Holyrood etc

MEMBER SERVICES

 No. of individuals who accessed the service

 Total hours delivered

 Avg. monthly attendance

54

126

PRACTICAL & EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Group work and being part of a positive, inclusive community is key to supporting an individual's welfare and enacting positive change. However, some members occasionally struggle to access group activities and need individual support.

60

682

CORE SKILLS

A big part of our weekly activity programme is devoted to ensuring members have access to learning core skills.

54

3460

MEMBER TRAINING

Drop-in every Tuesday 10-4pm. This is a supported session to focus on their chosen learning path. Alongside this we have opportunities for training and paid work experience via our apprenticeships.

90

718

CREATIVITY

We provide opportunities for members to explore creativity in many forms. We have a fully functioning wood workshop, art & textiles space and the resources required to express yourself in a supported group setting.

30

2351

MEMBER VOLUNTEERING

Members can volunteer and train in our social enterprises, making a difference by supporting the charity's income, learning valuable skills, and building confidence as part of a dedicated team.

52

668

HEALTH & WELLBEING

We provide a range of different group sessions based around boosting positivity, self-esteem and confidence. All are led by 2-3 volunteers with the specific skills required.

5

N/A

REFERRALS

We are well positioned as a community hub with links and partnerships with other organisations across Edinburgh.

44

155

EXPERIENCES & OPPORTUNITIES

Alongside our weekly programme of group activities, we offer opportunities to educational, holistic and wellbeing experiences.



MEMBER STORY

I first came to the Grassmarket Community Project feeling completely lost. I was lonely, had no confidence, and had been in and out of the hospital struggling with my mental health and recovery.

A friend who had been going told me about it, and I thought it might help me get back on my feet. Since joining, it's been life-changing. I've started to trust myself again and gained confidence I never thought I'd have.

I've learned new skills, made friends, and found people I can rely on. The staff are always there, not just for a chat, but to point me towards the support I need. GCP has given me a place where I feel I belong, and it's helped me feel like a part of something bigger than myself.

531

Total number of
GCP Members

324

Total number of Members
engaged this year

158

New Members
this year

MEMBER SERVICES

This year, the below number of our members said that GCP has helped them with the following:

Leave the house more often	135
Reach my potential or feel more fulfilled	101
Access additional support from other orgs	62
Complete learning or training at GCP	38
Volunteer at GCP	29
Volunteer somewhere else	24
Complete training elsewhere	18
Get a job	10

Since joining Grassmarket Community Project I've been... (sometimes, often or all of the time)

I've been feeling valued, useful or respected	81%
I've been feeling less isolated	80%
I feel part of a community	80%
I'm aware of where and when to find support	75%
I've been interested in or tried new things	75%
I've been feeling more positive about myself	72%
I've been able to make plans independently	71%
I've created new, healthy relationships	71%
I'm able to cope with challenges or adapt	69%
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	69%

The main benefits our Members have felt participating in GCP Activities

Learning or trying something new	65%
Positive impact on mental health & wellbeing	60%
Having a safe place to go to	58%
Being more creative and finding hobbies	50%
Establishing/maintaining a routine	50%
Learning practical skills and independence	45%
Feeling more positive about my future	44%
Feeling confident and greater self esteem	40%
Helping other people	38%
Confidence to make decisions on my own	36%
Having someone I can trust to talk to	36%
Feeling able to cope with challenges & change	31%
Building a support network	31%

**"IT'S GOOD TO KNOW YOU ARE
HERE. IT'S GOOD KNOWING I
HAVE SOMEWHERE TO GO"**

— Duncan

3

Monthly groups

3276

Hours of paid work
placements

441

Total Accredited
Qualifications awarded to
members, staff & volunteers

2223

Hours of group
activities delivered

5937

Total hours of individual
support & opportunities

47

Free films screened



143

Individuals who took part in our services for individuals

2656

Meals served to people who are homeless, vulnerable housed or have no recourse to public funds

80

Average weekly total adults supported through Open Door Services (meal + cinema)

29

Members volunteering in our services/social enterprises

22

Weekly groups

8639

Total community meals served

MEMBER SERVICES



"Coming along is a really positive experience. I've made friends and everyone who volunteers here is very friendly."

Before I started coming here I was really isolated and felt very lonely. Now I know if I am able to come here I will be greeted with a friendly face and feel very welcomed."

"It means a lot to me. It really helped me through hard times and got a lot of knowledge from them. Can't thank the GCP enough."

"I needed the services when I was at rock bottom with my mental health with nowhere to go. It really saved my life. I value what they do so much that I now volunteer with them to make sure others get the support they need. I have made new friends as well as learned new skills. They are angels."

"It's like a community hub full of unique and special people, all of which have a story to tell about themselves and what they've done in here."

"I think (I'm sure like many others) that this project is so valuable to many people: no matter who. Mainly because it embraces everyone in a way which encourages and takes care, in a wholesome and positive way."

And also importantly, that this is realised on a day after day basis, so that the help we need is always available, and its this continuity of effort that makes the Grassmarket Community Project unique."

"The grassmarket is a good, safe space to learn new skills and hobbies. Speaking of my experience from the past the grassmarket also offers plenty of support with friendly staff and volunteers."

"The GCP means to me its like the family I have never had the staff go out of their way to help you."





“I KNOW I’M IN THE RIGHT PLACE TO GROW”

MEMBER STORY

When I first moved to Edinburgh from Fife, I felt completely out of place. With no friends, no job, and living in temporary accommodation through Cyrenians, it was tough to adjust.

I wanted to find a way to connect with others, explore my creativity, and build skills that would help me find work. That’s when I joined the Grassmarket Community Project and the Young Members’ Programme, hoping it could give me a fresh start.

During my induction, I heard about the hospitality pre-apprenticeship at Coffee Saints, and I was immediately drawn to it. I knew I wanted to be part of that, so I approached the staff and waited for a spot to open up.

While I waited, I joined the ‘Oot the Box’ sessions, where I met other young members and helped create displays for the GCP Members’ Showcase. It felt amazing to be part of something like that. I worked hard at a trial shift at Coffee Saints to show that I was reliable and eager, and the team made me feel so welcome.

Now, as I start the pre-apprenticeship, I feel like I’m on the right path. This opportunity gives me the confidence to believe that when I eventually move back to Fife with stable housing, I’ll have the skills and independence to build a future for myself. I’m excited for what’s ahead and so grateful for the support of GCP and Coffee Saints — I know I’m in the right place to grow.

68

Total Members
aged 16 - 25

235

Hours of young members
services delivered

3

Paid Pre-Apprenticeship
placements completed

159

Accredited Qualifications
awarded to young people

4

Social Work
Placements completed

1

Career Ready
Internship

SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

Our social enterprises are core to our sustainability, generating vital income that is reinvested back into the charity, and providing valuable workplace opportunities for our members and volunteers.

WOOD WORKSHOP

Our woodwork shop emphasizes skills development and practical learning in an environment that builds confidence and helps our members gain hands-on experience and master woodworking techniques.

This year the team have been learning to build a boat! This exciting and rewarding project is almost coming to an end, but the team have learnt so much – not just how to build a boat, but also about teamwork, goal setting, collaboration and problem solving.

Elsewhere in our woodwork shop it has been business as usual.

Our non-boat builders have been creating beautiful pieces of commissioned furniture, a number of awards for different organisations and lots of small wooden gift items, but one of the more unusual pieces that was manufactured this year was The Spirit Case for the Edinburgh Futures Institute.

This was made using materials from the old Edinburgh Royal Infirmary including an Elm tree that stood on the hospital grounds. Our woodworking team are able to turn their hardworking hands to anything!



3000+

Hours of work experience
provided in social enterprises

78,809

Coffees sold

400+

Dogs in attendance at
our 2 Pup-up cafés



COFFEE SAINTS

Our Coffee Saints brand has been going from strength to strength this year. Over and above our usual customer base, we have a huge number of community groups using our space, from gamers, literacy, urban sketchers and health & wellbeing groups. All have said they use the space for the warm welcome that they receive and the delicious coffee & cakes!

Both cafes are very dog friendly and we have excellent facilities for those who like to use the space as a break from the office.



HOSPITALITY & EVENTS

It's been a busy year for our events team, in May we provided the Catering for the 2024 Church of Scotland General Assembly, where over the course of the week, we served over 4000 hungry delegates.

We decided to move away from being a festival venue this year and instead went into partnership with Fringe Central, who used our spaces as the main hub for the hundreds of artists performing during the festival.

We also hosted our very first Murder Mystery evening which was a great success and we hope to do more of these as we move into 2025.

ALMOST

One boat built

3,000+

Products made
from tartan

12,000+

Delegates hosted
at our events



TARTAN SHOP

What a year it has been for our Tartan Social Enterprise! Not only have they achieved the highest sales since this enterprise was developed, but some of our wonderful volunteers also attending New York Tartan week showing off our stunning Greyfriars Tartan, making contacts and spreading the word about our amazing community project.

The team have been busy creating all manner of products from hats, to dog attire, jewellery, items for the home and lots of gift items — they have a range with something to suit everyone! All credit to our volunteers in our tartan enterprise — without them this social enterprise simply would not exist.



“THE GRASSMARKET COMMUNITY PROJECT IS RUN WITH KINDNESS AND LOVE, AND THE MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS ARE ALL SUPER. AS A VOLUNTEER AT GCP, YOU WILL DEFINITELY FEEL SUPPORTED AND MADE WELCOME.”

— VOLUNTEER

153

Volunteers in total

50

Volunteer Facilitators &
Support Volunteers

70

Open Door Service
Volunteers

52

New volunteers
joined this year

11

Key Corporate
Partnerships*

243

Employee volunteers across
our 29 corporate days

WHAT OUR VOLUNTEERS THINK ABOUT VOLUNTEERING AT GCP:

"I love volunteering as you form relationships, get fond of people. It really is an integral part of my week."

Maureen

"GCP is really well organised but there's also a sense of freedom, which means you can be completely yourself."

Pauline

"GCP is a fantastic place. Personally, it has had a huge positive impact on my life."

Janie

"As a volunteer I get the satisfaction of helping members and to feel part of a community that supports my own values. It is a friendly environment and one that helps me feel useful by helping those with particular needs. It also helps me to combat my own feelings of isolation as an elderly person living alone for the first time."

Anon

"It has been a fantastic year supporting GCP in many ways. We have participated in Tartan production and also maintained their activity and workshop spaces for their members in the heart of Edinburgh.

Our efforts help run the day-to-day learning & development opportunities and also support the GCP to provide a safe and high quality space for all. We are very humbled to continue providing time and support to this great charity."

Craig, HSBC

"VisitScotland's Edinburgh iCentre team had great pleasure this year helping to support the members at the Grassmarket Project by volunteering support with services at their various workshops. This involved collaborating with members and the Grassmarket team, lending a hand in the textiles shop, woodwork workshop and supporting their open-door meals services.

The project has been a really great way for our team to offer practical volunteer work which in turn has helped develop their knowledge, attitude and understanding regarding the contribution the centre offers to the community."

Penny, VisitScotland

"It's rewarding seeing the difference the staff and volunteers make to the lives of others as well as witnessing the friendships and camaraderie that the members give each other. I've enjoyed watching individuals find their superpower and gain in confidence"

Anne

15

Tartan Shop Volunteers who helped to generate £50k+ in sales!

68

Volunteers Accessed Training Opportunity



TOGETHER, WE ARE THE GOOD PLACE TO BE!

CHOOSE OUR SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

The ethical choice and a great way to support our social purpose.

- Pop into Coffee Saints for a breather and bite to eat
- Visit our wee Tartan Shop for beautiful hand-crafted gifts
- Shop online for our range of hand-crafted tartan and woodwork
- Commission something special with our Tartan Team or Wood Workshop
- Book Grassmarket Centre for your next conference or celebration

VOLUNTEER, FUNDRAISE & SPONSOR

Get in touch with us to see how you can get more involved with GCP.

And, of course, you can donate! Your donations are vital for GCP; big or small, it makes all the difference.

DONATE



JOIN



SHOP



THANKS TO OUR KEY PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS INCLUDING:

Baird Trust, Binks Trust, Breeze, Circular Communities, City of Edinburgh Council, CoCo Counselling, Community Enterprise, Dance Base, Digital Lifelines, EVOC, Edinburgh Airport, Edinburgh Castle, Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, Edinburgh Film Guild, Edinburgh Futures Institute, Edinburgh Social Enterprise Network, Edinburgh University, Ekal solutions, Festival Fringe Society, Foundation Scotland, Grassmarket Mission, Greyfriars Charteris Centre, Greyfriars Kirk, HSBC, High Constables of Edinburgh, Historic Scotland, Hub South East Building Brighter Futures Fund, Inspiring Scotland Volunteer Network, Invisible Cities, John Lewis, Lloyds, Mary Kinross CT, Mercat Tours, Move on, Museums of Scotland, NatWest, Nucleus, Ooni, Open Book, Pilotlight, Poverty Alliance, Robertson Trust, Robin Leith Trust, SHAPE, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Social Enterprise Scotland, Souter Trust, Standard life, TNL Community Fund, TNL Heritage Fund, TSB, Tabhair, Viewforth

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Report design by Ruth Kirby Organ | @kirbyorgan_



A FINAL THANK YOU TO...

Our fantastic members, staff and volunteers who continue to strengthen and develop this wonderful community.



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