



1st Step Development Ventures Trustees' Annual Report

November 2024-October 2025



1st Step Development Ventures Charity Contact Information



Scottish Charity Number - SCO 48748

Address Avonmill House, 12 Avonmill Road, Linlithgow, West Lothian EH49 7QX

Telephone number 07869373900

Email Address firststepdevelopment@gmail.com

Facebook 1stStepcafeandbikes

Website <https://firststeprecovery.co.uk/>

Charity Trustees

Andrew Mackie -	Chair
Malcolm Hughes -	Secretary
Graeme Williamson -	Treasurer
Laura Drummond	
Kirsty Dove	
Maya Andrews	

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To all our volunteers — especially those on their recovery journey — thank you. Your courage, commitment, and contribution shape everything we do. To our staff, trustees, partners, and funders: thank you for believing in our mission and helping us bring it to life.

Together, we are proving that recovery, community, and purpose go hand in hand. And we look forward to continuing this journey with you.

CONTENTS

- 1. Our Achievements**
 - 1.1 1st Step Bikes***
 - 1.2 1st Step Community Café & Garden***
 - 1.3 Falkirk and Linlithgow Food Revolution Hubs***
- 2. Objectives**
- 3. Building The Evidence**
- 4. Structures, Governance and Management**
- 5. Trustee Recruitment and Appointment**
- 6. Financial Review**
- 7. Reserves Policy**
- 8. Looking Forward to Next Year**

1. Our Achievements: *recovery through positive action in our communities.*



Volunteers Collect Donations from Tesco Supermarket.

At the heart of our work is a clear and powerful mission: to promote recovery from addiction through developing projects that benefit the wider community and importantly create new volunteering opportunities for people facing barriers to volunteering.

Every project we run is designed to offer real opportunities for people in recovery to build confidence, reconnect with community, gain skills, and most importantly, to find renewed purpose and hope.

We are proud to say that during this year we have continued to thrive as an organisation, team of volunteers and staff and the wider community has benefited through access to free or affordable good quality food or a donated bike or free bike repairs.

Our volunteering programmes have gone from strength to strength. People in recovery have found a supportive, structured environment where they are valued, trusted, and empowered. Many have gone on to further training, employment, or other positive life changes — evidence of the long-term impact that purposeful volunteering can have.

We've created roles that are often stepping-stones to a new life. And the sense of community and peer support that grows from this shared experience is one of the most powerful aspects of our model.

We are now 10 years down this road, and our volunteers (including Trustees) and staff have a lot to be proud of, including the following highlights of 2024/25:

- We have worked with over 100 volunteers and contributed over 10000 volunteer hours to benefit the wider communities of West Lothian and Falkirk.
- We have saved over xxxx kilos of food that would have been wasted but was instead turned into meals for people across West Lothian and Falkirk.
- We continued to refurbish our new larger unit at the Howgate shopping centre. This space has allowed us to expand our reach, offer more volunteer placements, and raise awareness of both our environmental mission and our recovery focus within the wider community.
- A new hub – Linlithgow Food Revolution – opened at Cross House, Linlithgow.
- Between our 2 community food revolutions hubs we have supported over 4000 people each month. We have saved over 62000 kilos of food that would have been wasted but was instead turned into meals for people across West Lothian and Falkirk.
- We have worked on more than 1200 bikes and donated/fixed for free over 250 bikes to people who would not have been able to afford bikes or repairs.
- This year, we've seen many individuals take huge steps forward in their recovery journey through meaningful involvement in our work. Whether in the 1st Step bike workshop, community food hubs, café, gardens, or community events, our volunteers are the beating heart of everything we do — and their stories inspire us every day.

1.1 1st Step Bikes



Volunteer Achieves Bronze Velotech Accreditation.

In 2023 we moved to a new larger unit at the Howgate shopping centre in Falkirk and are now open 5 days a week, and also now 2 Saturdays a month.

The shop has enabled us to expand our bike refurbishment training workshops to many more people and enables us to be accessible/open at the weekend. This has meant that we have been able to successfully apply for Cycling UK grants to cover material costs for free bike repairs or replacements helping people that would otherwise struggle to afford a bike.

In April 2025 we started to work with New Scots, people establishing a life in Falkirk, many of whom were asylum seekers or refugees. 1st Step Bikes was able to adapt our training courses and translate the materials into a range of languages enabling New Scots to be able to learn the basic skills of bike maintenance and repairs and receive a refurbished bike and safety accessories.

The Bikes team have continued to grow and build their skills, and gained new Velotech accredited qualifications. This means that 1st Step Bikes has enabled hundreds of people to be able to cycle for pleasure, exercise, and work or to be able to see family members. These activities generate better physical and mental wellbeing.

We have continued to offer outreach bike training courses, building cycle-tech skills in the wider community across West Lothian targeting people affected by addiction/poor mental health. This has included Bridgend Village, Polbeth, and Dollar Park in Falkirk.

1.2 1st Step Community Café & Garden



1st Step Café Christmas Celebrations.

At 1st Step Community Café we believe everyone deserves a warm welcome, good food and a sense of belonging. Our café is a friendly community space where people can connect, share skills and support one another.

Some people come because they want to support our work, but others come because they feel lonely and/or are struggling financially. They find friendships and companionship as well as free, tasty food!

Throughout the year, we hosted seasonal events that bring the community together, from summer kids events to festive celebrations including Christmas

lunches and family Halloween parties. For some people this is the only hot meal they have that day and for families it can mean a chance to take part in social occasions without the fear of stigma or being excluded by money worries.

Volunteering is central to the café, and the amazing café team have worked wonders with a modest budget, supplemented by excess donated food from local businesses and our own produce from the garden, to produce some lovely food.

We offer volunteer opportunities that really do help build confidence, experience and friendships, while providing free food and refreshments to anyone and everyone.

Alongside the café, our community garden creates a peaceful shared space where people can grow fresh produce, learn new skills and enjoy the benefits of nature individually and together.

“For many the café is their first introduction to the recovery community. This can be a stepping-stone even before mutual aid meetings and a chance to see others in recovery. These positive role models demonstrate the change that is possible in peoples lives” Local Addiction Nurse observation.

Consultation feedback from a recent focus group highlighted the benefits of volunteering or coming to the cafe and events *“It was fun ...I felt included and not different...made me feel part of a community...I would have to travel to Edinburgh for something similar.”*

1.3 Falkirk and Linlithgow Food Revolution Hubs



“It’s more than a basket of food” local pantry user.



Linlithgow Food Revolution volunteers set up shop at Cross House.

Over the past year, our two community pantries, aka Food Revolutions, have continued to grow as welcoming spaces where people can access good quality food, reduce waste, and connect with their local community. Built on the principle of rescuing and redistributing surplus food, the pantries have strengthened both their environmental and social impact, ensuring that perfectly good food reaches people rather than ending up in landfill.

During a year marked by the continuing cost of living crisis, demand for affordable food support increased significantly. More individuals and families have turned to the pantries to help stretch household budgets and manage rising everyday costs. Despite this growing pressure, we have remained committed to our core principle of being open to everyone. By maintaining a universal and inclusive approach, the pantries continue to tackle the stigma often associated with food support while creating welcoming spaces that bring communities together.

We have also seen encouraging growth in community involvement. The number of local businesses and organisations donating surplus food has increased steadily, enabling us to provide a wider variety of fresh and nutritious items while preventing more food from going to waste. This growing network of food donors reflects increasing awareness of the importance of sustainability and community action. It's important to note that this partnership with local businesses also benefits the businesses involved, helping them meet their objectives to reduce waste and minimise carbon footprint.

Volunteer engagement has also risen significantly over the year. More local people have chosen to give their time to support food collections, sorting, stocking shelves, and welcoming pantry users. Their commitment and enthusiasm have been vital in helping the Food Revolutions operate

successfully and respond to increased demand. Volunteers not only keep the pantries running day to day, but also help create the friendly and supportive atmosphere that makes the projects so valued within the community.

For many volunteers, involvement in the pantries has also supported the development of recovery and wellbeing. Through volunteering, people have been able to build confidence, develop new skills, strengthen routines, and increase social connection and purpose. The supportive and inclusive environment of the Food Revolutions has created opportunities for individuals to improve their wellbeing, gain experience, and feel more connected to their communities while making a positive contribution to others.

Together, the continued support from donors, volunteers, and pantry users demonstrates the positive impact of a community-led approach to reducing food waste and supporting local people through challenging times.

2. Objectives

Inspiring Recovery Together

“Working towards communities that make addiction recovery real. That means challenging stigma, supporting people to see their own strengths, and creating opportunities for them to rebuild social connections and find purpose and fulfilment in their local communities.”

The opposite of addiction is not sobriety but being able to build positive and diverse human connections. This is often referred to as the ability to build “recovery capital”. The building blocks of which are peer support, supportive friends, family and community and access to purposeful activities.

This is easier said than done when very often people have become estranged from families due to chaotic and challenging behaviours and are trying to break free from negative influences in their social lives. People trying to recover are often very isolated and can be vulnerable to relapse. They can struggle to be accepted for volunteer opportunities because they often need a great deal of support and patience as recovery is fragile and set backs are common.

At 1st Step we know for certain that recovery is real and can be sustainable if you invest the time and support to build real connections between diverse people and enable people in recovery to be able to contribute to their communities as active citizens. This in essence is “point” of our organisation and the huge need we as a charity have been set up to fulfil through our key objectives, which are:

- Provide services for individuals affected by and in recovery from substance misuse in West Lothian and Falkirk communities in order to

relieve the suffering and disadvantage caused by addictions and improve lives of everyone affected by addiction

- Provide safe environments for individuals in recovery from substance misuse, their friends, family and local communities.
- Advance education by providing skills development, training and volunteering opportunities for people in recovery from substance misuse to improve their life chances and opportunities for future employment

We achieve our objectives through creating opportunities for people to interact, socialise and learn together. We support a peer lead weekly recovery meeting, also a community cafe, which is open to everyone. The Cafe runs as a social enterprise offering and outside catering service. We have also created a cafe garden and offer courses in growing and healthy eating to complement the Cafe.

Over the last 8 years we have gone on to develop 1st Step Bikes, based at the Linlithgow recycling centre and Howgate shopping centre. From our workshops we offer bike refurbishment training courses and retail experience for people in recovery where they can start to learn new skills, develop routines, make wider social connections (really important to preventing relapse) and start volunteer and rebuild their lives.

Creating purpose, tackling boredom, stigma and giving people hope, are all key ingredients needed to help people recover sustainably. These are the ingredients we work to achieve.

3. Building the Evidence

During the year we have continued to work closely with stakeholders and our community to further understand the what is needed. Key conclusions are:

- **Lack of good quality supported volunteer/personal development opportunities** (especially at the weekends)

People don't always want to talk about their situation. Many want to focus on meaningful tasks where they can "lose " themselves. **Creating work and genuine purpose** was often highlighted together with the need for structure and routine (which they have lost).

- **Working on bikes is good for recovery/mental health** because you can work by yourself if you are feeling fragile and as your confidence grows, at your own pace you become part of the wider team. Valuable life skills are-learnt.

"Consistent – I appreciated that it was 4/ 5 days a week and a regular thing"

"I have learnt how to ask for help because I feel part of a community"

"My daughters can see I have turned a corner - learned to trust their father"

- **Need to tackle stigma** People trying to recover are often very isolated as they try to cut themselves off from former friends/negative influences. Often they have very chaotic lives and poor relationships with family and friends. Research shows that stigma is a significant barrier to recovery and that the building blocks of real recovery are diverse new community support networks and making a positive contribution to the wider community. Not easy when you lack confidence and there are few supported practical volunteer opportunities.

Our volunteers have the opportunity to interact with peers and diverse customers, servicing, buying or donating bikes.

"When I started I was still suffering from panic and anxiety attacks. I felt ostracised from the wider community. I really appreciate the new community that is 1st Step but also that what I am doing with 1st Step shows the wider community that I am no longer that bad guy they thought I was. Working on bikes for people I already knew and who already had a negative impression of me has helped me reinvent myself".

- Need for positive **peer role** models that give people hope and the support they need and seeing peers reclaim their lives and achieve qualifications/employment.

"Steven is so inspiring. It shows me recovery can be real"

"Being a single parent, the guys are positive male role models for my wee boy"

4. Structure, governance and management

The governing document of 1st Step is a constitution, which sets out among other things the purposes, structure and powers of the organisation, and which provides for appropriate governance and management. A copy can be made available on request.

5. Trustee recruitment and appointment

The constitution sets out the process and powers available for appointing and recruiting to vacant Board positions under the clauses dealing with The Board and Appointment/Retrial. The constitution also allows for a minimum of 4 Trustees and a maximum of 8. There is a provision, which allows the Board to operate with office holders only so it can go down to 3 Trustees in exceptional circumstances.

When we have made appointments in the past there have been 3 key criteria

1. An interest in the organisation and its objectives.
2. A willingness to support the organisation and its objectives with a practical commitment.
3. Knowledge or experience, which will inform the effective operation of the Board in support of the organisation and its objectives.

Board positions so far have not been advertised but have been filled either by people coming forward to volunteer or by approach to individuals who are assessed as having knowledge or experience, which will support and develop the operational resilience of the Board. When a potential candidate comes forward - through either route - their suitability will be reviewed and signed off by the Board prior to any appointment being made.

6. Financial Review

2.0 Financial Review

Charity funding, in general, continues to be difficult to achieve, however the flexibility that 1st Step has developed in opportunities to meet its core commitments has allowed the charity to draw on funding from a variety of sources.

1st Step Development Venture's funding is mainly in the form of restricted grants from 3rd party funders:

Donor	Grant
National Lottery	£99,402
National Lottery Awards for All	£18,507
West Lothian Council Community Health and Wellbeing Fund	£8,879
New Scots Integration Fund	£8,541
Paths for All	£7,205
Lintel Trust	£1,000

In addition to these direct funders our thanks also go to our various supporters in the community and local businesses for their non-financial support and contributions over the year.

Generated income from projects for this financial year in the form of donations:

Bikes, servicing and parts	£23,659
Falkirk Food Revolution	£16,083
Linlithgow Food Revolution	£19,868
Cafe	£2,656

These funds allow the centres to be self-sufficient in sourcing the best quality available food and other commodities for our clients

Salaries continue to be our main expenditure at £124,041. We are able to maintain the employment of 11 members of staff through the support of funding partners while offsetting other expenditure against the income streams above.

6.1 Next Financial Year

1st Step is fortunate that the Lottery funding will continue through the 2025/26 financial year and allow the provision of paid employment to be a mainstay of the recovery progression. However, the challenge of continuing salary funding in the future is not one to be underestimated in the current climate.

We look forward to a continued growth in the donation-based income streams to provide financial continuity of the services provided to our client base.

Overall, the strategy with more direct community-based activities and partnerships has brought 1st Step into contact with new networks and funding opportunities that will be progressed in the coming year.

6.2 Reserves Policy

Financial sustainability is a challenge to nearly all charitable organisations; this is often due to the current tendency for funders to support new or one-off projects, rather than support core or on-going costs.

Our unrestricted reserve as of 31st October 2025 is £65,093, equivalent to 5 months running costs, which gives us a reasonable level of financial security and would allow us to cover any funding gaps, in line with our reserves policy.

To allow for increases in salaries and the extension of salary payments to the pantries, the Designated fund of £20,365 allocated for Bike project continuity has been increased to £45,365 to also cover the Falkirk and Linlithgow pantries.

In addition, two new Designated funds have been set up. These being;

- 1) Community Food Support Fund, of £10,000 has been set aside to a) allow the purchase of food for the pantries, and b) the provision of emergency food parcels for our community.
- 2) Grant Matching Fund, of £40,000 has been set aside as match funding for funding bids being submitted for 1st Step Development Ventures to allow us to continue our current activities.

We will continue to research and identify potential funders that support our values and priorities to promote recovery in our communities. We also aim to increase income generation from through the Café and new initiatives, which

will allow us to maintain and build up our level of reserves to give us greater financial security.

Signed on behalf of the charity trustees:

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Graeme Williamson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the left.

Print name Graeme Williamson

Designation Treasurer

Date 20th July 2026