Cat's Cradle Education and Organising (SCIO)

# Trustees Annual Report

## 28th Feb 2025- 28th Feb 2026

**SC052364**

*Presented and approved at the Annual General Meeting of 2026.*

OSCR
Scottish Charity Regulator

Cat's Cradle
EDUCATION AND ORGANISING

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## Reference and administration details

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|---|---|---|
| **Charity name** | Cat's Cradle Education and Organising (SCIO) | |
| **Registered charity number** | **SC052364** | |
| **Charity's principal address** | 29 Wester Drylaw Park | |
| | Edinburgh | |
| | | **Postcode:** EH4 2TR |

**Names of the charity trustees on date of approval of Trustees' Annual Report**

| | Trustee name | Office (if any) | Dates acted if not for whole year | Name of person (or body) entitled to appoint trustee (if any) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | Amy Tait Westwell | Chair | | |
| **2** | Francis Stuart | | | |
| **3** | Cailean Gallagher | | | |
| **4** | Mike Arnott | | | |

## Reference and administration details

**Names of all other charity trustees during the period, if any, (for example, those who resigned part way through the financial period)**

| Name | Dates acted if not for whole year |
|---|---|
| n/a | |

## Independent Examination Completed By:

Rosalind McIlwain, The Ayrshire Community Trust, 27 Vernon Street, Saltcoats, North Ayrshire, KA21 5HE

## Structure, governance and management

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|---|---|
| **Type of governing document** | The Charity is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (a SCIO). It was registered in its current legal form on 28 February 2023. The charity was previously a Ltd Company but changed its legal form to a SCIO. The assets of the Ltd Company were transferred to the SCIO on 28 February 2023. It has a single tier structure and as such the trustees are the members of the charity. |
| **Trustee recruitment and appointment** | There are a minimum of three charity trustees at any time. The board may at any time appoint any person to be a charity trustee - by way of a resolution passed by majority vote at a board meeting. Trustees meet yearly for an Annual General Meeting. |

## Objectives and activities

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| **Charitable purposes** | To advance education by providing structured learning programmes for the public concerning the history, philosophies and theologies of community-organised movements.<br><br>To advance community development by bringing together marginalised and isolated groups who work in the same geographical areas to participate in cultural and artistic production, investigate and analyse their neighbourhoods, determine their shared needs and how to meet them, and develop community events, thus contributing to the broader social and artistic life of across parts of Scotland and raising the profile of groups at the fringes.<br><br>To advance heritage and culture and arts by providing affordable and accessible workshops and workspaces that help people from under-represented communities to self-publish writing, art and music. |
| **Summary of the main activities in relation to these objects** | The charity provides structured learning programmes for the public concerning the history, philosophies and theologies of community-organised movements. It mostly does this in collaboration with other community groups. We also provide training for charities and community organisations on how to include arts, crafts, and Freirean pedagogy in existing community development and learning programmes. |

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**APPENDIX 1**

**Achievements and performance**

# Summary of the main achievements of the charity during the financial period (February 2025 - February 2026)

Cat's Cradle delivers education and cultural programmes so that people can build good, sustainable, and powerful groups to develop their communities. We believe that powerful groups are groups whose members learn together - about each other, about group dynamics, about history, about different traditions of organising around the world. Over the last year, Cat's Cradle has expanded its education-led community resilience work with partner organisations, encouraging groups and organisations to *make the road by walking*. This means that people who are working together towards a shared goal should learn as they go, and the whole group should be conscious of their learning.

## Cat's Cradle Toolkits

Over the course of the year, we developed free and publicly accessible toolkits which introduce people to collective learning and cultural capacity-building in their organisations. These summarise some of the key lessons we've learned over the past three years. They equip the reader to effectively facilitate community group discussions and group decisions, and they help groups to include the experiences of all their participants, especially migrants, in everything they do as a matter of everyday procedure rather than afterthought. By removing barriers to participation, these toolkits directly advance our purpose of bringing together marginalized groups to determine shared needs and build stronger, more cohesive communities. The toolkits have started conversations with several people and organisations, including a grassroots migrant solidarity group in London, a group of further-education teachers, and a community-led co-operative in the North East of England. We're looking forward to promoting them more, and helping more people put them into practice. The toolkits were written during the financial period as the outcome of several workshops, and printed in April 2026.



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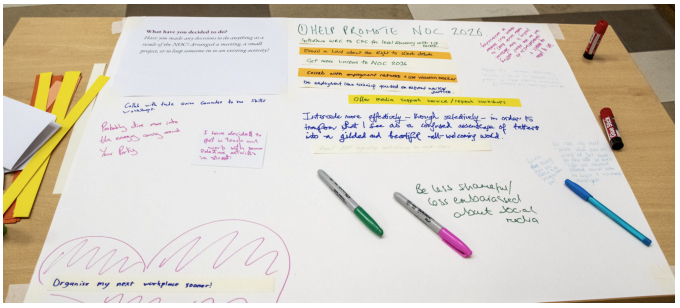
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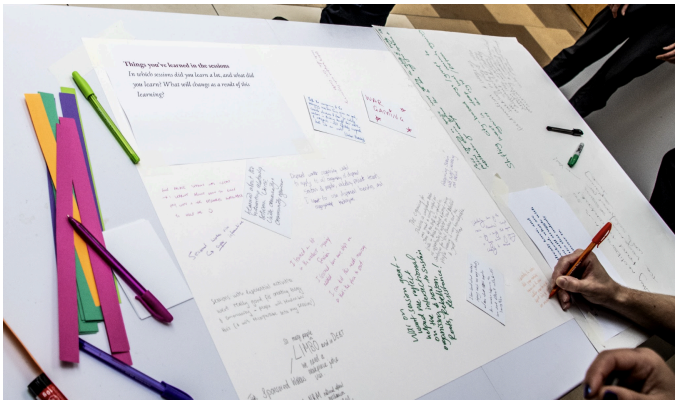
# New Organising Conference 2025

Cat's Cradle is a partner of the New Organising Conference, and part of the organising committee. Through the year we devote some of our time to developing the conference programme and the learning practices of the conference. The conference supports collaboration and connections between:

- Charities
- Third Sector Groups
- Advice Centres
- Advocacy Groups
- Law Centres
- Trade Unions
- Tenants and Community Unions
- Government Enforcement Bodies
- Funders
- Educational Organisations
- Advocacy Groups





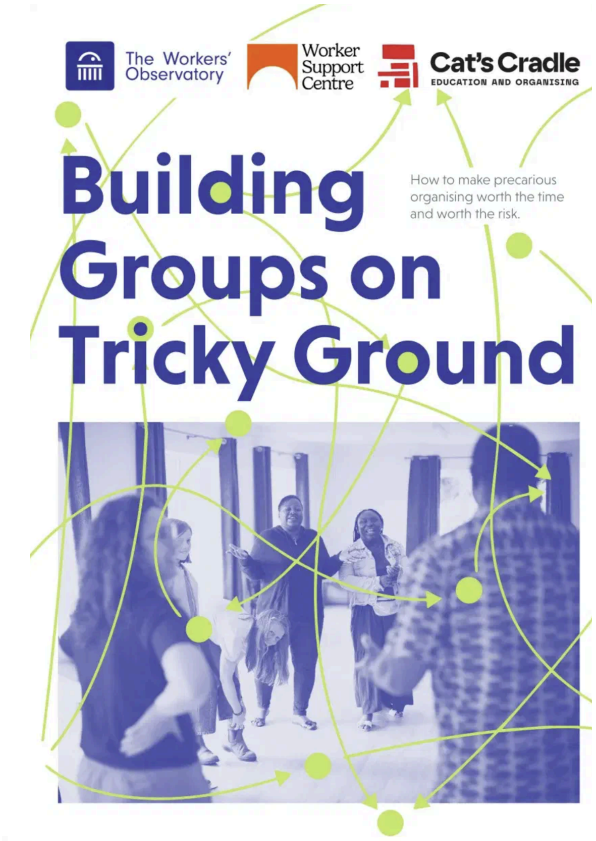


We bring together participants from diverse backgrounds with common goals, connecting complementary skills, experience and resources. The conference is designed to foster learning, insight and action, and Cat's Cradle contributes to this by designing reflection sessions and activities which bring out similarities and differences of opinion between participants. We also work closely with session-leaders to help them deliver sessions according to principles of mutual learning and practice-based learning.

In 2025 NOC offered 40 sessions — 5000 hours of engaged participative learning, together with open spaces where participants proposed their own sessions. Sessions ranged from case studies of successful community advocacy to organising strategy and tools designed to build capacity within the third sector, personal reflections on organising, and how to challenge racism. At the end of the conference, participants had made serious commitments to collaborate with other people and organisations, had reflected on some of the most difficult questions of their work, and had gained practical skills in, for example, media and videography.

# Collaborative Guidebooks

Cat's Cradle led a collaborative process to develop free and publicly accessible guidebooks, co-written with the Worker's Observatory and the Worker Support Centre. This process began in December 2025 and ended in August 2026, so we'll report on it further in next year's Trustee Annual Report. The guidebooks have now been published, and a preview is included below. These guidebooks give organisations a clear strategy for community development where establishing a group is difficult - for example when a community holds very diverse or conflicting experiences and norms.




## Principles for Strong Group-Building

**1 Building Trust:**
Sharing experiences
Consistent social media engagement

There's no magic shortcut for building trust. But incentivising the exchange of working knowledge and experiences helps to create a common view of the burdens of work, and for workers to develop mutual understanding about the situations they face. Keeping a Whatsapp group active, and promoting a culture of sharing resources on mutual aid basis, helps to develop these kinds of bonds.

**2 Building Community:**
Food
Socialising

Create spaces where workers may get to know each other outwith working hours, break down barriers, and learn about shared interests. Food is always a great social lubricant, and fostering these spaces can be as easy as a regular pub meeting in a place and time agreed by the workers. Strategising how to get more workers involved is something that will also help to get the group growing despite high turnover.

**3 Building Purpose:**
Worker-led workshops
Shared priorities

Seasonal and app-based work can be divisive, isolating workers by design and making them feel that they are competing among themselves. Developing shared issues is a good first step, acknowledging that exploitation comes from companies and not from other workers in more difficult situations. Collectively setting priorities is what will define what's next, and advance a group to action. (For ideas of how to build purpose at early meetings, see our guidebook 'Issues, Demands, Slogans'.)

**4 Defining roles:**
Task allocation

Workers must not only be in charge, but also take and feel responsibility. Allocating tasks that people feel comfortable performing is good – "I'll send this," "I'll draft that," "I'll create this post," I'll design that logo". It's also important that new skills are learnt in the process, and also that while the work is carried out for the collective good, individuals can come to see certain areas as their focus or role.

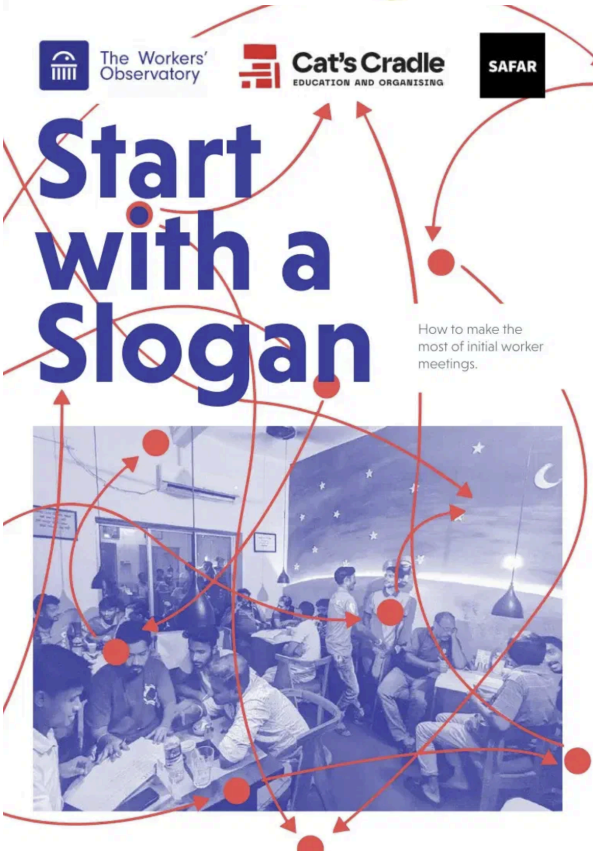
**5 Defining steps:**
Clear next steps

Before ending the first meeting – and any other meeting – agree on next steps and a timeframe. This might include, among other actions, setting up channels to communicate (e.g. Whataspp, Facebook group), a time and place for the next in-person meeting, and a strategy to reach out more workers.

**6 Defined identity:**
What is the group?
What do members have in common?

Considering initial discussions, and based on the common interests, the group can define why it is important to keep in touch, and what the core values are that underpin its cooperation and identity.

15

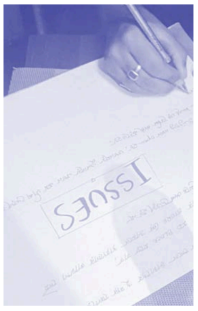



## Step 1: Finding Problems

**This session has three key steps, described in the following sections.**

At the start of the session, each group should be given an A3 page with the word **PROBLEMS** or **ISSUES** in the middle. Each table should also be given the instructions in the left-hand column, while the text on the right can be provided to facilitators as extra guidance:

| Instructions for Participants | Extra Guidance for Facilitators |
|---|---|
| **Problems or issues that made you upset, angry, tired or frustrated.**<br><br>Think about and write down problems or issues that have affected you at work. Write down the problems or issues on spider arms around the word ISSUES or PROBLEMS, then write down more detail next to the problem so you create a mind-map/spider diagram. You can focus on two or three big problems, or write down a whole bunch of them. | Encourage participants to identify problems related to various kinds of situations they face or aspects of their work (in food delivery it could be accidents, wages, petrol cost).<br><br>You might think about inviting someone from a union or advice centre who is familiar with the field to help with problem identification.<br><br>Every diagram will take shape differently. The main thing is to get the problems on the page.<br><br>**Tip:** try using existing lists or charters of demands as a starting point for drawing up issues.<br><br>→ At a **Workers' Observatory workshop** on 1 July 2026, facilitators each table to draw up a list of issues relating to one of the five principles set out in Edinburgh City Council's draft Fair Work Charter: Respect, Effective Voice, Security, Opportunity, and Fulfilment.<br><br>→ At a **SAFAR workshop** in Kolkata (13 August, 2026), facilitators collated demands that a union had already formulated (the union's charter of demands) and went through them one by one, asking workers how much the issues resonated, and inviting them to add to the list.<br><br>**Remember:** In some situations, writing in any language can be a problem for many workers. In that case, facilitators can read the room and take up the charge of casually writing down whatever the participants are saying, without making speakers conscious or self-aware. |




11

# Worker's Observatory Organisational Development

In its first year as a charity, Cat's Cradle worked with Dunfermline delivery drivers and workers at the St James Centre, to develop strong place-based groups equipped to advocate for their statutory employment rights, thereby reducing the risk of in-work poverty and developing civic engagement for marginalised community members. This work informed the development of the Workers' Observatory, now an independent organisation led by platform delivery workers in Edinburgh, which operates on principles of building strong groups and place-based community development to support migrant workers to improve their working conditions.

From October 2025 to February 2026 we supported the Worker's Observatory in its organisational development, and helped the organisation to track its learning. We experimented with systems of reporting, writing, and co-reading, and we developed a suite of practices for the organisation to use in its meetings and workshops, such as organiser development around strategic planning, prioritisation, and long-term objectives. As a result, the WO developed clearly defined roles and leadership, and re-assessed its strategy in terms of the long-term resilience of the community which leads it.



# Migrant Justice Edinburgh Pilot Programme

With Edinburgh Empowering Multicultural Communities Alliance, Citizens Rights Project, and the Workers Observatory, we developed and ran a four-month pilot project bringing migrant workers together in Craigmillar to learn about each other's lives, assess their problems, and make decisions about action they wanted to take to change things. From October 2025 to January 2026, Cat's Cradle advised on pedagogy, facilitation, and community development strategy, and produced material for the workshops. This project was in advance of Migrant Justice Edinburgh's successful bid to the Regenerative Futures Fund, which enables a ten-year programme of education and civic engagement in Edinburgh rooted in principles of pedagogy, community development, and cultural organising.

## Romano Lav Rights Education

This year, with Romano Lav in Govanhill, we ran sessions on organising and collective empowerment for young Roma participants, tackling illegal conditions and racism. Using our "Each One, Teach One" approach, participants became peer educators, extending learning across their communities. Roma young people, aged 12–22, came to understand their rights to minimum wage, holiday and sick pay, and explained that they were sharing this knowledge with parents and co-workers, beginning to identify illegal practices and safely advocate for fair, lawful treatment.

## World School Community Learning Programme

Our World School programme delivered sessions on African history in Edinburgh and Aberdeen. We explored practices of community education, community organising, and autodidacticism in West Africa, engaging with Edinburgh's Nigerian community. The participants engaged in genuine community learning, where Scots and Africans learned with mutual enthusiasm about the traditions of community strength they could draw on in their activity. Our World School sessions were paused in the second half of the financial year due to maternity leave, and will recommence in October 2026, in a slightly different form. These sessions hugely informed our cultural organising workbook.

# Testimony

Bilkis first got involved in Cat's Cradle in a workshop we ran for the Amina Muslim Women's Resource Centre in Dundee in January 2024, which explored grassroots organising across Africa. Bilkis then threw herself into our community education programme in Dundee (World School Dundee), which brought people together to learn about organising traditions from different countries. Now she is a contractor with Cat's Cradle as a community educator and organiser, and was involved in the Romano Lav programme, our World School sessions, the workbook production, and the New Organising Conference.

I arrived in Dundee in late 2023 with a passion for community development but no clear idea where to begin. When I was introduced to Amy and Cat's Cradle and got familiar with the organisation, I felt a sense of possibility. However, I didn't yet know how transformative the experience would be for me, both as a tutor and as a learner.

From the start, Amy and her colleagues didn't just "allow" me to express my views; they actively encouraged it and would often seek my opinion and perspective regarding the workshops we were planning. In our meetings, they listened with genuine interest, making it clear that my input mattered to the progress of the workshops. This was empowering, to know my perspective could shape a space. I saw that same value extended to participants. The workshops were built around conversations. Using prompts such as photos, videos, and excerpts, Amy and the team would gently nudge people to share their stories and knowledge. By the end of a session, we would be surrounded by a mountain of shared experiences, each contribution adding to the whole. This approach was particularly powerful for participants from backgrounds where freedom of speech is restricted; it offered them a glimpse of another way of living, where voices are heard and respected.

Cat's Cradle also shifted my understanding of how learning spaces can be designed. Before this, my own education experience had been shaped by centralised, one-size-fits-all models. While this has its pros, it definitely also has several cons. With Cat's Cradle, I saw a different philosophy at work, as Amy once said to me, "Make the school not feel like a school." People learned at their own pace and in their own style, and it carried everyone along. This is critical because a lot of the topics we cover could seem intimidating to certain audiences if not approached carefully. I admit I was sceptical at first. I remember preparing for a workshop with Amy and thinking, "This is never going to work." But I was wrong. It worked beautifully and I am glad about that.

Perhaps the most personal impact was discovering my talent for facilitating and educating. Amy, in her subtle way, drew this out of me by assigning roles that matched my interests. My first time coordinating a session on Africa, I was nervous, wondering why I'd agreed to it at all, but with the team's support, I found myself directing the conversation with ease. That moment planted a confidence I now carry into every teaching role.

The programme also broadened my worldview. Because often we think our struggle is novel and singular. But meeting with various people from various backgrounds under a single topic and seeing we all share the same pain increases empathy, liberation and togetherness. In spring 2024, we held a session on Workers' Unions. Around the table sat Scottish elders, youth, people from North Africa, West Africa, and beyond. We shared our struggles and dreams, each unique yet strikingly similar. I realised that while our contexts differ, the desire for dignity and a better world is universal. That recognition deepened my empathy and sense of solidarity.

Over the past year, working with the Cat's Cradle team has transformed how I think about impact, teaching, and the sharing of knowledge. As a professional tutor, I now approach every course with a heightened awareness of inclusivity, creativity, and the diverse ways people learn. I am more confident in my skills, less hesitant to use my voice, and more committed than ever to creating spaces where others feel empowered to share theirs.

## Financial review

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| **Brief statement of the charity's policy on reserves** | The charity seeks to keep at least 6 months salary in reserve to allow for the payment of wages to at least two main contractors. |
| **Details of any deficit** | n/a |
| **Donated facilities and services (if any)** | n/a |

## Declaration

**The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above, and that they appoint Rosalind McIlwain as an independent examiner for the Annual Accounts.**

**Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees**

**Signature(s)** Amy Westwell

***OSCR will accept digital or typed signatures***

**Full name(s)** Amy Westwell

**Position (e.g. Chair)** Chair

**Date** 19th October, 2026