Granite Heart

Empowering communities through giving back

ANNUAL REVIEW 2024–2025

OUR FIRST YEAR OF GIVING BACK

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OUR STORY

This Annual Review tells the story of **Granite Heart's** journey over its first eighteen months; from a simple idea shared between friends to a thriving local charity supporting communities across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

It has been made possible by every person who donated an item, bought something in our shop, volunteered their time, served on our Board, worked alongside us, made a grant application or simply believed in what Granite Heart was trying to achieve.

CHAIR'S FOREWORD

When Granite Heart was founded in June 2024, none of us imagined where the journey would lead.

Looking back over the last eighteen months, it is hard to believe just how much has happened. We had no shop, no income and no certainty that our idea would succeed. What we did have was a small group of people who believed that, together, we could create something positive for our local communities. They believed enough to lend us £39,000 to start our journey.

Like many new charities, there were moments when the road ahead felt uncertain. We faced challenges, difficult decisions and plenty of hard work. Yet throughout it all, one thing never changed: the determination of our volunteers, supporters and trustees to keep moving forward. Everything you will read in this Annual Review has been built on that determination.

Before the doors of our first shop ever opened, volunteers spent months making jams, chutneys and tablet to sell at local fayres, raising funds and introducing people to **Granite Heart**. Others gave countless hours helping prepare the shop, sorting donations, collecting stock, painting walls, assembling shelving and quietly getting on with the hundreds of jobs that rarely attract attention but are essential to making a charity work.

Some people also took an extraordinary leap of faith. Friends and volunteers provided the loans that enabled **Granite Heart** to open its first shop, with no guarantee that the charity would succeed. Their belief gave us the opportunity to turn an idea into reality.

The opening of our Westhill shop in June 2025 was a milestone none of us will ever forget. It marked the beginning of **Granite Heart's** retail journey, but more importantly it marked the point where local people began supporting local communities in a completely new way.

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CHAIR'S FOREWORD
cont...

Since then, the response has exceeded anything we could have hoped for. Every donation, every purchase, every hour volunteered and every act of kindness has helped us begin supporting charities, community groups and good causes across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

As you read through these pages, I hope you will see that this Annual Review is not really about **Granite Heart**. It is about the people who have made Granite Heart possible.

It is about volunteers who freely give their time, customers who choose to support a local charity shop, donors who fill our shelves with wonderful items and local organisations whose work is making our communities stronger every day.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, thank you to every one of you.

This chapter is only the beginning of our story – thank you for helping us write it.

CHRISTOPHER PARKES
Chair of the Board of Trustees and Co-Founder

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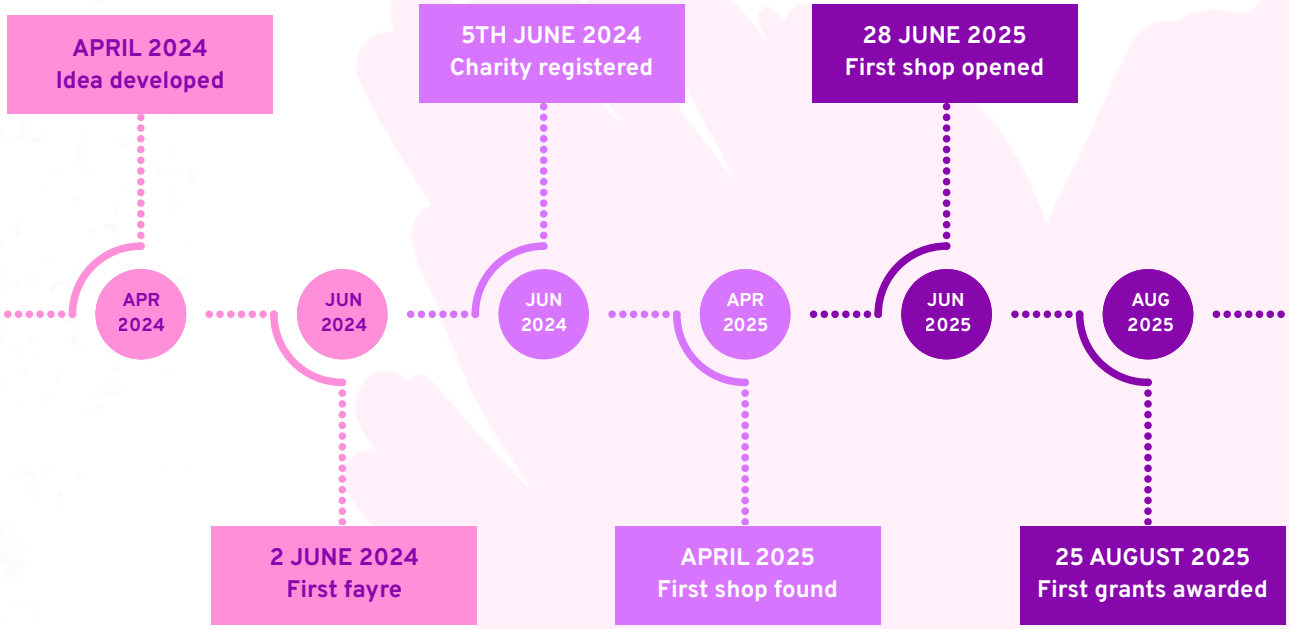
THE JOURNEY BEGINS

Every organisation has a beginning. This was ours.

Granite Heart was founded on 5th June 2024 by a small group of people who believed there was another way to support local communities.

Before there was a shop, before there was income, before there were grants. There was simply an idea, friendship, and a determination to make a difference. None of us imagined just how much those early conversations would lead to.



Everything that follows grew from those simple beginnings.

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GRANITE HEART IN NUMBERS

In just eighteen months to 31st December 2025, **Granite Heart** has grown from an idea into a thriving charity supporting communities across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

31
organisations supported

£11,778
in grants awarded

55
grant applications received

£175,607 in income (inc. restricted loans)

One shop

896 Gift Aid Donors

31,474 items sold

104 volunteers

10,000+ volunteer hours

14,343 customers

2,083 social media followers

*** Numbers as at 31st December 2025**

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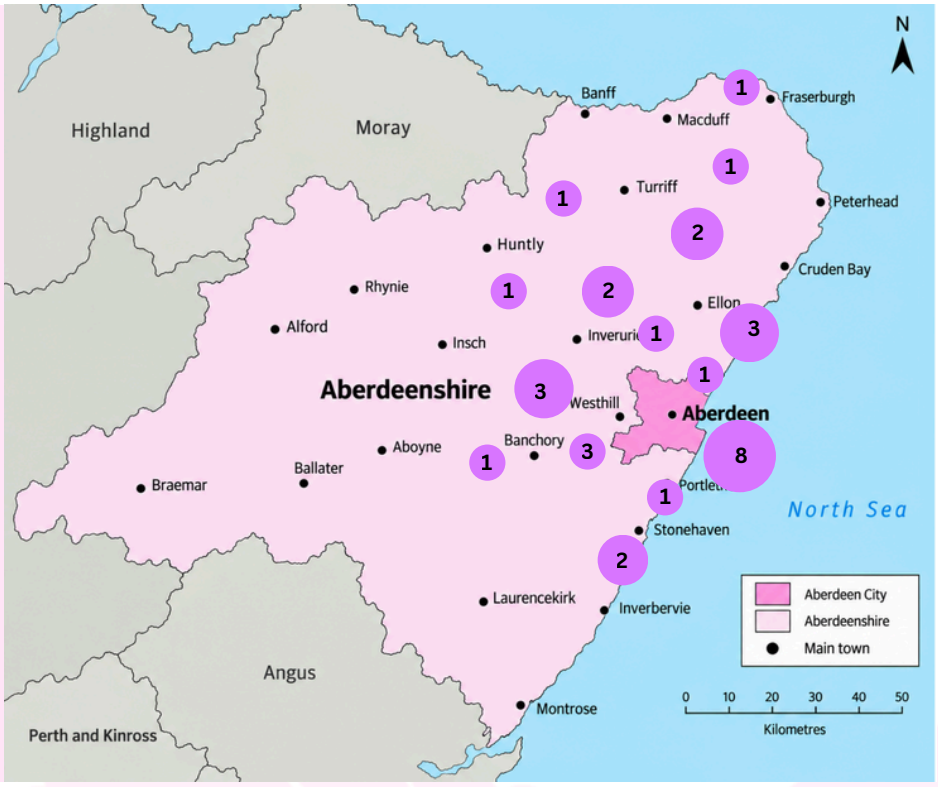
MAKING A DIFFERENCE

31 local charities and voluntary organisations helped.

£11,778 awarded

(as at 31st December 2025)



Every marker represents a local charity, voluntary organisation or community group supported by **Granite Heart** during our first eighteen months.

This map represents only the first chapter. Since then, **Granite Heart** has continued to support even more local charities, voluntary organisations and community groups across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, with our impact continuing to grow.

THE HEART OF GRANITE HEART

Every grant we award, every donation we receive and every customer we welcome begins with one thing: our volunteers.

Long before the doors of our Westhill shop opened, volunteers were raising funds at local fayres, collecting donations, painting walls, assembling shelving, transporting stock and preparing the shop. Since then, they have continued to give their time in countless different ways; sorting donations, serving customers, steaming clothes, pricing stock, presenting grants, helping at events and quietly doing the hundreds of jobs that keep the charity running every day.

Some volunteer every week. Others help whenever they can. Every contribution matters. **Granite Heart** quite simply would not exist without them.

Their generosity, friendship and commitment have created far more than a successful charity shop.

Together, they have created a welcoming community where people enjoy volunteering, develop new skills, build lasting friendships and make a genuine difference to the lives of others.

Many people join **Granite Heart** to give something back to their community. They stay because they become part of the **Granite Heart** family.

The volunteer stories that follow are just two examples of the many remarkable people who make **Granite Heart** what it is today.

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STORIES FROM THE GRANITE HEART FAMILY

Granite Heart would not exist without the people behind it.

Our volunteers, supporters, grant recipients and communities are at the heart of everything we do. Their stories are all different, but together they tell the story of **Granite Heart** itself.

Throughout this Annual Review you will meet just a few of the people and organisations who have helped shape our journey so far.

We hope you enjoy reading their stories as much as we have.

SENSATIONALL'S STORY

> **Accessing SensationALL has been life changing for our family.**

For many families across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, SensationALL provides exactly that, life-changing support.

The charity supports individuals of all ages with neurodivergent conditions or additional support needs across northeast Scotland, while also providing practical and emotional support to their families and carers.

Many of the children and young people who access their services find mainstream environments overwhelming or inaccessible, leaving them at risk of social isolation and poor mental wellbeing.

Granite Heart's grant funded dedicated soft play sessions, providing children with opportunities to play, learn and simply be themselves within a safe and understanding environment.

The sessions do much more than provide fun. They help develop confidence, communication, emotional regulation and social interaction, while also providing families with reassurance that they are supported and understood.

For many families, that support makes an extraordinary difference.

> **Love SensationALL, the staff are flawless and nothing is ever too much. The kids feel safe, included and free to be heard.**

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TRUSTEE

MEGAN'S STORY

> **I feel privileged to be part of the Granite Heart journey.**

As a Trustee of **Granite Heart**, Megan plays an important role in helping shape the charity's future, contributing to decisions on fundraising, grant-giving and future growth. One of the highlights for her has been presenting cheques to successful local causes and seeing first-hand the difference even relatively small grants can make within local communities.

The opening of **Granite Heart's** first shop in Westhill remains one of her proudest moments. Like many involved with the charity, she has been surprised by the remarkable generosity shown by both volunteers and donors, and by the level of need that exists across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

One of the things Megan has enjoyed most has been seeing the sheer variety of causes **Granite Heart** has been able to support, ranging from disadvantaged babies and foodbanks to budding footballers and care home gardens. She hopes this is only the beginning of the charity's journey.

For Megan, however, it is the people behind **Granite Heart** that make it so special.

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CASTLE STREET COFFEE'S STORY

Castle Street Coffee

> **Sometimes, making a difference begins with creating somewhere people simply feel they belong...**

Castle Street Coffee CIC is a community café in Huntly with a powerful social mission, supporting young people through early intervention, coaching, employability support and practical life skills.

Granite Heart's grant helped fund a multi-games table for their Youth Shed, a welcoming and inclusive space where young people can socialise, relax and access support in a safe environment.

Many of the young people who use the Youth Shed experience anxiety, low confidence or find it difficult to engage in mainstream education. For some, it provides an important alternative to feeling isolated or disconnected from their community.

What might appear to be a pool table and an air hockey game is, in reality, something much more important. It has become a way of building friendships, developing confidence and creating opportunities for meaningful conversations and support.

The young people themselves perhaps explain its impact best:

> **We love it!**
> **It's fun and gives us something to do at lunch.**
> **Having this place to come to is really good.**

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VOLUNTEER

CODY'S STORY

When Cody first joined Granite Heart, he hoped volunteering would help him gain valuable work experience and improve his confidence and social skills.

Today, he is an important member of the team, providing excellent customer service, working on the till, preparing stock and helping wherever he is needed.

What has surprised him most has been seeing just how much he has grown in confidence since joining the charity.

He says volunteering has helped him develop important workplace skills including collaboration, adaptability, initiative and integrity, while also building healthy and lasting friendships with his colleagues and fellow volunteers.

Perhaps more importantly, it has helped him recognise strengths in himself that he may not previously have seen.

Asked what he would say to someone considering volunteering, his answer perfectly captures the spirit of **Granite Heart**:

> **Just be you, because even if you don't see anything special, they will and that'll become your greatest strength.**

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HEARTS FOR JUDE'S STORY

Every week in the UK, at least twelve young people lose their lives to undiagnosed heart conditions.

Hearts for Jude, in partnership with Cardiac Risk in the Young (CRY), was established to help ensure fewer families experience such devastating loss. Through free cardiac screening, they are helping identify potentially life-threatening heart conditions in young people across the North East of Scotland before it is too late.

Granite Heart's grant helped fund cardiac screening for seven young people as part of their 2025 Aberdeen screening programme.

In total, 411 young people were screened during 2025, with 20 referred for further investigation.

Sometimes, the impact of a grant cannot easily be measured. The seven young people supported through **Granite Heart's** funding may never know the difference it has made to their lives and, perhaps, that is exactly the point.

> **The greatest impact of all is often the impact we never see. Seven young people received cardiac screening through Granite Heart's grant. We hope that, for every one of them, the result is wonderfully uneventful and that they go on to live long, healthy and happy lives. Sometimes, that is more than enough.**

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KEY VOLUNTEER

GILLIAN'S STORY

For Gillian, volunteering with Granite Heart has become much more than simply giving up a few hours each week.

She spends her Mondays helping sort donations at the Sorting Hub before volunteering in the Westhill shop on Wednesdays and Fridays, where no two days are ever quite the same. Whether she's serving customers on the till, steaming clothes, stocking shelves or simply enjoying a chat with customers, she loves being part of the friendly atmosphere that has developed around the shop.

Learning how to operate the till was daunting at first, but volunteering has brought new confidence, new friendships and a real sense of purpose.

One of her favourite memories is opening day at Westhill.

> **From just an idea sitting in the Asda café on a Saturday discussing it, through getting registered and finally opening the doors, it's been wonderful to see how far we've come.**

For Gillian, **Granite Heart's** greatest achievement is helping smaller local groups that might otherwise go unnoticed. And what would she say to anyone thinking about volunteering?

> **Come and join us! It's fun, it's rewarding, you can choose the days and times that suit you and have I mentioned the free tea, coffee and biscuits?**

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THE NEXT CHAPTER BEGINS...

01

THE FIRST CHAPTER

The first chapter of **Granite Heart's** story has shown what is possible when local people come together to support their communities. As **Granite Heart** continues to grow, our focus remains unchanged: to raise as much money as possible so that we can support more charities, community groups and good causes across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

02

SECOND SHOP

The next exciting step in that journey will be the opening of our second shop in Cults in Autumn 2026. Alongside this, we continue to explore opportunities for future expansion in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. Every new shop we open has a single purpose: to create a sustainable source of income that allows us to support more charities, more community groups and more local people.

03

GROWTH

Growth, however, is about more than opening shops. It is about strengthening our volunteer team, developing our people, maintaining sound financial foundations and continuing to build a charity that local communities trust and are proud to support.

04

THE FUTURE

As we look to the future, we remain ambitious, but also determined to grow responsibly. Every decision will continue to be guided by the values that have shaped **Granite Heart** from the beginning: kindness, integrity, community and a commitment to making a positive difference. The first chapter of **Granite Heart's** story has been an exciting one. We believe the next chapter will be even more rewarding.

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SOME OF OUR GRANT RECIPIENTS

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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Thank you for helping us begin this journey.

When **Granite Heart** was founded, none of us knew exactly where the journey would lead. We simply believed that, together, we could build something that would make a difference.

Looking at everything that has been achieved over the past year, I believe that faith has been justified.

Of course, there is still much to do. We have ambitious plans and exciting opportunities ahead, but I hope that as **Granite Heart** continues to grow, we never lose sight of what has made it successful so far: the people.

Our volunteers, staff, customers, donors and supporters are the heart of this charity. Their generosity, commitment and belief in what we are trying to achieve continue to inspire me every day.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, thank you for everything you have done to help **Granite Heart** become what it is today.

> **Together, we are building something that will continue making a difference in our communities for many years to come. The next chapter will be even more rewarding!**

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THANK YOU!

OUR CONTACT INFORMATION:

https://www.gofundme.com/f/GraniteHeart

https://graniteheart.org

https://www.facebook.com/graniteheart.org

https://instagram.com/graniteheartabz