



Cyrenians

IMPACT REPORT 2024-25





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WELCOME FROM OUR CEO

The last year has been one of extremes; the Scottish Parliament declared a national Housing Emergency in May, the number of households assessed as homeless reached the highest since records began, and here in Edinburgh the housing crisis is even more acute. It has become increasingly apparent that those we support are presenting with more complex needs, bearing the brunt of the cost-of-living crisis, over-subscribed services, long waiting lists and the lack of suitable, or indeed, available accommodation.

Despite this challenging situation, we have been heartened by the continued support of our partners and our donors. This year, with your help we have been able to provide one-to-one intensive support to over 2,400 individuals experiencing, or at risk of homelessness, and supported a further 4,554 to build connections, access training and food, and prevent people from reaching crisis point.

As we continue our work, guided by our strategy - taking a public health approach to homelessness prevention - we do so with the knowledge that homelessness is more than just a housing issue. Levels of rough sleeping are now rising above pre-pandemic levels and the systems in place are struggling to meet demand. We know that beyond a lack of housing, homelessness is often the result of complex challenges like childhood poverty, trauma, abuse, and mental and physical health issues. As decision makers focus on the need to provide adequate accommodation to those directly impacted by the Housing Emergency, we must not lose sight of the need to offer the right support for these underlying issues and prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place.

It is imperative that we continue to centre the voices of lived experience, calling on our MPs, MSPs, and councillors to understand the many facets and impacts of homelessness so that we can all provide better and more effective support.

Our sector is under immense pressure to deliver more, for less, in a highly competitive funding environment. Faced with pressures to cut costs we remain steadfast in our commitment to place our values at the heart of everything we do. We will continue to put those we support at the centre of our decision making and remain hopeful that every year, we are a step closer to preventing homelessness for good.

Ewan Aitken
CEO

THANKS FROM OUR CHAIR

We cannot tackle homelessness alone. In an increasingly challenging environment, we must come together to achieve real and lasting change.

For many of the people we support, this has been a particularly difficult year. At Cyrenians we have been vocal for many years about the pressure on homelessness services in Edinburgh, which is also reflected elsewhere in Scotland. We have often spoken of the lack of available housing, the shortage of temporary accommodation, and the ripple effect this has on people's lives – often so damaging to mental and physical health, community connections and family wellbeing. We know that those we support have to wait longer to get the help they need, and this can add to feelings of hopelessness and isolation.

During the past year our Board of Trustees has been strengthened by the recruitment of some talented new members. I know I speak too for the whole Board in expressing my appreciation of our staff. Our 2024 staff survey showed some staggeringly reassuring numbers. Every respondent reported being committed to our values, and 97% or more enjoy their work, are proud to work for us and would recommend Cyrenians as an employer to others. Whenever I meet a member of our team, I never cease to be impressed by the commitment and enthusiasm they demonstrate. This, more than anything else, reassures me that we will successfully weather the adverse economic and financial environment that we are facing, and we will continue to remain positive lights for those we support.

Our many volunteers too, provide that warmth and sense of belonging that makes Cyrenians unique. Our supper club helpers, volunteer gardeners, depot support, and many more all contribute to a sense of belonging and safety that Cyrenians provides to those we support

I am grateful too, to all the individuals, businesses, supporters and grant funders who have worked with us this year, ensuring that we can continue to tackle the causes and consequences of homelessness.

John Lawrie
Chair of the Board of Trustees



HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

Homelessness is not inevitable. It can be predicted, which means it can be prevented. Prevention is key to our public health approach to tackling homelessness. If we can interrupt the cycle of homelessness by supporting people before they reach crisis point, we can create stronger, safer communities for everyone.

Transition points – such as leaving care, hospital, school, the armed forces or prison – are the most vulnerable points of a person's life, however the supports currently in place to manage these changes are often complex and difficult to navigate.

Our skilled key workers have the expertise to access the right systems, at the right time, and navigate through them with ease. They provide essential support to individuals already experiencing instability and stress, who may otherwise not know what help is available to them.

An expert guide can be the difference between manoeuvring through a high stress period and landing on your feet - with a stable foundation to continue building your future - and entering a cycle of homelessness that reduces your opportunity to thrive.

In October 2024, we published new research which quantified the average cost to Edinburgh City Council of supporting someone presenting as homeless into settled accommodation, compared with the cost of providing support which helps them to maintain their tenancy. The research was published to coincide with World Homeless Day and demonstrated conclusively that spending money on prevention is the fastest, most effective, and cheapest way to address the housing emergency.



Last year we built trusted relationships with

2,436

people, supporting them to navigate through complex welfare and housing systems and build a positive future

Last year

242

people died whilst homeless in Scotland. More than half of them were less than

45 YEARS OLD

People can expect to wait up to

2 YEARS

for a stable place to call home, resulting in increased pressure on other services such as mental health support



SUPPORTER STORY

Rachel is Cyrenians Senior Finance Manager and this year she conquered the Forth Rail Bridge Abseil to raise vital funds to tackle the causes and consequences of homelessness.

“ I have a really clear memory of being away at an adventure holiday with my school when I was around 14 years old – one of the activities was an abseil and I was ready to get cracking. Being one of the few with a camera at the time, I volunteered to take snaps of my classmates going down the small quarry and, having listened to all their tales on the climb back up, realised I couldn't handle the abseil.

That disappointment at not taking on the challenge stayed with me. So much so, that my husband bought me an abseil experience for my birthday a few years ago so I could meet the challenge head on. Turns out, I loved it!

When I joined Cyrenians I wasn't really aware of just how far reaching their work was. Being in the finance team means I'm not often at the 'front' of it all, but I work with colleagues from across all our services and hear about the incredible work they do day-to-day. It's quite frankly, inspiring and I really wanted to do something that would help raise vital funds, but also give me an opportunity to tell more people about our incredible projects.

None of my family were surprised when I told them I was abseiling off the Forth Rail Bridge, but they were surprised when I started talking to them more about the why behind it. I come from a family of teachers – they are aware of homelessness, but they don't really know what it is.



Being able to tell them about parts of our work that line up to their own interests (like the musicians in my family and our Creative Natives project, or the foodie friends and our Cook School) was such an eye-opening experience. It led to some great conversations that challenged the perception that homelessness is only about people sleeping rough.

I couldn't have asked for a better day to abseil. The skies were blue, the people were so friendly, and alongside members of the SITE Scotland team, our little Cyrenians abseilers were cheered on by our fundraising team and all the organisers – it had a real party atmosphere.

My 14 year old self would be so pleased to see I'd taken on the Forth Rail Bridge, and I really loved being able to do something that supported my colleagues in a way that feels somehow more direct than my day-to-day role. ”



A SAFE PLACE TO STAY

Homelessness is not just a housing issue; however people need safe, suitable, and stable accommodation to thrive.

By the time someone is experiencing homelessness it is likely they have already navigated through a series of traumatic events. People need time to recover from homelessness and our communities provide person-centred, holistic support whilst people's lives stabilise, and they can get back on the road to independent living.

In many cases, mainstream independent housing options may be both inaccessible and very difficult to maintain. This means people face a high risk of becoming homeless again in the future without the kind of wrap around support we offer at Cyrenians.

As part of our housing solution, we provide the opportunity for our community members to build social connections that will continue to sustain them once they have moved on from our housing. We offer training, employment support, benefits advice and help individuals to grow in confidence and navigate opportunities like further education.

Across our 5 residential communities and Women in Safe Homes project we are able to support young people, women fleeing domestic abuse, and people with experience of long-term hospitalisation to build a stable foundation before they move towards independent living.

By creating breathing space, we interrupt the cycle of homelessness.



In Edinburgh the average stay in temporary accommodation is

507 DAYS

That's almost

2 YEARS

of not being able to put down roots or build your future

We don't put time limits on our community members and continue to provide support when they move into their new home

We provided

76

people a safe place to stay last year



MEET SAM

SUPPORTED BY OUR OUTREACH TEAM

“ Cyrenians has supported me through some of the toughest transitions in my life. I'd spent a long time homeless and had been a patient at the Access Place for a few years. Then, the Council offered me my first proper tenancy. But I needed help getting on my feet.

The Cyrenians team helped me to set up all my bills, applied to the Scottish Welfare Fund and Fresh Start to get some essentials and household items for my new home, including things to decorate. They also advocated for me alongside my housing officer to get some repairs done in the flat.

Unfortunately, when I started my tenancy the front door to the flat had been broken, and when it was repaired, I didn't get a fob key. For a while I got by relying on neighbours to let me in whilst I waited for my fob. One day I came back from the shops to find all my neighbours out, and made the mistake of thinking I could climb up to the second floor to let myself in. I slipped and fell, doing serious damage to my leg.

I ended up having my leg amputated below the knee, and my mental state deteriorated whilst in the hospital. I was confused and didn't know what was going on - I just couldn't communicate with the hospital staff. The Cyrenians team came to see me and talked to the hospital staff and helped them understand where my mind was at and made my stay in hospital a bit smoother. They helped my treatment along by liaising with the staff.

They also managed to get access to my flat so they could collect some essentials for me, like my glasses, phone and some clean clothes.

When I was discharged, I had to face going back to a home at the top of stairs I couldn't climb. The Cyrenians team spoke with a psychiatrist at the Royal Ed, explained my situation and managed to get me a room in the Royal Ed hospital ward even though I didn't meet the usual criteria - way better than having to be transferred to Fife or become homeless in Edinburgh again. I couldn't stay at the Royal Ed long term, but while I was being cared for there, I came back to myself. It was a real lifeline.

Then, working with their colleagues in the Hospital In-reach team, they saw that I got a place at Milestone House. They helped me to make housing bids, and supported me to make enquiries about my stay in hospital and the lack of fob that got me there.



Cyrenians went above and beyond for me - advocating for me when I was offered housing that wasn't fit for wheelchair use and reaching out to my Housing Officer when neighbours I thought were friends took advantage of me and stole money from me. They met with the Council and my local councillor which led to them changing some of their policies so that what happened to me wouldn't happen again.

Eventually I was offered a bungalow with a garden in a quiet area that didn't need any adaptations. I've been in my house for nearly a year now, and I'm finally settled. I've got a GP, started to reduce my medications and am on my way to getting a prosthetic leg. I've also made good friends with my neighbours in the community - I've got my life back on track. ”

Our Hospital InReach service supports patients at risk of homelessness to maintain or access accommodation during their hospital stay.

Patients supported by our team are
68%
less likely to be re-admitted to hospital compared to the 12 months prior to working with us

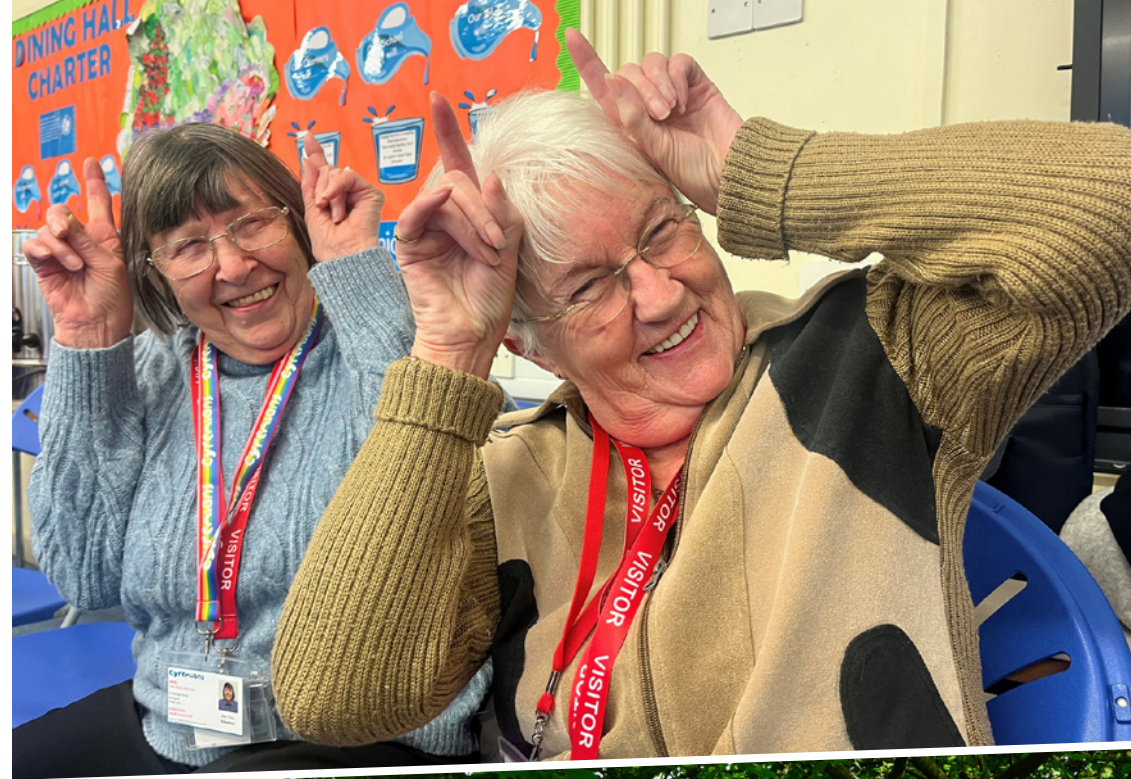
BUILDING SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

We are more resilient to life's challenges, including homelessness, when we have people around us that we can trust and go to for help. Without a support network, we are more vulnerable and likely to face poorer outcomes in health and education, and are at higher risk of homelessness.

Relationship breakdown remains a leading cause of homelessness; without the support from loved ones, life can be more difficult to navigate, opportunities harder to access, and crisis point much closer to home. Building connections with others helps mitigate the impact of those breakdowns.

A sense of community is more than just sharing something in common with others. Tackling homelessness by bringing people together over food, shared activities, creative pursuits, learning opportunities, and through place-based initiatives helps to build connections that protect individuals now, and into the future.

Our projects focus on building those informal connections, offering people the space to grow in confidence and thrive together in order to continue supporting one another long after they leave Cyrenians.



503

people joined us regularly at our weekly lunches to share food and build connection

284

people regularly joined our activity groups to improve their wellbeing, get creative, and make friends

100s

of people benefited from our green spaces, including hospital staff, patients and visiting families



MEET MALCOLM

SUPPORTED BY OUR ADDIEWELL VISITOR CENTRE TEAM

“ When I came into Addiewell my wee girl was not long born and my wife was pregnant, so I had a lot of fears and anxiety over how I was going to build a bond with my kids.

The course on parenting styles Cyrenians offered has given me more tools to handle situations positively - it helped me to develop as a parent, and to be more patient and understanding. It helped me understand my family unit better, and how to work as a team with my partner.

My wife keeps pictures of me about the house as a reminder - but then my kids will ask “where’s daddy”? Bonding visits and building a relationship with your kids while you’re in prison can be daunting, so anything that can build familiarity makes me much more confident as a parent.

The visits also help my kids to cope - they even look forward to coming up because of the personal touch of the Cyrenians team. I feel comfortable at the visitor centre, and like I’m able to be open and playful and daft with them. They’re young kids so they love it when you’re silly with them.

The biggest impact on me has been learning about conflict resolution. I would never have walked away from conflict before - but now I think about the impact it’s going to have, and about how that’s going to affect my family and future. I didn’t know how to deal with my anger, but now I’ll process the information and take myself out of the situation, and take time to calm down and think. Bonding visits at the visitor centre give me something to look forward to every week... since I’ve started working with Cyrenians I’ve not had any reports for violence or fighting.

If I had a really stunted or fractured relationship with my kids, I don’t know how that would have affected my marriage and everything else along with it. Now I know that when I get out [of prison] I’ll have a great relationship with my family. It’s a long time to be away from your children, especially at key stages during their childhood - so my reintegration back into their life will be much calmer and smoother now thanks to the support I’ve gotten.

To have confidence in my family life means I’ve got confidence with everything else in my life. Rather than hope I won’t, I know I’m not going to get involved in crime or with the same people, because I know how it’ll affect my family and jeopardise what I’ve built up. It gives me confidence to know that I’m going to go out there and make good choices. ”



Tess Hamilton
Service Manager

Our Addiewell Prison
Visitor’s Centre
supports families to stay
connected, reducing the
risk of reoffending and
homelessness following
release.

Last year we supported almost

300 ADULTS

and

221 CHILDREN

to strengthen their relationships
through family bonding sessions

DEVELOPING SKILLS

Across all our services we aim to provide people the support they need to create the stable foundations on which they can build the rest of their life. For our skills and learning projects, this often results in challenging traditional learning styles, offering positive opportunities, and space to grow to those we support.

Young people are at particular risk of homelessness as they begin to navigate high-risk transition points such as leaving home, school, or care. All these steps pose risks, and without the right support it can be a fragile time with devastating consequences.

KEEPING THE PROMISE



Cyrenians is part of Scotland's national pledge to deliver on the change demanded by the Independent Care Review and #KeepThePromise to Scotland's care experienced young people that they will grow up loved, safe and respected.

IN OUR SERVICES -

75 per cent of young people resident in our communities and half of the young people accessing our skills and development services are care experienced

To find out more visit cyrenians.scot/thepromise

We have a particular focus engaging young people in a range of vocational opportunities, providing what is often the first opportunity to learn in a different way to mainstream education. Our outdoor training courses, cooking qualifications, living skills and more, provide interventions which greatly reduce the risk of homelessness and isolation, instead building a sense of confidence, pride, and often, accredited qualifications opening doors beyond the support we can give.

It is not just young people who benefit from our training, but also professionals, carers, and families who may be struggling to communicate. Sharing our expertise through free-to-access training helps other trusted adults support even more young people to navigate vulnerable moments of their lives before reaching crisis point.

Preventing young people from entering a cycle of homelessness to begin with, is essential to ending homelessness for good.

93

parents/carers attended our 1-2-1 workshops to facilitate better communication with their children

105

accredited qualifications were achieved through our training courses

478

young people attended bespoke training courses through our Conflict Resolution and Green Skills Centre projects

1382

professionals attended our training on conflict resolution, gambling harm, child protection and drug trends



MEET CHRIS

15-year-old Chris's family were struggling to find support in their local area of Fife. Chris wasn't attending school or engaging with any other services at the time and was struggling with social anxiety. They'd completely lost touch with their social circle. Chris's mum couldn't work during this period, as they weren't attending school, and their mood was very low. It was a stressful time for the whole family. Then, Chris's mum got in touch with Creative Natives.

Chris began attending stART sessions at the Creative Natives studio. They were nervous when they first visited but liked the chilled vibe of the studio and were up for taking the step to come to a new project and meet new people. Supported by our staff team of artists and creatives, Chris felt able to try new activities and explore their creativity: drawing, painting, modelling and sculpting. By the end of the 6 weeks, Chris had gone from introverted and hardly speaking to non-stop chatting, laughing, confident and glowing with a sense of achievement.

Chris made such great progress that when they were offered a space on the follow-up block of stART sessions, they happily declined as they now felt able to return to school. Their mum was equally delighted as she was now able to return to work, bringing security and stability back to the family home. She said this would have been unimaginable before their time with us. After attending the studio for just 6 weeks, Chris's life options have been transformed.

“ We are incredibly grateful to Creative Natives in Edinburgh for giving Chris a spot on their stART program. At the time, Chris was not participating in any outdoor social activities and was struggling with extreme social anxiety. However, through the support and encouragement of the amazing staff at Creative Natives, along with ongoing cognitive behavioural therapy, Chris has made significant progress. Over the six weeks, they built up enough confidence to return to a part-time school timetable, something we couldn't have imagined before. The improvement in their self-confidence has been truly impactful, and we owe a huge thanks to everyone at Creative Natives for their dedication and care. I cannot recommend them highly enough for the incredible work they do. They have made a real difference to all our lives. Thank you so much! ”



Our Creative Natives project supports young people who may be experiencing isolation, social anxiety, and feel excluded from mainstream education

Last year we supported
82
young people at their time of need

INFLUENCING POLICY

Cyrenians is uniquely placed to use the lived experience of both our staff and our service users to influence local and national policy and practice. This year we have continued to facilitate ALL In for Change, the national platform for lived and frontline experience and partnered with other organisations to publish the annual Taking the Temperature report, providing Scottish Government with direct feedback on the impact of the Housing Emergency on frontline services.

The Housing (Scotland) Bill – which was introduced to parliament last year – has continued to progress, with Cyrenians consulting on its development at every stage. The Social Justice and Social Security Committee - responsible for scrutinising new homelessness prevention duties on public bodies - spent the morning at our Cook School hearing from Cyrenians service managers about the work we already do in partnership with public bodies like hospitals and prisons.

With most of the Committee's scrutiny conducted in the Chamber, it was important for members to have an opportunity to visit a setting where real prevention work takes place.

This work – and many other efforts to demonstrate the importance of prevention and keep this high on the policy and media agenda throughout the year has contributed to additional Scottish Government spending commitments on affordable housing and homelessness prevention.

The expansion of our Youth Participation work has allowed us to bring an even greater focus to the voice of young people in our influencing work. We have created opportunities for young people to share their insights and shape our response to public consultations. By building trust and confidence, we have been able to support two young people to share their experience on their terms at events attended by politicians, decision makers and in the media.

Images below :

Top left: Co-leaders of the Scottish Green Party Lorna Slater and Patrick Harvie at the FareShare Depot in Leith

Top right: Former Drugs and Alcohol Minister Christina McKelvie at one of our LEAP residencies

Bottom left: Former community resident and Catalyst for Change spokesperson, Sean, appearing on STV

Bottom right: Dr Scott Arthur MP visiting a Community Pantry in Edinburgh



Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Chief Executive of Cyrenians Ewan Aitken and Minister for Housing Paul McLennan



Daniel Johnston MSP and Secretary of State for Scotland Ian Murray and at our Hospital Gardens



THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS

You raised over half a million pounds to tackle the causes and consequences of homelessness! Thanks to YOU this is our most successful year of fundraising together! Check out the highlights to see how it happened:

234

supporters created lasting change with a regular gift

391

customers enjoyed a year-round calendar of Supper Club and Good Food events, with proceeds directly supporting our work



273

of you donated to our Winter Appeal, which raised over £134,000

385

volunteers generously donated their time to our projects, gardening, delivering food, and more!



18

brave souls abseiled the iconic Forth Rail Bridge, including some of our own staff team!



2

special supporters left a legacy gift this year. We are honoured by everyone who chooses to care for our community with a gift in their will.

Colleagues from corporate partners have hosted office pop ups, raffles and fundraising events to get everyone involved in tackling homelessness together



Over 350

colleagues from 36 businesses participated in group volunteer sessions, directly contributing to projects such as our Green Skills Centre and FareShare Depot

22

runners took part in the Edinburgh Marathon Challenge, from local businesses to family members of young people we've supported directly



Our collaborations demonstrated how businesses and charities can create lasting social impact. Our work with Fazenda was praised for its meaningful efforts to raise awareness of Edinburgh's worsening housing crisis when we won the Inspiring Partnership 2025 award from the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce.



TRUSTS AND GRANTS

THANK YOU

Thank you to all the grant makers whose generous contributions made our work possible in 2024-2025.

In addition we would like to thank all of the individuals, businesses, and community groups, too numerous to name, who generously supported our work last year.

■ AWM	■ East Lothian Council
■ Armed Forces Covenant Trust	■ Edinburgh Integrated Joint Board
■ Artemis Charitable Foundation	■ Essential Edinburgh
■ Austin Pilkington Trust	■ Ettrick Charitable Trust
■ Baillie Gifford	■ Falkirk Council
■ Barratt Foundation	■ Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership
■ Basil Death Trust	■ Fareshare UK
■ Capital City Partnership	■ Gannochy Trust
■ Cargill Trust	■ Grace Trust
■ Cashback for Communities	■ Hayward Sanderson Trust
■ Cattanach Trust	■ John Lewis Partnership Fund
■ Charles Hayward Foundation	■ Karen Napier Fund
■ City of Edinburgh Council	■ Leith Benevolent Association
■ City of Edinburgh Council Alcohol and Drug Partnership	■ MA Lascelles Charitable Trust
■ Clothworkers' Foundation	■ Meikle Foundation (formally Martin Connell)
■ CLN Trust	■ The Merchant Company of Edinburgh
■ Comic Relief	■ Midlothian Council
■ Cordis Trust	■ The Misses Robinson Charitable Trust
■ Crerar Trust	■ National Lottery
■ Cruden Foundation	



■ NHS Lothian Health Improvement Fund	■ Souter Charitable Trust
■ Nigel Bruce Charitable Trust	■ The Corra Foundation
■ The Promise Scotland	■ The Renaissance Club Charitable Foundation
■ Rev Lord George Macleod of Fuinary Charitable Trust	■ The Robertson Trust
■ Riada Trust	■ The Vardy Foundation
■ Robertson Group	■ UK Government
■ R S Macdonald	■ Veterans Foundation
■ Ryvoan Trust	■ Walter Scott & Partners
■ Scottish Children's Lottery	■ Ward Family Charitable Trust
■ Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO)	■ West Lothian Council
■ Scottish Government	■ West Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership
■ The Scotto	■ Whitaker Charitable Trust
■ Scotland's Veterans Wellbeing Alliance	■ William Grant Foundation
■ Sodexo	■ Wilson Christie Fund
	■ Wolfson Foundation

GET IN TOUCH

If you would like to find out more about our work, how we can work together or how you can support us, please get in touch:

General enquiries:

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-  fundraising@cyrenians.scot

Our social media:

-  [@cyrenians](https://www.instagram.com/cyrenians)
-  [@cyrenians](https://www.facebook.com/cyrenians)
-  [@cyrenians](https://www.linkedin.com/company/cyrenians)
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