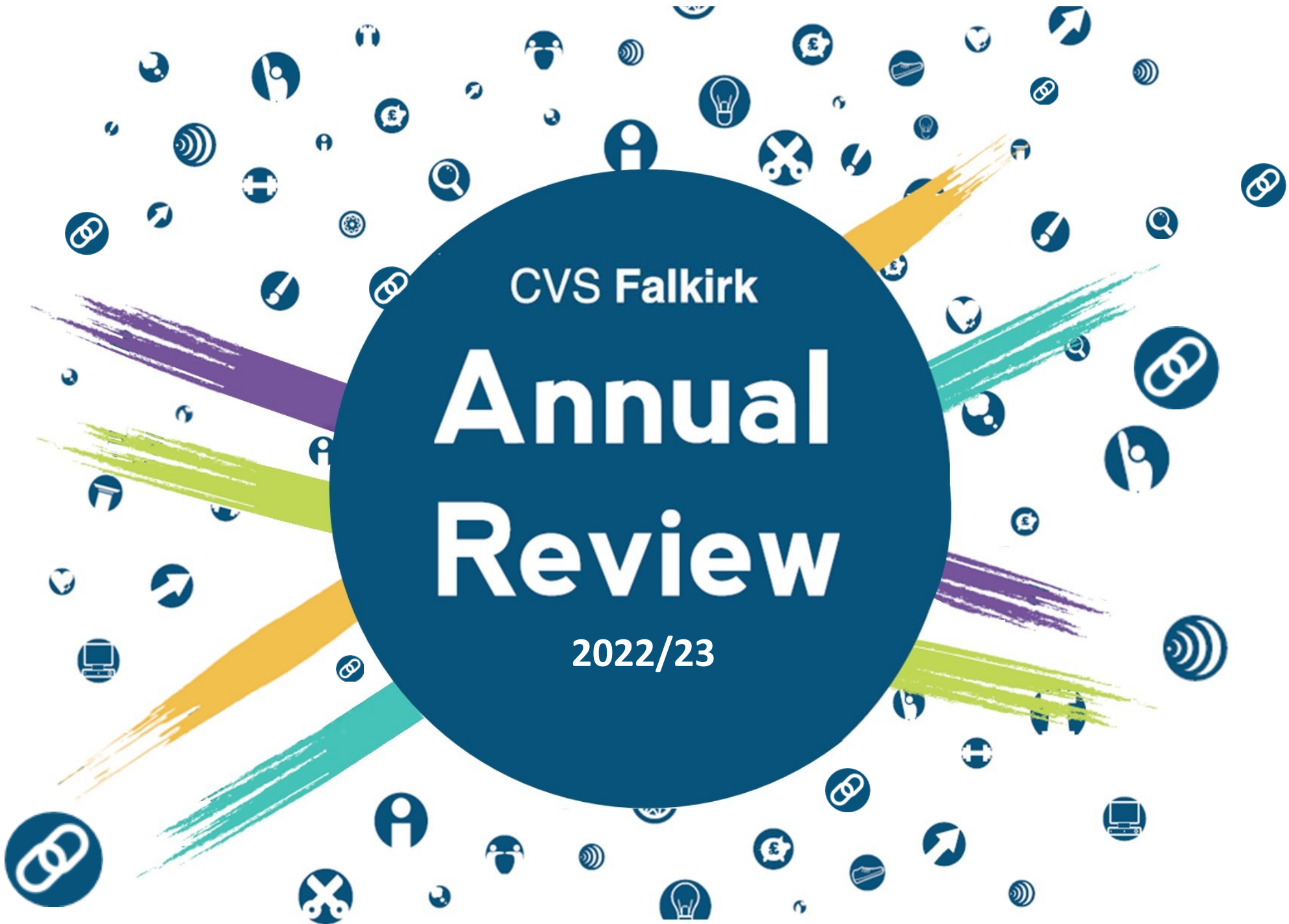


CVS Falkirk

Annual Review

2022/23



About CVS Falkirk & District

The TSI Scotland Network

As part of the Third Sector Interface Network, we provide a strategic role in third sector involvement in community planning, health and social care integration, while responding to local sector needs.



The network is committed to supporting the sector with a particular focus on:

Building Capacity: Supporting a strong and vibrant third sector that delivers outcomes for Falkirk & District.

Source of Knowledge: Being a source of third sector and public policy information.

Connecting Partners: Creating opportunities to network with the third sector for collaboration and creating connections between the planning of public services and the third sector.

Voice of the Sector: Developing a collective and strong, local third sector voice.

Your Local Third Sector Interface

CVS Falkirk & District is the Third Sector Interface for the area, where our role is to ensure the strength and resilience of our vibrant local third sector, which includes all charities, volunteers, social enterprises, voluntary and community groups working throughout the communities of Falkirk District.

We published our **Strategic Plan 2022 – 2024**, a living document building on our expertise, local knowledge and understanding of the third sector. Our strategy acknowledges that external factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic and cost of living crisis are challenging, but that believing in collaboration, positive leadership and a collective determination will support and guide the sector.

Our Vision: *We want to see resilient and empowered communities creating a strong, fair, and more equitable Falkirk, with a thriving third sector at its heart.*

We will do this through our **Strategic Commitment** supporting the development of community empowerment, driven by local communities working alongside public services to improve the lives of people living in the Falkirk and District area.



Outcomes

This year, we have focused on achieving the following outcomes:

- ★ Enabled more opportunities for more people to participate in their communities.
- ★ Third sector organisations increased their skills and resilience.
- ★ More third sector organisations participated in third sector forums and networks.
- ★ More visibility of the third sector within the CPP and HSC partnership.
- ★ Falkirk's third sector has more opportunity to collaborate regionally.

Introduction: Victoria McRae, CEO

It is my pleasure to introduce this year's annual report: an overview of the events held, the services delivered, the range of supportive and engaging activities provided, and our key achievements supporting the third sector, strategic partners and volunteers throughout the Falkirk and District area.

It has been a challenging year for the third sector as a whole: post pandemic and the cost of living crisis has made life harder for many in our communities, whilst also challenging for many third sector groups and organisations to provide essential support and activities.

As an organisation, we have completed a in depth programme of change, moving to smaller offices, reducing expenditure and investing in our digital presence: specifically, to allocate as much of our funding as possible into staff resource so that we can support the sector and partners to our very best. We published a new 2 year Strategic Plan, aligning our operational workplan to ensure that we delivered our activities and achieved our projected short term and longer term outcomes.

This report highlights our unique role as a TSI and the value our organisation brings to the local context. We are incredibly proud to support third sector organisations tackling key local issues such as poor mental health, poverty and inequality, and employability and of our work to help the sector increase their sustainability and effectiveness. In partnership with our colleagues at SVE and CTSI, we hosted a 2 day hybrid Forth Valley Third Sector Conference, with the Minister for Wellbeing and Social Care, Kevin Stewart MSP, noting his appreciation for the sector while highlighting the new Scottish Government Mental Health Strategy. Bringing this strategy into local communities we administered the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund, with an investment of more than £430,000 to funding local community-based activities.

We are committed to our role of third sector supporter and enabler, catalyst for local action and collaboration, conduit for information and engagement, partnership builder, advocate and representative. We know from the impact we have had this year that these are the elements of our work that make the most difference for the third sector in our local area and best encourage and support links between the sector and strategic partners and stakeholders, for the benefit of Falkirk District's communities.

We are very grateful to our key funders and partners for their ongoing commitment to us and to our third sector colleagues who engage with us through our third sector forums and networks, and to the amazing volunteers who show real commitment and resilience in all that they do.



With warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Victoria McRae".

Victoria McRae

Chief Executive Officer of
CVS Falkirk & District

Reflections: Looking Back at 2021/22

As we all focused on a post pandemic recovery and a shared commitment to return to our work activities, along with a more in-person approach to work, the team at CVS Falkirk & District concentrated on providing the information, guidance and resources that would support our local third sector colleagues in their roles.

Our 2022 AGM was held in person, where we were delighted to reconnect with so many of our members and supporters.

We shared some of our achievements and activities, including our 2 day Forth Valley Third Sector Conference (online) with our colleagues from SVE and CTSI, and welcomed the **Deputy First Minister, John Swinney MSP**, who acknowledged the strength, flexibility, resilience and commitment of the local third sector in their response to the pandemic since 2020.

**Celebrating
Volunteering
2022**

**Forth Valley
Social Enterprise
Directory**

**Falkirk Funders
Fayre 2022**

**Forth Valley
Third Sector
Conference 2022**

**Funding for
Emergency Food
Provision and
COVID-19
response**

As organisations strived to increase stability and sustainability within their organisations, we developed a range of resources, delivered (fully funded) training and provided one to one support from capacity building, to volunteer management, to socially enterprising activity as well as legislative change encouraging third sector organisations to contribute to the consultation processes.

Enabling Opportunities for People to Participate in Their Communities

What Difference Did We Make?

- **119 volunteer opportunities** created
- **35 organisations** more equipped to engage and manage volunteers

Promoting Volunteering

Post-pandemic, volunteer-involving groups and organisations began to re-engage with volunteers and their clients and communities. However, the challenges surrounding health and wellbeing, COVID-19 restrictions and new ways of working, funding and the cost of living crisis has meant that many groups struggled to secure their pre-pandemic levels of volunteering.

We supported the sector by helping them to create interesting roles, promoting these widely through our communications channels – including both our local and national websites, social media, regular volunteer hotlists, direct mailings – and targeted promotion to groups and individuals with relevant skills and interests.

Supporting Volunteer Management

We have provided a responsive and tailored programme of support to 35 organisations, helping them build resource and capacity to deliver a meaningful and robust volunteer programme throughout Falkirk District. With access to training and resources, we have helped groups with safeguarding, legislative requirements, inclusive placements, policies and protocols, and funding for volunteer expenses. Sometimes we are called upon to provide intensive crisis management support, where our specialist knowledge and many years of experience have enabled the provision of immediate help and assistance .

We encourage organisations to join our **Connecting Volunteering Network** to share good practice and expertise, while discussing current topics in a supportive arena, which may include (for example) engaging refugees and asylum seekers as volunteers.



Personal Experience

“Being able to tap into CVS Falkirk’s help to recruit and support volunteers is extremely beneficial to the Jupiter Growing Together project in Grangemouth.

The support is more than just highlighting our project on their website, they make an in person effort to connect the right people to the right projects through events and referrals that my project has benefitted from by new volunteers coming along. Two of my volunteers are especially proud to have their volunteer stories shared on the Volunteer Falkirk website.

CVS Falkirk as always help us empower and celebrate our amazing volunteers.”

- Senior Project Officer, The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) Scotland

(Left: one of TCV Scotland’s young volunteers demonstrating their new woodworking skills.)

Celebrating Volunteering

Every year, we make the most of Volunteers' Week to take the opportunity to celebrate and recognise the contribution volunteers and volunteer programmes make to people and our communities in Falkirk District.

Volunteers' Week 2022

To celebrate the return to in-person events, at the start of Volunteers' Week 2022 we hosted our first ever Picnic in the Park! event at Callendar Park. The Picnic! was a chance for us to celebrate all volunteers across Falkirk, and show them just how much they are appreciated, while giving them the chance to meet up outdoors on a lovely June day in one of our fantastic local greenspaces.

Being able to have an in-person event after COVID-19 and lockdown restrictions was so important to us, as we know how valuable it is for our communities to come together and connect face to face.

We also had some fantastic helpers at our Picnic! from one of the local nurseries, and 7 additional certificates were distributed for our litter pick volunteers!

(Far top right: 2022 Falkirk District Volunteer Award winners and commendations.)

Falkirk District Volunteer Awards 2022

We invited local people, organisations and groups to nominate the volunteers they think deserve recognition for their exceptional efforts. The winner for each category was chosen by an independent panel and received a surprise gift to enjoy, donated by generous local businesses.

2022 Volunteer Award winners:

- Volunteer of the Year: **Benjamin Oliver**, The Action Group and Muiravonside Country Park
- Young Volunteer of the Year: **Hayden McGuckin**, TCV Scotland
- Volunteer-Involving Organisation of the Year: **Forth Valley Flyers**
- Community Volunteer of the Year: **Sylvia Kay**, Hallglen Community Pantry and Ettrick Dochart Community Hall
- Innovative Volunteer of the Year: **Tom Williamson**, Tom's Hidden Garden

2022 Commendations:

- Volunteer of the Year: **Allan Hannah**, Salvation Army New Future Training and Employability Centre
- Young Volunteer of the Year: **Anya Wortley**, Bailliefields Community Hub SCIO
- Volunteer-Involving Organisation of the Year: **Scottish Baby Box Appeal for Ukraine**, Falkirk and Larbert team
- Community Volunteer of the Year: **Carole Johnstone**, Save a Staffie Scotland



What Difference Did We Make?

- **Volunteers Week**
 - ⇒ Volunteer Awards: 9 awards
 - ⇒ Volunteer Certificates: 232
 - ⇒ Picnic in the Park: 70 attendees
- **Saltire Awards**
 - ⇒ 255 new registrations
 - ⇒ 278 awards

Enabling Opportunities for People to Participate in Their Communities

Welcome to Falkirk

Third Sector Support

We supported the multi-agency and collaborative approach, including both third sector and public sector colleagues, to coordinate and deliver meaningful and appropriate support to current asylum seekers, as well as individuals and families arriving in Falkirk from Ukraine.



We liaised with and learned from our third sector partners across Scotland, and sought resources and funding for digital technology from sources such as Connecting Scotland, to increase digital inclusion and reduce social isolation.

In addition, we invited the Scottish Refugee Council to deliver an “Involving Refugee Volunteers” training course, with **16 attendees from 13 organisations**. This acted as a follow-up to the ongoing coordination of support for those mentioned above, the asylum seekers currently residing in Falkirk District, and the families and individuals arriving from Ukraine.

Welcome to Falkirk Event

In July 2022, we organised and hosted a **Welcome to Falkirk** event for anyone new to the Falkirk District area. The event provided networking opportunities for local groups and organisations across different sectors to learn more about each other’s services, while encouraging local people and volunteers to help and support the event.

Eleven organisations and agencies participated in Welcome to Falkirk, providing fun activities for children and adults, and sharing pathways of support and opportunities for people to get involved in their communities, whether they were new to the area, or had grown up locally.

Stallholders included Friends of Falkirk Settlers (FOSS), Forth Valley Migrant Support Network, Falkirk Library, Central Wellbeing SCIO, TCV Scotland, Falkirk Sewing Studio CIC, and Triage Central.



Personal Experience

“The event provided us with opportunity to chat with other groups, and it was great to see some of our local councillors in attendance, particularly as I’m new on the project. It was valuable to reach and make new contacts.”

- stallholder at the Welcome to Falkirk event

(Above and left: attendees at the Welcome to Falkirk event.
Far left: flags created by children attending the event, at the FOSS table.)

Limerigg and Slamannan

With investment from Foundation Scotland, and using a place-based approach, we have been working within the rural communities of Limerigg and Slamannan to encourage community participation and volunteering while enabling community activism, in order to help the communities realise their ambitions to create opportunity and community infrastructure in their villages.

Our dedicated Community Development Officer has set up a weekly open door drop-in session within Slamannan, being available to discuss support mechanisms for community activity and the potential for new ideas and activities.

Our Development Officer has supported both the Slamannan Action Group and Limerigg Action Group to come together and collaborate on a joint project for connecting pathways. This has progressed with the acceptance of an Expression of Interest moving forward to first stage application.

(Right: organisers and volunteers at the launch of Martha's Pantry.)

The Limerigg Play Park plans have been progressed further securing land ownership, development funding and ongoing maintenance the park going forward.

Having met with local groups and community leaders from both areas, it was established that there was a need for the community to have access to some type of additional and affordable food provision. Community members then came together to formalise their aspirations through the creation of a group constitution.

From there, a local venue and funding was secured, training for volunteers completed and a date set for the launch of Martha's Pantry, offering a local and dignified food pantry service to both villages.



What Difference Did We Make?

- Weekly drop in sessions
- Dedicated community engagement support
- Dedicated organisational development support
- 6 new groups
- 3 capital projects
- £55,000 investment

Personal Experience

"[CVS Falkirk] has been extremely helpful - to me personally, and to members, in our efforts to open a dignified food service to support families in the villages of Slamannan and Limerigg who are struggling financially. Having someone available to guide us and to signpost us to a variety of agencies that would help get this project off the ground, has been extremely valuable."

- Martha's Pantry organisers

Third Sector Organisations Increase Their Skills and Resilience

Capacity Building Support

We provide a range of capacity building support to the third sector to ensure it is well governed, strong and sustainable. This helps ensure that it may continue to support the communities it serves, and confidently navigate any changes and challenges it faces.

We tailor our support to the needs and timelines of the organisations we engage with. Our capacity building support begins at the start of the journey for a small group of people coming together to address a current community issue through to national organisations keen to provide services and activities within the Falkirk and District area.

Through delivering one to one support we have tailored our help to meet the needs of each group or organisation and continued our engagement with them, working at their pace, until they achieve their desired outcomes.

We have facilitated and delivered a range of learning sessions on relevant topics designed to give third sector colleagues opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge, and to increase their impact and sustainability. This included: Recruitment and Selection of Senior

Roles, Managing Conflicts of Interest, Developing an Organisational Strategy, Lasting Leadership Training, and more.

Lasting Leadership Training

By securing funding from Scottish Government's Community-Based Adult Learning Fund, we were able to provide a bespoke 2 day **Lasting Leadership training**, focusing on sustainable leadership, lateral leadership, supporting leadership equality and diversity within organisations.

Three cohorts of **34 participants** completed the course, with all participants noting that a supportive space was a valuable element of the experience and that their understanding of leadership and personal resilience had improved greatly.

Community Leadership Network

Following on from the successful Lasting Leadership training, we have established a new **Community Leadership Network**.

The network creates space for community leaders to champion the sector by sharing their learning and experiences, skills and knowledge while striving to support local decision-making.

Personal Experience

"I really enjoyed it. It has helped me to see ways in which our organisation can be better and do things differently."

"The course has exceeded my expectations and really given me a lot to consider."

"Keen to start putting [the lessons] into practice."

- Lasting Leadership Training participants

What Difference Did We Make?

- Capacity building support to **178 groups**
- Intensive support to **4 organisations**
- New **Funding Officers Network** established
- 6 different training offers

"This is an amazing gathering of different groups, with different ways of bringing things to the table."

- Community Leadership Network member

Getting on Board: Trustees Training

To coincide with Trustees' Week, we hosted 3 bespoke training sessions specifically for trustees and senior managers of third sector organisations, focusing on Recruitment and Selection of Senior Roles, Developing an Organisational Strategy and Managing Conflicts of Interest.

Personal Experience

“Our group is fairly informal and led by people who know what its like to live with fibromyalgia. Keeping the group informal and relaxed works for the members, but being unconstituted does exclude us from a lot of funds that are available to the third sector. CVS Falkirk helped us to access the funding and ensured we had an agreement in place that worked for our group’s situation. The funds have allowed us to provide an interesting and varied programme of group activities for our members and to buy items to promote the group, as we know just how much it can benefit others who live with this health condition.”

- More Than Fibro Falkirk



(Above: More Than Fibro Falkirk’s crochet workshop.)

Finding Funding for Falkirk

We have been developing our **“Finding Funding for Falkirk”** initiative throughout the year to help the sector secure investment for its activities, and to mitigate the impacts of the complex and challenging fiscal and funding landscape.

We increased our range of digital funding resources available on our website, promoted new funding streams through regular e-bulletins, provided bespoke funding searches, continued to provide free access to the GrantsOnline search portal for local groups, completed an extensive mapping exercise of the investment opportunities available to the Falkirk District area, created a new **Funding Officers Network** to promote sharing learning, best practice and peer support, and more. All of these activities have helped us to achieve our aim of increasing the confidence and capacity of local groups to identify, apply for, and secure funding.

We continued our role as both a grant giver, and as an enabler for bringing investment opportunities to the third sector across Falkirk District. Working with colleagues at Falkirk Council, The National Lottery and Foundation Scotland, we have encouraged and supported new funding opportunities to be developed, and helped groups to access the funds available to them.

As a grant funder, we have administered:

- Falkirk Children and Young People’s Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund (“the Bairns Fund”) (£72,000)
- Falkirk Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund (£432,000)

Falkirk Funders Fayre 2023

Our **Funders Fayre** returned in-person, with 20 local and national funders engaging with more than 200 delegates. Feedback has been positive, with funders confident in awarding grants to Falkirk District-based organisations.

Personal Experience

“We are absolutely delighted and grateful to have received this funding so that we can offer sessions to those suffering with this new illness who feel alone, isolated and have nowhere to turn. The support from CVS Falkirk is invaluable to our group.”

- Long COVID Cuppa (C19 Café)

CVS Falkirk as a Grant Giver

With funding remaining the priority for third sector organisations, we launched “**Finding Funding for Falkirk**”, as mentioned earlier – a packed initiative of activities ranging from:

- increased communications through our websites and communication channels
- bespoke Funding Focus bulletins
- funding search portal via Grantsonline
- Falkirk Funders Fayre
- Funding Officers Network
- Grant Funding Portal
- grant giver and funding distributor

Grant Funding Portal

Our **Grant Funding Portal (GFP)** was launched in September 2022, in advance of Round 2 of the Falkirk Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing (CMHWB) Fund.

With considerable investment from ourselves, and support from our third sector partner FEL Scotland, plus Scottish Government’s Digital Boost Development Grant, we were able to develop this brand new tool, which was designed to make accessing our grant funds quicker, easier and more streamlined.

The GFP is a totally bespoke digital solution developed with the benefit of our extensive experience of delivering funding support and the needs of Falkirk’s third sector in mind.



The GFP includes the following features:

- a dedicated web portal with detailed information on grants managed by CVS Falkirk & District
- a fully secure online application facility
- a single view dashboard, showing pending and submitted applications across multiple grant programmes
- an update on application statuses, including feedback and decisions through email and SMS notification
- secure storage of application and supporting documentation

What Difference Did We Make?

- **127 users registered** on the GFP before the end of March 2023
- **42 successful applications** to the Falkirk CMHWB Fund
- a smooth and accessible application process

Personal Experience

“I found the system to be one of the best that I have used whilst applying for funding. It was clear, concise, and well laid out with instructions to help as you went through it.”

One of the best features for me was the functionality to save and return to the application when you needed to. So many other application forms have to be completed in one sitting, which is not ideal.

It can be somewhat daunting completing application forms online, but the GFP takes away a lot of those fears with its layout. If there is ever any doubt as to how to complete the form then the extremely helpful CVS Falkirk team are there to provide a level of support and assistance that many other funders do not offer.

A great system to use and one that I would definitely recommend.”

- Falkirk Foundation

More Third Sector Organisations Participate in the Third Sector Forums and Networks

Relaunch of the Third Sector Forums and Networks

Before re-establishing the Forums and Networks post-pandemic, we reviewed the membership, structure and focus of each, and how we could align these Forums and Networks to local policy and strategy (these included the Falkirk Plan and the local Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) Strategy), as well as overarching national focus on employability, health and wellbeing, addressing inequality and poverty.

Our new and re-established Forums and Networks are:

- Community Leadership Network
- Connecting Volunteering Network
- Falkirk's Third Sector Employability Forum
- Forth Valley Social Enterprise Network
- Funding Officers Network
- Health and Wellbeing Forum
- Safe and Empowered Communities Forum
- Voluntary Sector Childrens Services Forum

Forums and Networks meet online, supporting third sector colleagues by accommodating hybrid working and pressures on re-engaging services. This space has encouraged networking, collaboration and peer support.

It is important to us to have a wide range of third sector colleagues as members, who have the technical and specialist experience and knowledge to contribute to the Forums and Networks. They help us develop a strong third sector voice that can contribute to and influence local policy and decision-making.

Across the Forums and Networks, members have discussed third sector contributions to the Falkirk Plan, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Dignity in Food Provision, Cost of Living Crisis, Gender-Based Violence, "Getting Heard: a lived experience group discussion".

What Difference Did We Make?

- review and redesign of Third Sector Forums and Networks completed
- appointment of Chairs to:
 - ⇒ Voluntary Sector Childrens Services Forum (VSCSF)
 - ⇒ Falkirk's Third Sector Employability Forum
- appointment of 2 IJB Third Sector Representatives

Third Sector Representation

We conducted a thorough recruitment campaign for Integration Joint Board (IJB) third sector representation, which was completed with the appointment of an experienced and knowledgeable Third Sector Representative, and Substitute Third Sector Representative.

Our CEO attends the IJB as a representative of CVS Falkirk, as a member of the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) in Falkirk District.

Bringing a third sector voice to the IJB has proven very beneficial already, with the third sector collaborating on community communications, as well as providing insight into how they can contribute and support key strategies and initiatives. In addition, the insight into the work of the IJB has influenced and developed our organisation's understanding of adult health and social care.



There is More Visibility of Third Sector within CPP and the Falkirk HSCP

Falkirk's Response to COVID-19

COVID-19 Third Sector Response Forum

This forum was established in March 2020 as the first restrictions were put in place, with more than **100 representatives from 76 third sector organisations** engaging regularly.

They met regularly throughout the pandemic to discuss current issues and seek solutions through peer support, sharing of resources, and engagement with statutory partners.

COVID-19 Coordination Group

This multi-agency, cross-sector group also met continually through the pandemic, just like the forum above, seeking solutions to address disadvantage and impact throughout the area.

These 2 groups were the driving force in this area, working both independently and together to create infrastructure that delivered initiatives, activities and support to those who needed it most, and encourage collaboration throughout the sectors.

Learning Event (August 2022)

We held an event with both groups mentioned, to acknowledge their commitment and achievements, while reflecting on their work and taking learning to influence future work.

This event focused on what had been achieved and the legacy that has been established in that unanimous commitment to continue to collaborate and work together. During the event, we each reflected on our experiences, the challenges we had overcome through effective partnership working and incredible commitment and creativity, and the learning that could be used going forward.

What Difference Did We Make?

- 20 cross-sector representatives and key partners
- 2 presentations from Third Sector Forum and Coordination Group Chairs
- 4 tabletop discussions covering reflections and shared learning
- key learnings featured below

(Below: graphic recording artwork from the Learning Event, depicted by The Floating Designer, Sarah Ahmad.)



GRAPHIC RECORDING DONE BY: THE FLOATING DESIGNER SARAH AHMAD

Falkirk Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund

Managing the CMHWP Fund has offered us a great opportunity to work with new community groups, delivering community-led activities and initiatives.

Given the level of investment (around £432,000) and **42 successful awards**, the visibility of both our organisation and third sector has grown significantly. As a result, we have contributed to the design of HSCP funding streams, increasing the number of third sector applications and awards they received. Further updates will be available after in-depth evaluation of the Fund.

Participation and Engagement

A large part of our work over the last year has involved supporting and facilitating participation and engagement with partners from health, plus local and national government, which has increased the voice of the third sector.

We are very active in sharing information via our channels on the meaningful and supportive ways the third sector can support people and families, the challenges faced every day (such as Infant Food Insecurity) and opportunities to influence and contribute to local and national policy (Support to Asylum Seekers and Refugees).



Community Planning Partnership (CPP)

We are a CPP member, and an active member of relevant thematic and strategic meetings, where we advocate for the third sector and act as a conduit for important information to be shared with partners, and with the local third sector through our Forums and Networks. These meetings include:

- Community Wealth Building Partnership
- Empowering Communities Working Group
- Working with Communities
- Outcomes Coordination Group
- Locality, Place and Planning Group
- Falkirk Local Employability Partnership
- Adult Support and Protection Committee
- Mental Health Planning Group
- Integration Joint Board (IJB)

Community Wealth Building Partnership

CVS Falkirk co-Chairs the Community Wealth Building (CWB) Partnership and the Empowering Communities Working Group, leading on and adding value to these CPP activities with our knowledge of the third sector, the communities of Falkirk and District and the local landscape. Crucially, we encourage and facilitate third sector participation in these areas, where the support of a wide, cross-sector range of groups and organisations are key to achieving the intended aims and outcomes.

The CWB Partnership leads on the ongoing development of the Falkirk approach to embedding the principles of CWB, with the inclusion of a sixth strand focusing on health inequalities to meet local need. The Partnership members focus on working together to retain wealth in Falkirk District's communities to boost the local economy, reduce the impact of inequality including the cost of living crisis, and create a fairer and more equitable place to live for all Falkirk citizens.

The Empowering Communities Working Group leads on the implementation of Theme 1 of the Falkirk Plan: Working in Partnership with Communities. This theme sets out how Falkirk CPP can improve how it works with communities and supports them to take up opportunities available to them, such as grant funding, community ownership, and collective decision-making processes.

Falkirk's Third Sector Has More Opportunity to Collaborate Regionally

Forth Valley Third Sector Conference

In partnership with our TSI colleagues from SVE and CTSI, we hosted a 2 day, hybrid Forth Valley Third Sector Conference, with an online day focusing on organisational development topics (including measuring social impact, the life cycle of an employee and being an effective employer, and attracting funding and investment).

For our second, in-person Conference day we welcomed the **Minister for Wellbeing and Social Care, Kevin Stewart MSP**, as our keynote speaker. Mr Stewart took the opportunity to highlight Scottish Government's new Mental Health Strategy, the importance of learning from lived experience, and funds available to support community-based activities that help to improve mental health and wellbeing (such as the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund and the new Social Isolation and Loneliness Fund).

Delegates then enjoyed a range of in-person workshops with a focus on wellbeing for people and planet including Volunteering for All, Wellbeing Economy, and taking a Human Rights and Equalities First approach.

(Right: Kevin Stewart, MSP during his keynote.)

Our evaluation of the conference demonstrated its value for delegates, with 94% reporting that the workshops were relevant, interesting and thought-provoking, and 95% of delegates confirming that the event met their needs.

With a growing awareness and concern about tackling the climate emergency and working towards net zero from the third sector, local communities, and strategic partners, our team at CVS Falkirk & District invited FEL Scotland to deliver an engaging learning session on Climate Action and Activism for the Third Sector, which has led to the development of an inclusive, regional approach to support and encouraged community and third sector responses to climate change.



Forth Valley Social Enterprise Network

Providing a consistent approach to supporting local social entrepreneurs and social enterprises, CVS Falkirk, CTSI and SVE facilitate the Forth Valley Social Enterprise Network (FVSEN), bringing together expertise, diversity and peer support.

FVSEN acts as a conduit for:

- peer support, networking and information sharing
- potential collective trading engagement with policy makers, funders and other strategic partners
- jointly promoting social enterprises across the Forth Valley
- developing the social economy in the Forth Valley

The Network has welcomed presentations from The Supplier Development Programme, Social Enterprise Accountancy Scotland, Community Ownership Support Scotland, Social Enterprise Academy, Social Enterprise Scotland.

This year, FVSEN launched their **Forth Valley Social Enterprise Directory**, a designated portal promoting and providing information on trading social enterprises throughout the Forth Valley.

Financial Summary

Core funding for 2022/23 remained at the same level to that of 2021/2022. Without any significant uplift in funding, it is becoming more challenging for the organisation to deliver core activities, manage expenditure and continue as an advocate of the real Living Wage. We have reviewed the Company's finances thoroughly, reducing expenditure and relocating to smaller premises to strengthen the Company's position.

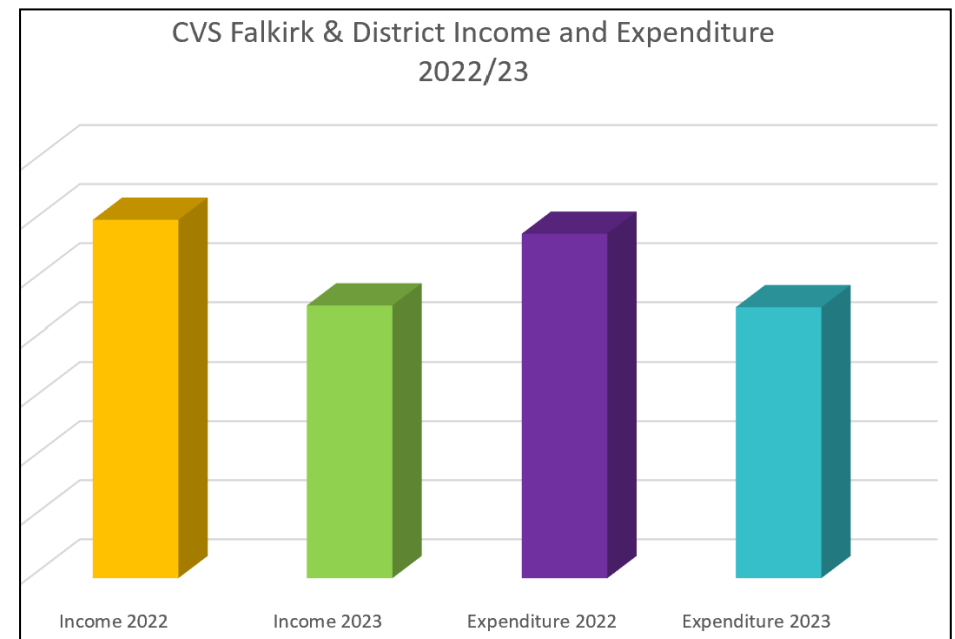
The core staffing resource remained unchanged, and their dedication and strength has been imperative in developing and representing the third sector. With the demands on our services continuing to increase, the Board of Directors have agreed to release funds from reserves for staffing resources in the forthcoming financial year in order to meet the diverse range of support required to support local organisations through an ever-changing landscape.

We have further developed our role as a Grant Giver utilising our new Grant Funding Portal (GFP), delivering a range of funding grants, including a second round of the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund and a bespoke, local Falkirk Children and Young People Mental Health Fund. Total grants awarded this year were £562,526, which is the main contributing factor as to why our income and expenditure fluctuated significantly between the years.

New project funding was secured from Foundation Scotland to support community development projects in Limerigg and Slamannan. Based on the success of the project, funding has been secured to continue the project into 2023/24.

Through prudent monitoring of expenditure and liabilities and the receipt of management income from projects and grant administration, the year ended with an overall surplus of £5,974. The balance on general funds at the end of March 2023 was £276,023.

Our Audited Accounts and Directors Report for the financial year 2022/23 are available on request, and to download from our website: www.cvsfalkirk.org.uk/about-us



Looking Toward 2024 and 2025

In 2023/2024 we will further develop our **Third Sector Forums and Networks** and our own membership – both mechanisms that allow the diverse groups and organisations that make up our local third sector to have a strong, collective voice. All groups and organisations who engage with us will be encouraged to become a member of CVS Falkirk & District, and of a Forum or Network relevant to their work.

The results of Falkirk Council's Strategic Property Review, confirming that 133 community facilities across Falkirk District will be closed unless alternative ownership or delivery models can be implemented, is of great concern to local communities and has directly influenced the direction of our new **Empowering Communities Programme**. The programme will build the capacity of groups so they can explore their aspirations of Community Asset Transfer and other community ownership options and ensure their sustainability and viability for the future.

Building on the success of our digital platform "Grant Funding Portal", we have sought investment to create a new digital platform (**ORCA: Organisational Resilience and Capacity Audit**), an organisational diagnostic audit that will help us to develop a bespoke programme of organisational development support.

As the cost of living crisis continues and looming public sector funding cuts threaten the existence of many third sector services and activities, our "**Finding Funding for Falkirk**" initiative will continue and we will prioritise seeking new ways to administer and broker funding opportunities that will benefit the local third sector, and the communities it serves.

On Wednesday 6th December 2023, CVS Falkirk & District turns 40! We are looking forward to sharing such a big milestone with you all, and the plans for our birthday year.



Thank You!

Our Funders

During 2022/23, we received funding from Scottish Government, Falkirk Council, Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP), Foundation Scotland and FEL Scotland. We would like to thank our funders and strategic partners for their continued support. Our thanks to Dickson Middleton for undertaking our annual audit of our accounts.

Our Third Sector and Members

We would like to extend our thanks to Falkirk District's third sector, and our members, for their incredible support during the last year. We are proud to represent such a vibrant and diverse sector, and will continue to work with you for the benefit of our local communities.

Our Board and Staff

A special thank you to our team: employees, directors and volunteers, whose enthusiasm and commitment allows us to develop, support and be successful in achieving so much throughout the year. A special thanks and recognition for their contribution to our former colleagues: Eve Winters, Kerry Kennedy, and our volunteer Vicki Stokes. A special note of thanks to Jade Harley, who completed her internship with us while contributing to our Voice of the Sector workstreams.

The Board would especially like to thank Brian Humphries, Bill Mitchell and Natasha Reynolds, who recently resigned from the Board.

We wish everyone all the very best for the future.

Staff Team (as of March 2023)

Erin Sweeney: Development Officer – Volunteering (Trainee)
Gail McLinton: Community Development Officer – Limerigg and Slamannan
Laura Jamieson: Communications Officer
Lynsey Hansford: Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Nicola Cox: Business Manager
Pam Dixon: Finance Officer
Tariq Mahmood: Team Leader – Organisational Development
Victoria McRae: Chief Executive Officer



Our Board (as of March 2023)

Clara Walker
Derek Allison
Kayleigh Hirst
Margaret Pow
Neil Bradbrook (Chairperson)
Tim Wild
Wendy Turner

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