

Social Impact

The Circle is an award-winning Community Interest Company with a More Than Profit® ethos. A More Than Profit® business aims to use its profits to fund positive social change. The Circle is headquartered in Dundee and has an additional hub in Glasgow. This is our Social Impact Report for 2022/2023.

[READ MORE...](#)



WELCOME

Despite an ever-changing political climate, an increasingly challenging funding landscape, and in the midst of a cost of living crisis, The Circle has had another busy year full of exciting changes and continued to serve our community!

I was recently appointed as the new chair of The Circle's board to see it through its next stages of development. We wish my predecessor Donald McPherson all the best and thank him for the years of commitment and support, taking The Circle from infancy to the renowned business it is now.

Looking to the future, rather than bemoaning the challenges, we continue to build on a solid base and develop a resilient team, delivering key support across our sites in Dundee and Glasgow and beyond.

This report outlines The Circle's impact and achievements over the past year. We are proud of the difference The Circle has made and we will work to develop and grow in the future.

Myself and the board thank the many contributors, small and large, and look forward to continuing to support Kirsty and the team as an involved and supportive board. Thank you for your time; I hope you enjoy learning about the many positive impacts the team have made, and that you continue to support us as we go forward.

Campbell Archibald, Chair of the Circle Board



What we do



The Circle Workspaces offers fair rent, flexible and supportive workspaces in Dundee and Glasgow for socially-minded organisations.



The Circle Consultancy offers easy-to-access business advice, bespoke training, and professional networking opportunities.



The Circle Academy provides Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) accredited business training for social entrepreneurs and businesses with a More Than Profit® ethos.



The Circle Volunteering is a dedicated programme which offers an opportunity to work with The Circle team at any of our hubs. The programme is designed to encourage personal growth and goal setting.

32 TENANTS

We have had a 19% increase in our number of tenants since last year across our Dundee and Glasgow hubs.



just enterprise

We were able to extend our free consultancy support through Just Enterprise to include Dundee and Angus.

OUR GROWTH IN 2022/2023



We worked with 50 volunteers across our Dundee and Glasgow sites, an increase of 44% from last year.

34 clients

The number of consultancy clients we worked with has doubled since last year.



We hosted 14 events across our Dundee and Glasgow sites including two networking events.

Our Goals – How we make a difference in our community



Providing
workspaces for
socially minded
organisations

Supporting
social
enterprises to
grow and thrive

Training social
entrepreneurs,
charities, and
community
organisations

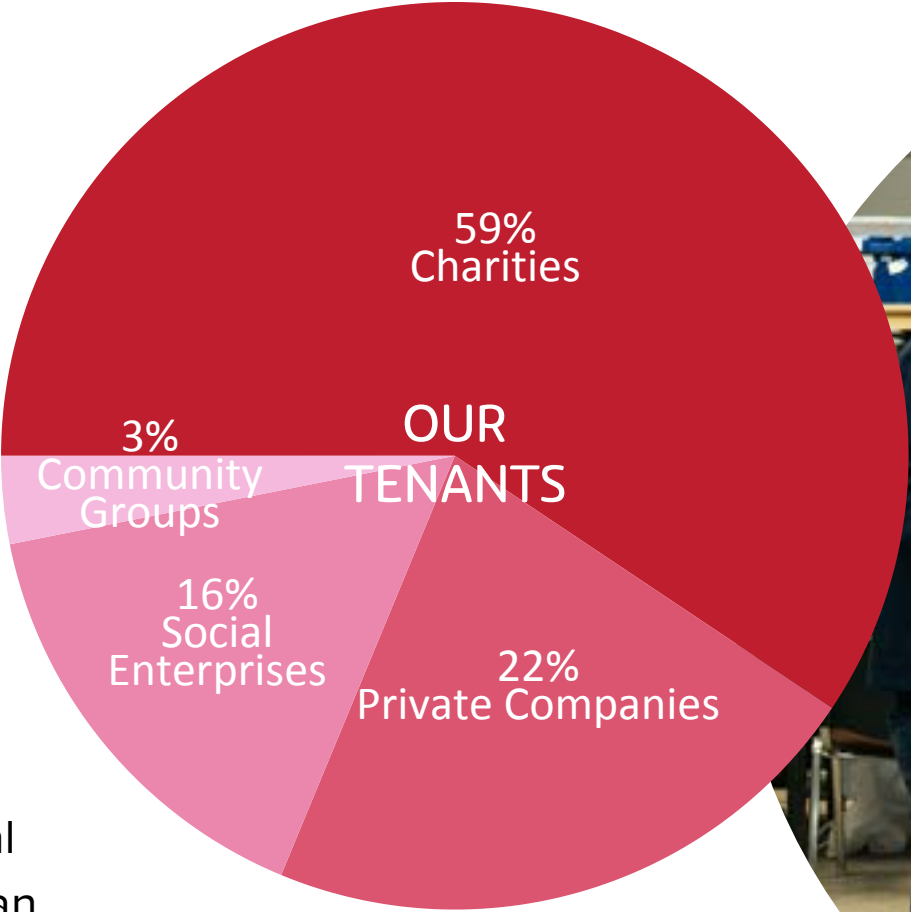
Developing
skills &
confidence for
the workplace

PROVIDING WORKSPACES FOR SOCIALLY MINDED ORGANISATIONS



The challenges we have all faced in 2022 have only increased in 2023. The cost-of-living crisis has impacted our community greatly, particularly the cost of energy. Many of our tenants have had to reevaluate their business models. The Circle has also undergone restructuring to meet the challenges of the past year.

We remain committed to supporting our tenants while they, in turn, support some of the most vulnerable people in society. One way The Circle does this is by offering reduced rental rates compared to typical commercial rates. The Circle's tenants pay an average of 50% less than they would with a typical commercial landlord. Over the past year, the value of this has equated to £175,847.67. This means our tenants can redirect money towards their vital frontline services instead of the cost of rent, increasing their impact on society.



2

New tenants in
Dundee

11

New tenants in
Glasgow

£53,000

Funding towards
environmental sustainability
in hubs

42%

Reduction of kWh
used in Glasgow

87%

Of 35,275 sqft of space
occupied across two
hubs

14

Events hosted

HOW OUR TENANTS HAVE MADE AN IMPACT IN THEIR COMMUNITY



Uppertunity works with individuals with learning disabilities, autism and mental health barriers.

- 49,000kg of CO2 saved since 2019
- 49 jobs created and 48 placements
- 25 volunteers with over 18,000 hours donated (£196k at living wage)
- Supporting 50 individuals a week via an array of classes

Funeral support Dundee - Funeral Link helps the bereaved in Dundee save money and offers independent advice and friendly, confidential one to one support.

- Saved £192,482 for users since 2019, £50,000 in 2021/2022
- 80% of users were from Scotland's poorest 20%
- The number of users in employment has continually risen, up to 34% in 2021/2022



Barnardo's supports children, young people and their families in our specialised community-based services nationwide.

- Barnardo's reached:
 - 6,333 through child abuse and exploitation services
 - 1,112 children in care
 - 2,788 care leavers
 - 168,342 through family support
 - 50,081 with mental health support
- Barnardo's also found new homes for 124 children through their adoption services
- Supported 976 young people to live with foster carers

The Scottish Pantry Network (TSPN) provides a range of services and resources to its members, including access to training and development opportunities, funding opportunities, and expert advice and guidance on key issues affecting pantries.

- TSPN reached 21 Network Members
- 34,000 Collective Pantry Members



HOW OUR TENANTS HAVE MADE AN IMPACT IN THEIR COMMUNITY



Cornerstone is a Scottish charity and social enterprise that provides care and support for people with learning disabilities, autism and complex care needs. They are one of our Dundee tenants.

- 2,100 people with learning disabilities, autism and complex care needs supported across Scotland

Gemap support people on their journey to becoming financially capable individuals, helping people to build on existing skills, confidence and independence in dealing with their personal finances.

They want to enable, inspire and transform how people view their finances.



Financially Included is a partnership project between GEMAP & Glasgow Violence Against Women Partnership funded by Delivering Equally Safe. Financially Included strives to implement the Scottish Government's strategy to tackle violence against women and girls in Glasgow by focusing on economic abuse. Their aim is provide a holistic welfare rights and debt advice service to survivors and creating training and toolkits to enable a more informed approach for advice sector workers on economic abuse.

Dundee Bairns is a charity in Dundee working to alleviate hunger and food insecurity for Dundee's Bairns.

- 3,000 children received clothing vouchers as part of cosy bairns
- Over 42,000 meals were provided to children this year alone



STORIES FROM OUR COMMUNITY



Partners in Advocacy

Partners in Advocacy are here to help people speak up and be heard, and to make sure that their thoughts and feelings are respected. The independent advocacy service is completely free and private, and anyone can ask for their help.

Partners in Advocacy have been a tenant of The Circle since 2018 and are based at our Dudhope Castle HQ. From this site they have helped the local community by;

- Supporting 104 young people in Dundee to know and exercise their rights which is their highest number of young people supported in a single year to date
- Running sessions at Dudhope in-patient unit to support young people who are detained to raise awareness of their rights and foster better advocacy partner relationships
- The advocacy partners supported had 129 additional support needs among the local community, the most common being mental health issues, ADHD and autism
- Held a young carers action day with a stall run by Service Co-ordinator, James, which resulted in direct referrals for support

“This is a new beginning. I am relieved the school has done something now.”

Local user of Partners in Advocacy



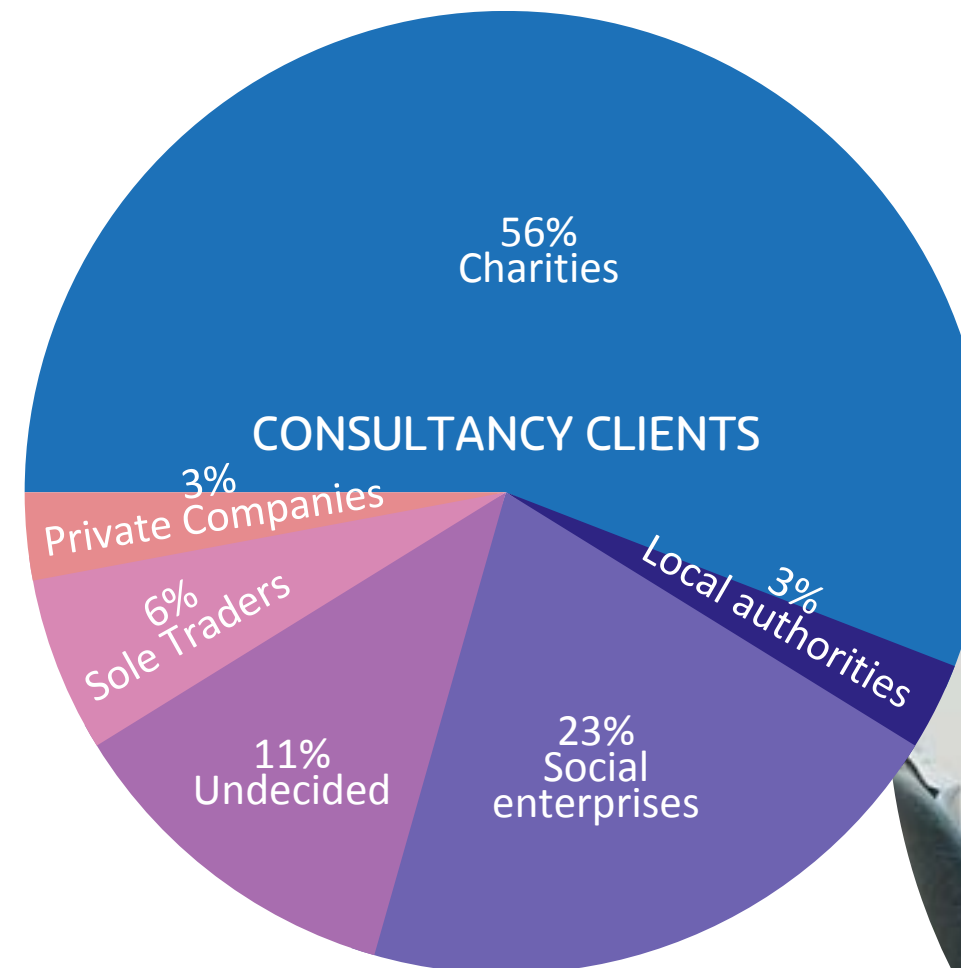
SUPPORTING SOCIAL ENTERPRISES TO GROW AND THRIVE



Over the past year The Circle Consultancy has supported 34 clients on areas such as strategic planning, market research and financial sustainability. Our team has also helped our clients to review and enhance organisational structures and governance. The Circle had one pro bono client: Hanna and Vitalii from Ukrainians Together. We were also delighted to continue our place on the Just Enterprise consortium and to be able to expand our reach for this into Angus.

“The support enabled us to have a mindset shift and look at our internal structure. It allowed me as a manager to have open conversations with my Trustees and change the structure of the charity for the better. We have also been able to look at our volunteer programme and be able to offer a more robust service. An external look into our organisation was much needed and we are so grateful for the support.”

Genna Millar, Project Manager, Dundee Bairns, Just Enterprise client



STORIES FROM OUR COMMUNITY



Community Wealth Building programme in Aberdeenshire

In November 2022 The Circle was approached by Elevator about an opportunity to work together on a programme focused on Community Wealth Building for Aberdeenshire Council. The aim of this programme was to provide people with knowledge on Community Wealth Building and help them clarify their plans to better prepare them for setting up and running their projects. Over the course of six weeks, The Circle delivered interactive workshops covering key topics including legal structures, funding, property and social impact.

“I have created a new voluntary organisation with a board of five women to act as an umbrella over the three projects I am presently committed to, all geared around play and learning. This will enable me to seek funding for staff and for the projects themselves, as well as providing direction to keep them all on track.”

A participant, six months after the programme ended



[READ MORE ON OUR BLOG](#)

SUPPORTING SOCIAL ENTERPRISES TO GROW AND THRIVE

Our consultancy clients are followed up with six months after their support. This year 50% of those who responded said they had a mindset shift and another 50% built a more robust business plan.



just enterprise

The Circle supported 15 charities and social enterprises at no cost to them through the Just Enterprise programme.

The Circle ran its first ever Board Matchmaker event at our Dudhope Castle HQ. In this event we paired skilled individuals with third sector organisations looking to grow their boards.



The Circle Consultancy team delivered more than 65 hours of pro bono support to individuals and third sector organisations.

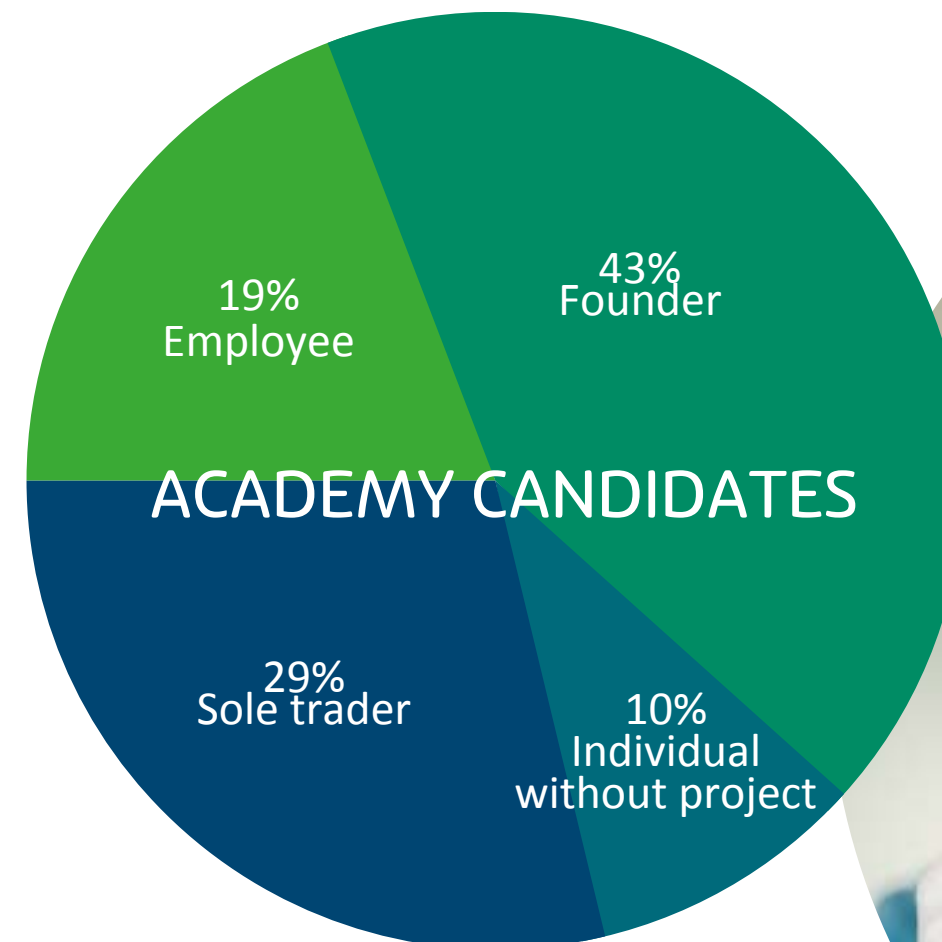


TRAINING SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS, CHARITIES, AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS



The Circle Academy is a practical and educational training programme for those interested in running a More Than Profit® business and offers the opportunity to attain a SCQF Level 7 'Award in Social Entrepreneurship'. It was piloted by The Circle between 2019-2022, with support from the Scottish Government, The Rank Foundation, Foundation Scotland, Mathew Trust, Brightsolid and Wells Gibson. We have tested a variety of formats, orders, timings and speakers for the programme over six cohorts of social entrepreneurs. More than 70 people have now completed The Circle Academy programme. These candidates have come from a wide range of backgrounds, experience levels and industries.

This year, we decided to put the programme on hiatus to take it through some exciting developments and we will be announcing more soon...



TRAINING SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS, CHARITIES, AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

6

Cohorts of candidates completed the programme.

73

Candidates from all over the world took part in The Circle Academy.

5

International alumni based in Europe, Africa and Asia.

10

Organisations received 1:1 support from a communications specialist.

£2,475

Distributed to wcademy pitch winners in total.

8

Candidates attained The Circle Academy Award in Social Entrepreneurship, an SCQF level 7 award.

Parfait Mugisha
Perfect Village Communities, Cohort 5

“

Each session was inspirational and taught me really important and indispensable lessons that helped develop our enterprise. The ongoing support from the Academy team has also been really helpful, especially with grants and funding research, and project development.

”

PVC Burundi is a community-owned and managed social enterprise that recognises the correlation between environmental degradation and decreasing community health.



ALUMNI SUCCESSES



Parfait Mugisha, PVC Burundi, cohort 5

Perfect Village Communities "PVC Burundi" is a community-owned and managed social enterprise that recognizes the correlation between environmental degradation and decreasing community health. PVC recently won the 2023 Equator Prize.

Johannes Peterson, Àban, cohort 5

Àban is a Scottish charity based in Inverness that offers positive outdoor adventures for young people and families. They recently won the 'One to Watch' award in the Social Enterprise Awards Scotland 2023.



Stephanie Graham, Dundee Community Craft and Natla, cohort 4

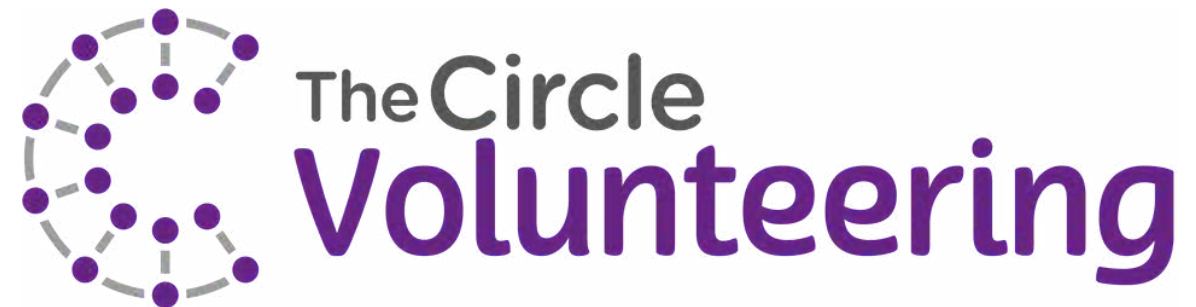
Stephanie runs Natla Jewellery Studio, a multi-award winning jewellery brand. Its profits feed into social enterprise, Dundee Community Craft which provides craft education, employment and volunteering opportunities to vulnerable people. Stephanie was named on the 2023 WISE100 list of top women in social enterprise.

Danielle McKinnon, Eat Sleep Ride, cohort 6

Eat, Sleep, Ride is an accessible, community-led social enterprise based on the South East Scottish coastline operating from a 24-acre off-grid farm. They support people on their journey to wellness and empowerment through therapeutic, educational and community initiatives. Eat, Sleep, Ride were recently nominated in the Health and Social Care at the Social Enterprise Awards Scotland 2023.



DEVELOPING SKILLS & CONFIDENCE FOR THE WORKPLACE



The Circle Volunteering is an inclusive and empowering volunteer experience with roles across the business to suit a range of interests and personal development goals.

The Circle Volunteering plays an essential role in our ability to create a wide impact on our community. Our volunteers help our team and tenants in all areas of our hubs. In return, they gain a community, skills for life, and support to build upon their wellbeing.

The programme is centred around our core values: fairness, teamwork, professionalism, pioneering, empowerment and inclusion.

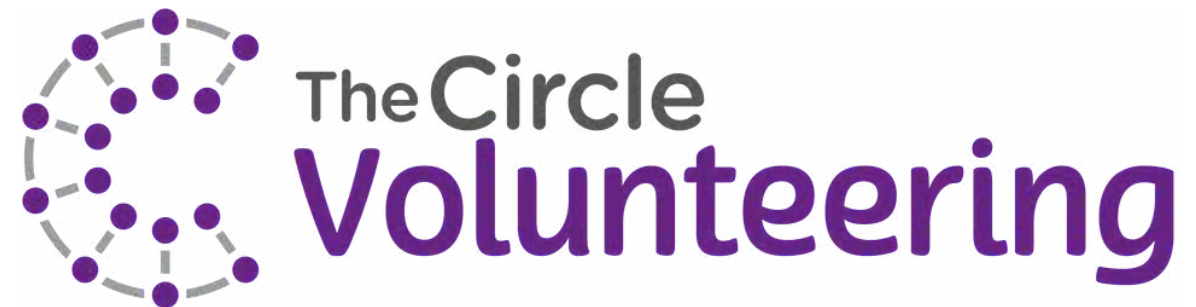
The Circle Volunteering aims to create a safe space for volunteers to gain confidence and experience by being accessible and inclusive. We help our volunteers find experiences that suit them and have created a community they can feel comfortable in.

In the past year we have increased our volunteer pool and widened our offering including roles in reception, administration, marketing and historical research. We have also been able to work with more educational institutions to offer their students work experience placements to introduce them to the third sector as a career path and increase their skills.

[READ MORE ON OUR BLOG](#)



STORIES FROM OUR COMMUNITY



Volunteer to Employee - Michael Aitkenhead, General Operative, The Circle Glasgow

Michael had worked at a fast food restaurant for many years when he decided he would prefer to work in an office-based career. Without any previous experience, he wasn't sure how to achieve this.

Michael decided to volunteer to gain work experience, develop his administration skills, and add something new to his CV which fit with his career goals. He started volunteering in a reception and admin role at The Circle Glasgow, in Easterhouse, in March 2023.

Because Michael continued to work full-time, he needed some time to adjust and manage his timekeeping with the support of The Circle's team in Glasgow.

In September 2023, Michael was offered a part-time job as a receptionist and now looks forward to less stress and more time to develop his admin and computer skills.

"I've gained useful work experience in a sector I have had little experience or training in."



DEVELOPING SKILLS & CONFIDENCE FOR THE WORKPLACE



50 volunteers
across sites, 28 are
currently with us.



14 of our volunteers are in
education.



Five volunteers have been
recognised with three Saltire
Awards and two accessing the
Room to Reward scheme.



Four volunteers have gone on to
secure employment including one
with The Circle.



The volunteer programme has been
developed to support personal growth.



12 volunteer events including two
community litter picks.

DEVELOPING SKILLS & CONFIDENCE FOR THE WORKPLACE

OUR VOLUNTEERS

32%

Under 25

40%

Female

48%

Male

12%

Non-binary

44%

BAME

48%

Consider themselves
disabled

18%

LGBTQIA+

“The Circle is a place that lightens my mood, and I can try all sorts of roles to develop myself.”

Haiyin Xu, Volunteer,
The Circle Dundee

When Haiyin moved to Dundee to search for job opportunities, she decided to volunteer to stay involved with society while on a career break. After meeting Dundee's Volunteer & Office Coordinator at a volunteer networking session in October 2022, Haiyin started volunteering at The Circle.

Over the year, she has created content, including video feedback from the team on the “4 day week”. She recently decided to volunteer at the reception desk to improve her English further and learn more about Scottish culture. She had the opportunity to attend a Work Preparation Day planned by The Circle and Social Security Scotland.

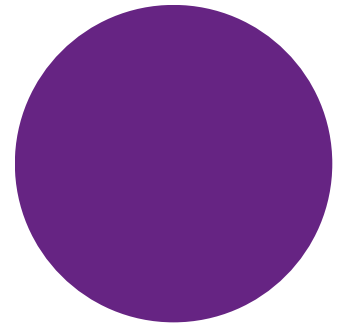
Haiyin recently got a job as a Social Research Interviewer surveying Scottish people's opinions on health, cost of living and family resources, though she is keen to continue volunteering.



DEVELOPING SKILLS & CONFIDENCE FOR THE WORKPLACE

WORK EXPERIENCE

The Circle Volunteering also works with schools, colleges and universities to offer work experience placements and internships to their students to provide them with an insight into the third sector as a potential career path. We've been delighted to work with some great young people over the past year to provide meaningful placements with experience across all areas of the business.



6

High Schools

5

Universities

11

High School Students

14

University Students

PARTNERS



STORIES FROM OUR COMMUNITY

James Clarke, Finance intern from the University of St Andrews through The Robertson Trust Internship Scheme

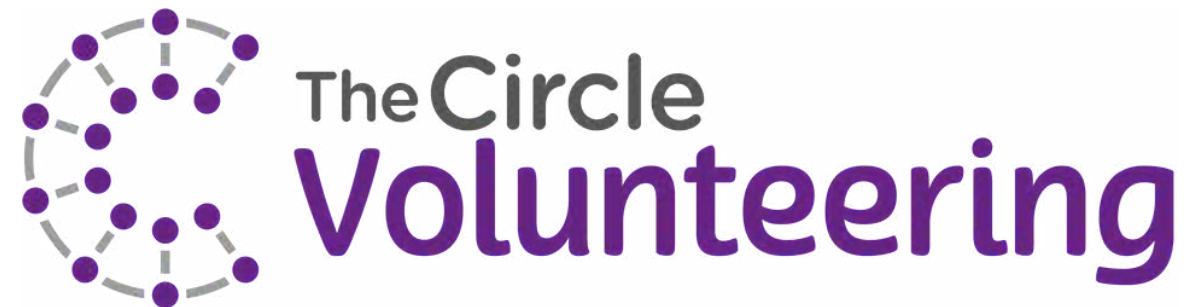
James comes from a Group +1 School (defined by LEAPS as a school with lower progression rates to higher education than the national average). Because of this, James was able to join a gateway programme into his Maths and Physics course at the University of St Andrews. James then joined The Robertson Trust Internship Scheme, which enables students from lower income to work paid internships in participating organisations to make work experience opportunities accessible. The Circle participated in this and offered 250 hours in a finance-focused role. While James had no experience in finance, he wanted to learn more to expand his post-university options. He impressed the team in his interview and offered that his education in maths and physics would help him in the role.

“I see the opportunities I was given reflected in the purpose of The Circle. That is, to invest in the local community and strive for growth, progress and prosperity. My time at The Circle gave me great insight into the world of work, finance and community, and it is something that I will carry with me as I take my next steps into the future.”

James is now in his final year of university and will use his experience at The Circle to inform his career path.



GOVERNANCE



OUR VOLUNTARY BOARD

Our board of directors is also comprised of volunteers as non-executive directors alongside our CEO, Kirsty Thomson. Each of them brings a deep wealth of knowledge, experience, and skills to help us develop The Circle. They are responsible for our governance, ensuring we always spend money appropriately in line with our constitution and that we are working towards our vision and mission. We are thankful to our volunteer board for their support during another challenging year.



Caroline Lees



Ron Smith



Campbell Archibald



Natalie Lafferty



Angela Rieu-Clarke

FINAL THOUGHTS

With the cost of living crisis, soaring energy prices and with competition for funding at a new high, we are seeing more organisations having to make some very tough decisions and The Circle has been no different.

However, after a particularly challenging year The Circle team have continued to pull together and work to keep delivering our services and support our community. I believe it is important to recognise that our work is only made possible by our talented staff team. I am immensely proud of what we have been able to achieve in the past year despite everything that has been thrown at us.

The impact being delivered by the third sector is more needed than ever but it is exceptionally difficult in the current climate. A focus on financial sustainability and adopting multiple income streams is vital to the survival of our sector.

I would like to thank our staff, board of directors, supporters, tenants, clients, partners and funders for their support in helping us achieve this impact across Scotland and beyond. I also want to acknowledge the contributions of our outgoing Chair, Donald McPherson and say a massive thank you for his six years of service on the board and for steering us through a difficult first six months of the year.

Kirsty Thomson, Founder and CEO



STAFF THIS YEAR

25%

Under 25

50%

Female

50%

Male

8.3%

BAME

83%

Full-time

1

New Starts

STAFF AND WELLBEING

The wellbeing of our team remains a steadfast priority for The Circle. The past 12 months have presented some of the most challenging circumstances The Circle has ever faced in its seven years of trading. The rising cost of business, especially energy, led The Circle on a perilous journey to remain financially sustainable. The resultant outcome was one of last resort - staff redundancy.

The decision to enter a period of redundancy was incredibly difficult for The Circle's leadership team. Our staff team's grace, professionalism and humanity displayed during this difficult period was exemplary, demonstrating the strong culture that has been built and fostered within the business. Our team has bounced back and shown great resilience to help The Circle persevere through the ongoing economic crisis. The Circle is proud to continue to recognise our team as our most valuable asset and we must keep staff wellbeing at the centre of that.

“ I never thought I would go to university, but The Circle is supporting me to work while doing a Graduate Apprenticeship in Business Management. They have understood my new time constraints, and my in-work mentor has scheduled regular check-ins, so I have somebody looking out for my wellbeing. I'm buzzing to bring what I learn to The Circle!”

Charli Perkins, Volunteer & Office Coordinator,
The Circle Dundee



HOW WE SUPPORTED OUR STAFF THIS YEAR



Wellbeing

Through monthly one-to-one supervision sessions, staff highlight issues or areas where they may struggle regarding their mental health. From this, The Circle's senior leadership team refer individuals through a tenant who is a registered Chartered Psychologist. .

Continuing Professional Development

CPD is encouraged for all our staff, with a budget aligned for staff training for anyone on the team who identifies an opportunity to learn and gain more skills.

Where possible, The Circle works with external funding to allow all staff access to recognised qualifications.



4 Day Week

The Circle is one of the first social enterprises in Scotland to have pioneered the 4 Day Week across the company. This is important in helping staff prioritise work-life balance and well-being. Several team members undertake mentoring or board positions for local third-sector organisations on their "rest day".

Living Wage

The Circle remains committed to paying staff the "Real Living Wage".



STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

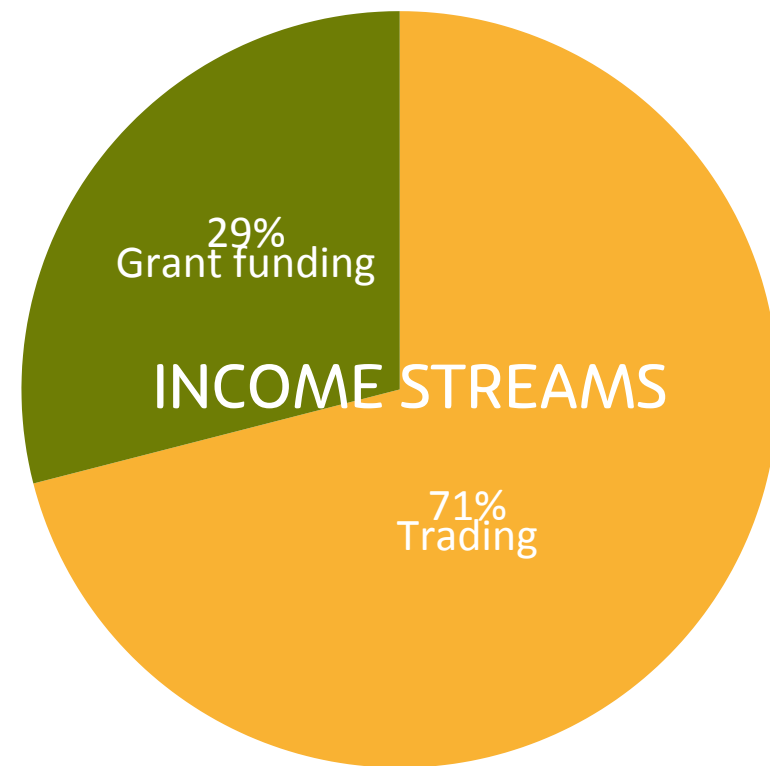
Building strategic partnerships across sectors and with local and national government are key for us to help achieve our goals and influence important changes for the third sector and for society.

This year we were delighted to receive visits from Tom Arthur MSP and Chris Law MP and to have the support of David Linden MP in tackling our ongoing challenges with energy prices.

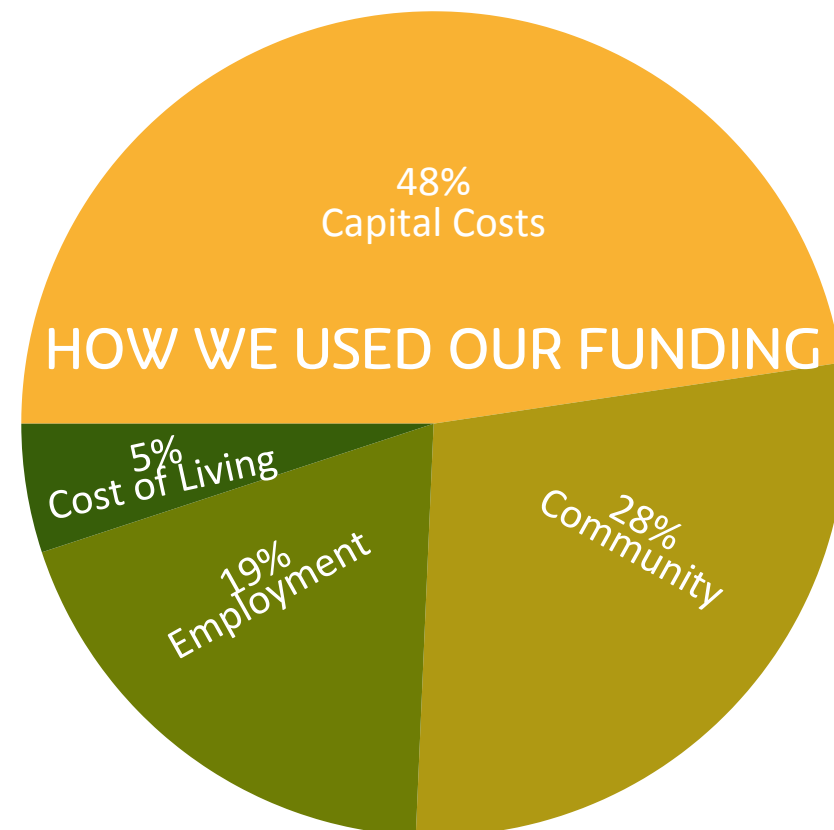


In the past year we have been fortunate enough to work with some great partner organisations to deliver projects, host events, provide work experience opportunities and more.

INCOME STREAMS



As a social enterprise, it's key for us to have a mixture of traded income and grant income for our financial sustainability. This year we are grateful to the funders who supported our work and whose generous donations made up 29% of our income.



RECENT AWARDS



Acknowledgements

Social Impact Report
2022/23

The Circle would like to thank our sponsors, funders, partners, our tenants, our team and the local community for all their support and encouragement over the past year.



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www.thecirclecic.org.uk

Circle Scotland CIC
Company No. SC515218

