

REPORT OF THE SOCIAL CARE COUNCIL (KNOWN AS CROSSREACH BOARD) MAY 2024

Proposed Deliverance

The General Assembly:

1. Receive the Report.
2. Recognise the continued pressures with recruitment across the sector, commend the workforce for all they are continuing to achieve in the face of that, and encourage the sharing of recruitment resources across wider Church of Scotland networks (Section 1.3).
3. Note the initiative being piloted with Scottish Workforce Chaplaincy and endorse the move to ensure that spiritual wellbeing remains a priority for the CrossReach workforce and those it supports (Section 1.3.5).
4. Commend the ecumenical and interfaith efforts to bring attention to the issue of Fair Work in social care and endorse further collaboration in this area (Section 1.4).
5. Express alarm about the cuts to vital care services being experienced by CrossReach and other care providers in the social care sector and ask CrossReach, working with the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team, to raise awareness about the crisis in social care with Presbyteries and congregations and to make representations to the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government (Section 2.8).
6. Note the extensive consultation exercise undertaken by CrossReach to set a clear way forward which will allow it to continue to play its part in the overall mission of the Church of Scotland, and urge Presbyteries to continue to work with CrossReach in a spirit of collaboration and mutual support (Section 3.5).

Report

1. BUILDING TOGETHER

1.1 Strong foundations

1.1.1 *'I've met 6 or 7 people that seen me last year when I was at my lowest. That's meant a lot to me... cos they've seen me at my worst. And now I am here with a CrossReach t-shirt on as a volunteer. It's been amazing.'* (CrossReach Recovery Volunteer at the Recovery Walk 2023)

1.1.2 *'Eskmills means everything to me – they've looked after me.'* *'It's like having another family.'*

(Eskmills Learning Disability Customers - 25 years Anniversary)

1.1.3 *'I get plenty of time to go at my own pace.'* *'I feel able to do what I want.'*

(Residents' feedback - Older People Quality Circles event)

1.1.4 *'Going each week, talking to Anna and people my own age through music and art therapy I found an understanding that I wasn't alone.'*

(Young Person - Sunflower Garden Service)

1.1.5 2023 has been a full and varied year for CrossReach as it has grappled with the complexities of a time of great change for the Church of Scotland and a time of great uncertainty for social care across Scotland.

1.1.6 In the face of significant financial pressures, pending legislative change, and growing need but constrained resources, a key task for the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and CrossReach Board has been trying to keep things as steady as possible for people accessing and working in the services, while taking stock of what the future might hold.

1.1.7 Part of the process of taking stock has been recognising and celebrating the value of what CrossReach does now. The care and support offered, as part of the overall mission of the Church of Scotland, and in line with the third mark of mission, makes a positive difference to the lives of around 28,500 people across Scotland every year.

<https://www.crossreach.org.uk/impact-report-2024>

1.1.8 In 2023, the services touched thousands of lives, continuing to demonstrate Christ's love for his people through love in action, and empowering them to live life to the full, whatever the circumstances faced.

1.1.9 There have been a number of highlights across each of the service areas.

1.1.9.1 Children and Families Services marked the 20th anniversary of [Sunflower Garden](#) in Edinburgh. The service works with children and young people, impacted by drug or alcohol use in their families, by offering Counselling, Art Therapy, Groupwork and Therapeutic Support from their base on Queen Street and out in local communities and schools. Last year, the service offered 3404 sessions to 299 children and young people. It is financed through a number of different funding streams, including charitable donations. The CrossReach Board have also allocated funds received from Church of Scotland to this service, recognising the benefit that it brings to hundreds of children every year.

1.1.9.1.1 [Sunflower Garden](#) is just one of the services which offers therapeutic support to children and young people. These are much needed services which see a growing demand in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. The counselling and support teams report that they are being presented with more trauma and distress than at any other time. This is of concern in all services but particularly in those supporting families with infants in the early years, where there can be lifelong impact on the health and wellbeing of a baby or young child where a parent is experiencing high levels of distress. CrossReach [Daisy Chain](#) and the [Perinatal Counselling Services](#) provide family wellbeing support which helps families to be emotionally and mentally well. They help to reduce parental isolation, offer a sense of routine and a nurturing and safe place to belong, while improving relationships for the whole family.

1.1.9.1.2 The [Perinatal Counselling Services](#) provided over 800 counselling sessions last year. Extending access to a crèche within those counselling services helps parents to be able to attend but can be anxiety provoking as it is often the first time a child has been left with someone outside of close family. The staff teams work closely with parents to navigate these moments positively. Role modelling, singing, reading and baby-led communication boost parents' confidence and improves the bond between parent and infant. 91% of clients felt they had an improved bond with their baby and an improved sense of wellbeing overall.

1.1.9.2 The Adult Care leadership team received a report following a piece of research led by Professor Sarah Johnsen, Heriot-Watt University, about the impact of [Dochas](#) (Stornoway) which offers preventative support for those at risk of becoming homeless. This service works out of The [Lewis Street Project](#) where five people are offered supported accommodation to help with their mental health. Both services achieve good outcomes for supported people and Professor Johnsen commented specifically on 'the great deal of hope' which [Dochas](#) holds out to the people who come into contact with it. The hope continues to be offered, despite the fact that some of the people being supported can find services hard to engage with. One of the people contributing to the report states:

'At times, I have actually thrown it back in their face and I feel awful for doing that – but that's the nature of the drink. When I've been drinking, I won't reply to their phone calls, texts or the door. They're always the same with me. It's the same support worker I get regardless and that matters as it makes it so much easier to be open and trusting.'

1.1.9.2.1 Every year, CrossReach is represented by staff and people who have found recovery from alcohol or drug use at The Recovery Walk Scotland. This national event is organised by the Scottish Recovery Consortium in partnership with organisations and individuals invested in recovery. The purpose of the event, which brings people in recovery together from across the country is threefold; to pay tribute to those who have lost their lives to alcohol, drugs or poor mental health; to celebrate recovery wherever that happens; and to make recovery visible to the people of Scotland, in order to bring hope to others.

1.1.9.3 The Older People services welcome generous gifts for [South Beach House](#), a residential care home for older people in Ardrossan and [Cameron House](#), a dementia specialist care home in Inverness. The donation of £10,000 provided by St Cuthbert's Guild, Saltcoats will be used to furnish a Namaste therapy room in [South Beach House](#) which will provide life-enriching sensory experiences for residents living with advanced dementia. The very active Friends Group at [Cameron House](#) have been fundraising for a new minibus to help residents take part in more community activities. A recent bid for funding from Highland Cross, a 50 mile fundraising initiative based in the Scottish Highlands, will mean that they have now reached their goal and can look forward to enjoying outings in and around the Inverness area.

1.2 Powerful Partnerships

1.2.1 Working in partnership has played an increasingly important part in supporting existing work and in creating opportunities for growth at both a local and national level. Scottish Government funding of £2,386,865 under the Residential Rehabilitation Rapid Capacity Programme will see capacity in [Beechwood House](#), Inverness, grow so that it can provide each year a service to an additional 22 people struggling with alcohol or drug use.

1.2.2 [Heart for Art](#), which benefited from Guild project partnership funding in the past, has also continued to grow and develop. This initiative supports people living with dementia, along with their carers, by offering therapeutic arts-based activities designed to stimulate conversation, help concentration and express themselves more freely. There are now 18 groups running from church halls across the country, as well as in a number of the residential care homes, operated by CrossReach. It has been humbling to work alongside so many congregations to help make a difference in their communities. A significant legacy received last year will support further growth of this initiative into 2024.

1.2.3 The two prison visitor centres ([HMP Perth](#) and [HMPYOI Polmont](#)) continue to provide much needed and valued support to families with loved ones in prison. The success of these centres often depends on close collaboration with both the Scottish Prison Service and Families Outside. During 2023, there was a particular focus on siblings who often take on a caring role when a family member is given a custodial sentence, with a push to understanding what more can be done to support them, including access to more informal visiting arrangements. Visiting arrangements at [HMP Perth](#) have also been strengthened over the past year to allow more time to be spent in the waiting areas and this has allowed for more frequent engagement with a bigger pool of visitors than was possible when the team there were working from their standalone building on the perimeter.

1.3 Workforce

1.3.1 None of what is achieved is possible without the support of a highly skilled and qualified workforce. At a time when recruitment remains difficult across all sectors and remains the greatest risk on the CrossReach risk register, a number of steps have been taken to recognise the value of existing employees and to recruit to vacant positions over the past year. One of the most important has been to introduce the Living Wage as a minimum standard for all employees, as well as to pay careful attention to differentials for frontline staff and managers who are carrying added responsibility.

1.3.2 There has been significant investment in IT solutions in the form of a new recruitment website 'JobTrain' which has seen 9372 applications since it was launched in April 2023, representing a fivefold increase in the number of applications being processed. This is a significant increase and has helped speed up recruitment processes by greater automation around tasks such as inviting for interview, calling for references and issuing standard letters. The process of inducting new staff members has also been reviewed with greater support being offered in the first few weeks of taking up a post with CrossReach. There has been some success reported as a result of these steps being taken but with over 250 FTE vacancies still to fill (22.9% of the full staffing compliment), and high agency costs being felt as a direct consequence, it is no time for complacency. Regrettably, the lack of recognition in some Local Government contracts that all working in care should be paid a Living Wage, means that the full costs of care are not always covered and runs

the risk of putting additional strain on the longer term sustainability of services themselves. The CrossReach Board and CMT have been greatly encouraged by the support of many of the new Presbyteries in responding to a request to share vacancies across their own networks. It is anticipated that this will pay dividends in the future as different ways of working together continue to be explored.

1.3.3 Retention, by demonstrating to staff just how much they are valued, is an important part of workforce management. The employee awards celebrated those with long service records and acknowledged the achievements of the 52 members of staff who gained professional qualifications over the course of the year. Qualifications were gained in a number of specialisms such as SVQ's in social care, management and leadership, teaching and understanding autism. Employees also gathered together, face to face and virtually, to celebrate the exceptional contributions made over the course of the year by individual staff members, volunteers and teams as nominated by their peers or people supported by the services. It was a highly successful event with a good mix of employees from both operational and support services that were acknowledged for their dedication, innovation and expertise on the day.

1.3.4 It is good when the value of employees is recognised from those within CrossReach but special to the Board when it is also externally acknowledged. This year, they were pleased when the Fundraising and Engagement team were awarded the trophy for best individual giving campaign by the Chartered Institute of Fundraising Scotland in September 2023, a major accolade for a young team in a well contested field. The CrossReach workforce is made up of specialists in different roles who all play a vital part in supporting services in different ways.

1.3.5 As well as recognising considerable strengths, looking after the wellbeing of employees as they face increasing pressures remains a priority for CrossReach. A number of steps have been taken over the last year in collaboration with the Wellbeing Champions; members of the workforce who take on a responsibility within their own place of work to support others and signpost to wider wellbeing networks where necessary. One of the most recent initiatives involves a collaboration with Scottish Workplace Chaplaincy. Four chaplains, with the potential for a fifth, have been paired with services in different parts of the country and are now offering additional spiritual care across our Children and Families, Adult Care and Older People Services. The overall impact will be evaluated towards the middle of the year and a decision taken as to whether this should be rolled out further, but it is hoped that the strong relationships being built up can continue well into the future.

1.4 Fair Work

1.4.1 One of the biggest factors at play in recruiting and retaining a workforce remains pay and conditions. Our 2023 report to the General Assembly detailed the issue of fair pay in social care and outlined an initiative led by Archbishop Nolan (Archbishop of Glasgow and President of Justice and Peace Scotland) and the then Moderator, Very Rev. Dr Iain Greenshields.

1.4.2 This initiative explored fair work as a matter of justice and equity for employees, but also recognised the negative impact on those who could not receive a service due to lack of available staff. Over 400 faith leaders from Salvation Army, Free Church of Scotland, The Scottish Episcopal Church, The Catholic Church, The Church of Scotland, The Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society and Jewish Care Scotland went on to sign a declaration asking the Scottish Government to rethink their pay policy for social care workers, which had already fallen well behind equivalent grades in the NHS. This initiative was then used to add a different voice to a campaign, #4StepsToFairWork, which was spearheaded by CCPS, the umbrella body for organisations delivering care and support in Scotland's voluntary sector. In December 2023, representatives from the Catholic Church in Scotland, Church of Scotland and CrossReach, led by Right Rev. Dr Sally Foster-Fulton, in her role as Moderator, met with Michael Matheson MSP, Cabinet Secretary for NHS Recovery, Health and Social Care. This meeting was arranged on behalf of faith leaders to discuss the wider issues and seek solutions. While progress has been made, with some previously excluded categories of children's workers now being included in the Scottish Government pay deal, there remains much to do if those working in care are to be appropriately recognised for their skills and expertise.

1.4.3 The support of individuals, presbyteries, and congregations in signing up to the declaration, and recognising the wider importance of this issue, has already been greatly appreciated. It is hoped that Fair Work in social care is an issue on which continued collaboration is possible. Leaders from the faith communities in Scotland will meet in June 2024 to discuss the next steps.

1.4.4 The premise of Fair Work goes wider than that of pay. One of the factors which has led to the sector falling behind and feeling undervalued is a lack of effective voice. The social care workforce is largely female (85%) and is not widely represented by trade unions. CrossReach has recognised this as a significant barrier to good employee relations and has worked alongside the Employee Representative Group (ERG) over the past year to ensure that CrossReach employees feel that they do have a voice and can influence decision making at both a service and organisational level. The ERG now has a raised profile within CrossReach and it is hoped that this will start to make a difference to the confidence of employees in bringing forward matters of importance to them, and seeking a collaborative way forward.

2. BUILDING IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

2.1 Financial challenges in the social care sector

2.1.1 While there remains much to be thankful for, there are significant threats to services posed by Local Authority budget cuts. Over the course of the last year, four longstanding services have been affected by decisions about their funding. [Daisy Chain](#) in Govanhill had over £90K pulled from its budget in the spring of 2023 and was helped through a tough time by generous donations made to the emergency appeal run by the CrossReach fundraising department. There has been some remodelling of that service, and it is hoped that discussions about a different way of operating will bear fruit and allow the service to continue to offer support to children and their families experiencing extreme disadvantage in the Govanhill area. However, this is far from settled and the service remains precarious.

2.2 The [Dick Stewart Service](#) in Glasgow, which offers supported accommodation to offenders who have recently left prison is under threat, after 20 years of operation, following budget decisions made by Glasgow City Council. This, despite it being recognised as a service of exceptional quality by the Care Inspectorate and Scottish Prison Service, and where those who have benefitted from the service are highly unlikely to reoffend. A recent inspection praised the service for excellent relationships between staff and the people they support, and the commitment to helping them progress, which meant that the risk of reoffending was assessed to be very low.

2.3 [Day services for older people](#) in Pitlochry and Bankfoot had notification of their funding being discontinued at the end of the year, but after some discussion with Perth and Kinross Health and Social Care Partnership, a [Heart for Art Group](#) was commissioned. This now runs from The Tryst, allowing CrossReach to continue to support some people from that area in collaboration with NHS and Alzheimer Scotland.

2.4 The Board also took the difficult decision to close Glasgow Supported Living Services, Yoker, because of the difficulties in funding and recruitment overall.

2.5 [Morven Day Services](#) in Kilmarnock, which supports people who have had a challenging time with their mental health has also been advised that its core funding will cease later this year. Significant representation has been made by people supported by the service to local Councillors and MSPs. Senior staff are now in discussion with the Health and Social Care Partnership about their intentions for the future, and whether any element of the service can be salvaged, but it is a fragile situation.

2.6 In a blow to homelessness services in Glasgow, the Glasgow Alliance to End Homelessness (GAEH) effectively came to a premature end in August 2023. CrossReach was a partner along with 6 other third sector partners (Aspire, Mungo Foundation, Right There, SACRO, Salvation Army and Wheatley Care), People with Lived Experience and Glasgow City HSCP. The Alliance model had been held up as a promising alternative to competitive tendering. That it has not been successful in Glasgow will be of note across the country. The decision to dissolve the GAEH, triggered by Glasgow City, was disappointing for all other partners but reveals something of the challenges Glasgow City Council continues to face as it tries to balance a budget and meet its statutory responsibilities.

2.7 All of the above cuts, and consequential disruption to services, have caused significant distress to supported people, their families and employees as few alternatives to these vital services are being offered. Each of the operational leads have been doing what they can to support those most affected by these difficult funding decisions.

2.8 Whilst the huge financial challenges experienced by Health and Social Partnerships is recognised and understood, there is a sense of inevitability that the short-term savings being made today can only lead to greater expense for tomorrow. The services subject to funding cuts within CrossReach and across the voluntary sector are high quality, cost effective and deliver good outcomes for people. These are the very services which help prevent family breakdown, support people to live well by recognising what is important to them, and can relieve the pressure on the already overloaded services provided by the NHS or the Scottish Prison Service. The cuts to social care, both within CrossReach and across the sector, will initially be felt most keenly by those individuals who rely on the support offered. However, in time, this will have a ripple effect in communities across Scotland as more people reach crisis point due to the erosion of the supportive infrastructure that social care currently offers. It is important that the current cuts to early intervention and care services are understood, debated and that future assurances are given to the Scottish public about services being there for the future when people most need them. CrossReach staff are ready to work alongside the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team to raise awareness within congregations about these issues so that appropriate representation is made to key policy makers, and now seek support to that end.

2.9 It is highly likely that in a time of stretched financial resources in Local Government and in The Church of Scotland that more difficult decisions will have to be made, despite all efforts to the contrary. The imperative to reach a breakeven position by 2026 remains a key focus of the Corporate Management Team and the CrossReach Board and Finance Group who keep all services under rigorous financial scrutiny while working hard to retain high quality. The Finance Group have introduced new processes around assessing the viability of services for the future which will help highlight both the critical path to success and where more difficult decisions may have to be taken.

2.10 The conditions around any future funding for CrossReach, directly from Church of Scotland funds, is a matter currently being discussed between the Assembly Trustees and the CrossReach Board. Resolution is anticipated later in 2024 and in time for 2025 budget preparation. However, resourcing mission goes wider than financial considerations and this will also continue to be explored and encouraged. The CrossReach Board are working in full co-operation with the Assembly Trustees and appreciate their ongoing interest and support whilst recognising the challenges that they are currently facing.

3. BUILDING TOGETHER

3.1 Collaborative conversations about the future

3.1.1 Following a period of Covid recovery but with new uncertainties looming, the CrossReach Board agreed to take some time to engage with supported people, employees, and partners to understand what was important to them. The resulting work has allowed the Board and CMT to explore core beliefs about CrossReach, know a bit more about what works well and what could be better, and think about the future, together.

3.1.2 The work undertaken has been humbling, insightful and thought provoking.

3.1.3 Overall, much of the initial feedback was positive about the work of CrossReach and highlighted significant strengths.

3.1.4 Feedback included words such as caring, compassionate, inclusive, professional and supportive.

3.1.5 There were no indicators that CrossReach was involved in care and support in areas which were no longer relevant, with a number of responses from supported people, carers and professional partners asking for more of the same.

3.1.6 There was a recognition that CrossReach makes a real difference to the people it supports with a number of people able to illustrate why life is better.

3.1.7 While there were a number of issues which were highlighted as important to different groups and individuals specifically, there was a good consistency in the feedback across all of those surveyed and who engaged in other ways, which will allow CrossReach to determine core principles and priorities for the future.

3.2 The people we support, families and carers

3.2.1 An initial survey which engaged over 100 people was followed up by an opportunity to get together and join in a more in-depth discussion. This was done differently in each of the three service areas, to ensure that people could engage well depending on their communication style and preferences.

3.2.2 Older People Services held Quality Circle afternoon tea events in each of the 14 care homes and were able to gain feedback from over 400 people in that way. It was important that residents were comfortable, in a familiar environment, and had people around them who could prompt with questions and feedback cards where that was helpful to them. Families and carers were all invited to play a part. Overwhelmingly, residents fed back that they felt safe, supported, and listened to. Having rapport with other residents and positive relationships with familiar staff featured highly in discussions. The feedback also highlighted how much individuals value the range of activities on offer including rickshaw rides, attending community events and enjoying live entertainment within their homes. Importantly, some residents communicated what they would like to see even more of, including opportunities to engage in music and other activities. People also shared how much they valued being able to go about their day at their own pace and the ability to make ongoing choices.

3.2.3 Adult Care Services held a World Café style event in Perth where 50 people with a range of different support needs including learning disability, mental health, homelessness and substance use came together to discuss how they would like CrossReach to develop for the future. A range of topics were covered and discussions were helped along by facilitators at each table. There were topics which were more important to some individuals than others, but a number of themes emerged. There was a concern across all the discussions regarding staffing, levels of retention and the desire for a more consistent staff base which would reduce the need for agency staff. These were identified as a top priority. Feeling fully involved in decisions, having their voices heard and acted on and making good connections in the communities around them were also high on the priority list.

3.2.4 Children and Families Services engaged with 29 children and young people. 14 came from the care and education service, including 4 on the pupil council, and 15 from the children with disability service based at [The Mallard](#) in Springburn, Glasgow.

3.2.5 They held two fun and friendly events which involved dressing up and assuming the role of ‘boss for the day’. Again, core themes quickly emerged including the need for consistent, well-trained staff teams around them, a need to be well connected in communities which would open up a range of activities and choices, and the need to be seen as individuals who were fully involved in decisions affecting them.

3.3 Employees

3.3.1 438 employees chose to give feedback as part of a workforce wide survey, and the senior management team were involved in a face-to-face session with a facilitator in addition. The priorities were clear. Recruitment and retention was the top issue identified by employees, who were concerned about the number of vacant roles and the levels of pay compared to other sectors. Funding and finance was second, but related, with concerns being expressed about sustainability in the light of the constraints to funding and if high agency costs were to continue. Third was quality and capacity, reflecting comments about a need to support employees with good training and supervision and identify routes for career development and progression so that current and future needs could be met well. Investment in the IT infrastructure to support care delivery was also important to employees along with Employee Voice, the environment (including net zero aspirations), and faith and mission.

3.3.2 Feedback from volunteers surveyed was consistent with that of employees.

3.4 Corporate partners

3.4.1 Feedback from the 22 partner organisations contacted was broadly similar. This included comments from NHS and Local Authority partners, national church offices, funders and commissioners. Quality of services and future capacity to meet current and emerging needs was a number one priority with a well trained developed and remunerated workforce in order to facilitate that being the second highest issue raised. Financial security, supporting the net zero targets and using influence to develop public policy were also features of that feedback.

3.5 Presbytery partners

3.5.1 Last year over 200 Churches, Guilds and Presbytery partners collaborated with CrossReach as part of the 'Share the Love' initiative. This involved working in new and different ways to both raise awareness of social issues and to raise funds so that both the local congregations and CrossReach community-based services could better respond to them. This has helped reignite relationships in some areas and has brought mutual benefit with over £65,000 having been raised to date.

3.5.2 In order to continue to support the relationships being formed, CrossReach undertook a series of discussions with Presbytery Clerks and Mission Officers. These explored how to foster greater collaboration between the new Presbyteries, the CrossReach services in their areas, and the wider work and influence of CrossReach. Nine of the eleven Presbyteries based in Scotland have been part of the conversations so far, with two, which are more newly formed or in the process to follow at the most appropriate point. CrossReach continues to enjoy a good relationship with the Presbytery of England and appreciates the ongoing financial support from the Liverpool St Andrew's Fund.

3.5.3 These were positive and constructive conversations, allowing all parties involved to understand the pressures around and to work out ways in which to improve communications in the first instance, so that future opportunities can be recognised and developed.

3.5.4 The CrossReach Board appreciate the time that Presbyteries have given to these conversations and are grateful for the follow-up including the sharing of recruitment materials and for support for the Fair Work campaign. They look forward to engaging further on 'Share the Love' and strengthening partnerships over the course of the next year.

3.5.5 While none of the feedback received has been a total surprise, it has been really helpful to hear from such a wide range of the people for whom CrossReach is important and will allow the CrossReach CMT and Board to build on some of the actions which it has already taken over the past 18 months. These include investment in strengthening the mechanisms through which supported people and employees can have a more influential voice in the decisions which affect them, as well as enhancing pay terms and conditions for employees.

3.5.6 The consultation has also highlighted the importance of further developing strong partnerships which will be a key component to future success and will allow future collaboration around both service delivery and policy development.

3.5.7 There has been no identified need to change the remit set by the General Assembly for the Social Care Council (operating as CrossReach) which states:

- as part of the Church's mission, to offer services in Christ's name to people in need;
- to provide specialist resources to further the caring work of the Church;
- to identify existing and emerging areas of need, to guide the Church in pioneering new approaches to relevant problems and to make responses on issues arising within the area of the Council's concern through appropriate channels.

3.5.8 The purpose, vision and values will all be updated to reflect the feedback received and will be published, along with a set of core principles and a five year plan, later this year.

3.5.9 The Board are grateful to all who took the time to engage with the surveys and wider discussions and would want to thank them for their openness, honesty, and ambition for CrossReach as it looks to the future.

4. BUILDING TOGETHER

4.1 A fairer, more just society

4.1.1 These were highlighted in various sections of deliverance in 2023 and continue to be important areas for involvement by CrossReach and the wider church community.

4.2 National Care Service

4.2.1 The Scottish Government introduced the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill on 20th June 2022 with a view to making the change by 2026. Despite the widely agreed need for radical reform in the way in that Social Care is organised and funded there is still much debate about how this should be achieved, and what it will cost. The debate about Stage 1 of the Bill was significantly delayed as a result, but took place in February 2024. CrossReach have contributed to discussions in a number of ways and took part in the National Forum event in October 2023, organised by the co-design team at the Scottish Government, which provided an opportunity for people to come together and talk about the future of community health and social care in Scotland. However, by December 2023, the Scottish Government pushed back the date of full implementation from 2026 to 2029.

4.2.2 In December 2023 Audit Scotland commented:

4.2.2.1 *'Quite rightly time needs to be taken over planning and implementing the scale of the changes proposed in the Bill but the sector simply cannot wait for the reform that this is intended to bring. Action is needed now to ensure the sustainability of the sector and improve the availability and quality of social care services.'*

4.2.2.2 Focus must also be given to the specific local pressures seen across different areas of Scotland, in particular our rural and island communities. An ageing population, coupled with depopulation and the significantly increasing costs of delivering services in these communities is of real concern’.

4.2.3 There is still not enough information to assess the implications of the Bill on providers of social care in the voluntary sector. CrossReach will continue to work alongside the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team, who have been a supportive and welcome ally on this issue, to make representations at the most appropriate points.

4.3 National Mission on Drugs Deaths 2022- 2026

4.3.1 CrossReach continues to play an important role in the mission to reduce drugs deaths in Scotland by being an active participant in initiatives like the National Collaborative. The investment at [Beechwood House](#) in Inverness, reported above, will be a focus for the remainder of 2024 and the new facility is due to open its doors in November 2024.

4.3.2 CrossReach has also supported the work of the Church of Scotland’s Faith Action Programme Leadership Team by contributing to an online training resource which will help tackle stigma in the area of substance use by facilitating discussion on the role that stigma can play in preventing recovery, and giving some examples of the way CrossReach services tackle this issue.

4.4 Fair Work in Social Care

4.4.1 Reported in the section under recruitment challenges, the CrossReach Board acknowledge the significant support given to this area of work by the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team which has involved preparation of resources, as well as attending meetings with Scottish Ministers. They are grateful for that support and would encourage continued collaborative effort on this issue.

4.5 National Dementia Strategy

4.5.1 The Scottish Government published the implementation plan in February 2024 and CrossReach will continue to support COSLA and national partners to deliver on that plan. CrossReach was the first care provider in Scotland to appoint Dementia Ambassadors within each of the Older People Services and are proud to have continued to support the programme since 2012. Dementia Ambassadors work across social and public service settings and strive to improve the lives of people with dementia and their families and carers. Dementia Ambassadors are supported in a range of ways, including online information sessions to provide timely updates and share opportunities. In person regional meetings also provide opportunities to link with colleagues from other services, to share ideas and to celebrate success. In addition, ongoing support is provided in our Dementia Ambassador Microsoft Teams space with access to extensive resources organised by theme including types of dementia, seasonal activity ideas, and information for carers. The chat function allows Dementia Ambassadors to liaise with more than 60 colleagues from across the organisation.

4.5.2 Dementia Ambassadors are given time each month to focus on ongoing learning both internally and externally with key stakeholders including NHS Education Scotland and the Scottish Social Services Council. They also play a key role in supporting the Heart for Art service which is a collaboration between CrossReach and local congregations to support those in the community living with dementia.

4.6 The Promise Scotland

4.6.1 In 2020, Scotland recognised that it needed to improve the way in which it looked after children in care so that they could grow up loved, safe and respected. CrossReach supported the consultation on what could be different and has continued the journey to “#keepthepromise” over the last year in a number of innovative ways.

4.6.2 Following feedback from young people that the transition from care was a poor experience significant effort has been put into improving this by working more closely with Local Authority partners. One young person reports a very positive experience after CrossReach took on the lease of a flat for him, close to the house which he had lived in so that CrossReach staff who had become his family could continue to support him. The Local Authority committed financially to keeping the space open for him in the children’s house so that if it didn’t work out, he could return at any point. This has worked exceptionally well, and he will shortly take over the tenancy agreement himself.

4.6.3 Other feedback from children and young people was in relation to care plans, which they said should be improved. The CrossReach lead practitioner for The Promise worked with a group of staff to review these and make them more relevant and appealing to young people and this is now paying dividends as support needs can be better captured and understood.

4.6.4 In order to keep staff up to date with the latest thinking and developments, a Promise Newsletter has been circulated quarterly containing relevant information, podcasts and updates. A learning community which focuses on all of the above has been established and 2023 saw the publication of a new practice model to ensure that all Children and Families staff can stay engaged in new learning and theory, and are able to share ideas and thoughts with one another.

4.6.5 In responding to the needs of families who want to stay together but require some support to do this, the residential houses have provided a range of short-break options with some children coming to stay once a month or fortnight, giving them and their family a break, while staff also provide support. This is working well, and feedback has been positive.

4.6.6 The Children and Families team are exploring ways of developing our work with families who need additional support and were successful in gaining funding from the Scottish Government Drugs Mission Fund to support families impacted by substance use. With the launch of the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund, it is hoped that other opportunities will emerge.

4.7 Net Carbon Zero target

4.7.1 While it is recognised that this needs to be a whole Church effort, there are particular challenges to CrossReach, as a provider of social care services and a high energy consumer, in determining the most helpful way forward. The Board agreed to invest in a survey to assess the current situation in a number of buildings from which it operates and make initial recommendations for consideration. This work was carried out in the Autumn of 2023. A restructuring of the Estates department gave the opportunity to appoint a part-time post to take recommendations forward and to support all of the services to make small changes while a broader view of the bigger steps and investment needed could be taken. This is proving to be a helpful way forward and the Board would anticipate bringing a further update on progress to GA 2025.

4.8 Scottish COVID-19 Inquiry

4.8.1 The Inquiry is investigating the devolved strategic response to the coronavirus pandemic in Scotland between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2022. The independent Inquiry will establish the facts, identify the lessons that need to be learned and make recommendations to Scottish Ministers, so Scotland is better prepared in future. The Church of Scotland is a Core Participant in the Inquiry which is taking evidence from different groups at different stages of its investigations. CrossReach will give evidence as part of the health and social care impact hearings in March 2024.

4.9 Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

4.9.1 The Inquiry has been sitting since 2017 and is looking at the abuse of children in care in Scotland to understand what happened and why and where abuse took place. It is also examining the effects of abuse on children and their families and whether the organisations responsible for children in care failed in their duties. CrossReach has given evidence, on behalf of the Church of Scotland, on two separate occasions already and is preparing to give evidence on phase 8 in May 2024 which will cover the abuse of children in residential accommodation for young offenders, Borstal institutions, remand institutions and young offenders’ institutions.

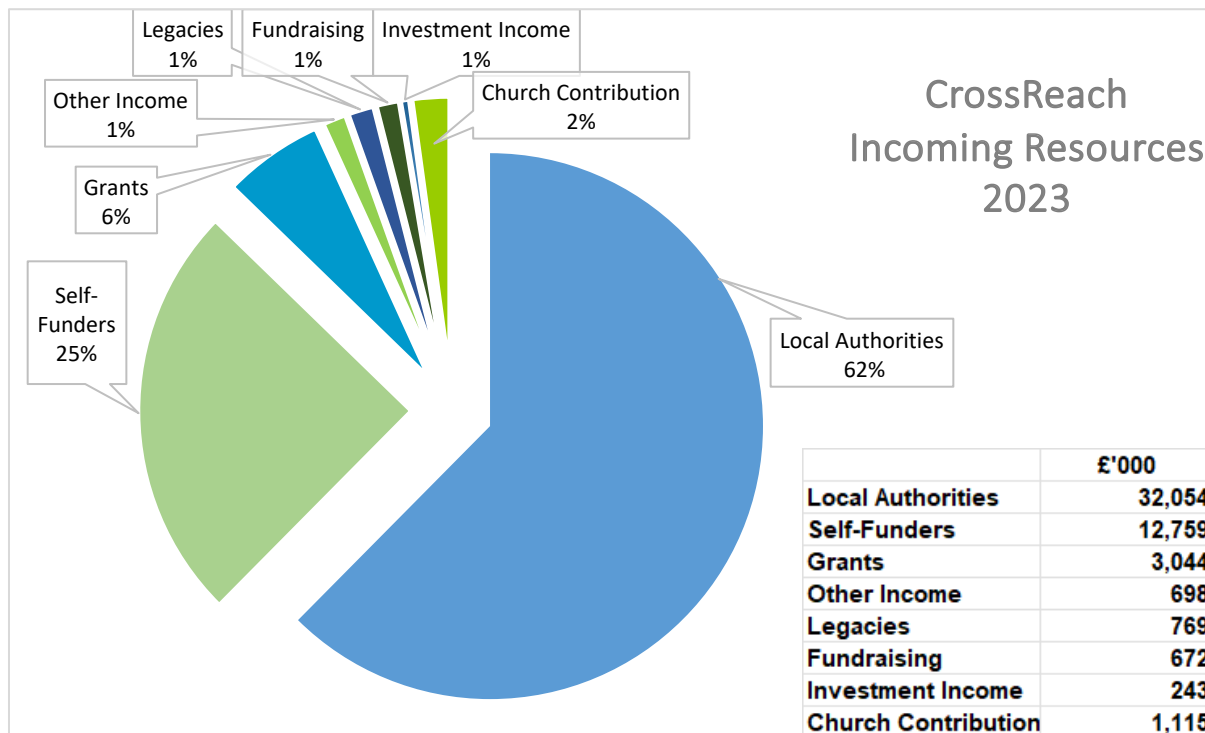
4.9.2 The Church of Scotland has acknowledged the harm it caused to some young people in its care establishments in the past and has offered a deep and profound apology. It has signed up to the Scottish Government Redress Scheme and recently provided a report on the steps CrossReach takes to prevent abuse now, as well as make redress to survivors as part of that scheme. The CrossReach Board are grateful to the legal department who are supporting them concerning both of these inquiries.

4.9.3 CrossReach will continue to play a part in using its voice and resources to raise issues of national significance to the Church and wider communities across Scotland with, and on behalf of, supported people and employees. The CrossReach Board appreciates the interest and given attention to these big issues which affect so many people today and will be vital for a fair and inclusive Scotland in the future.

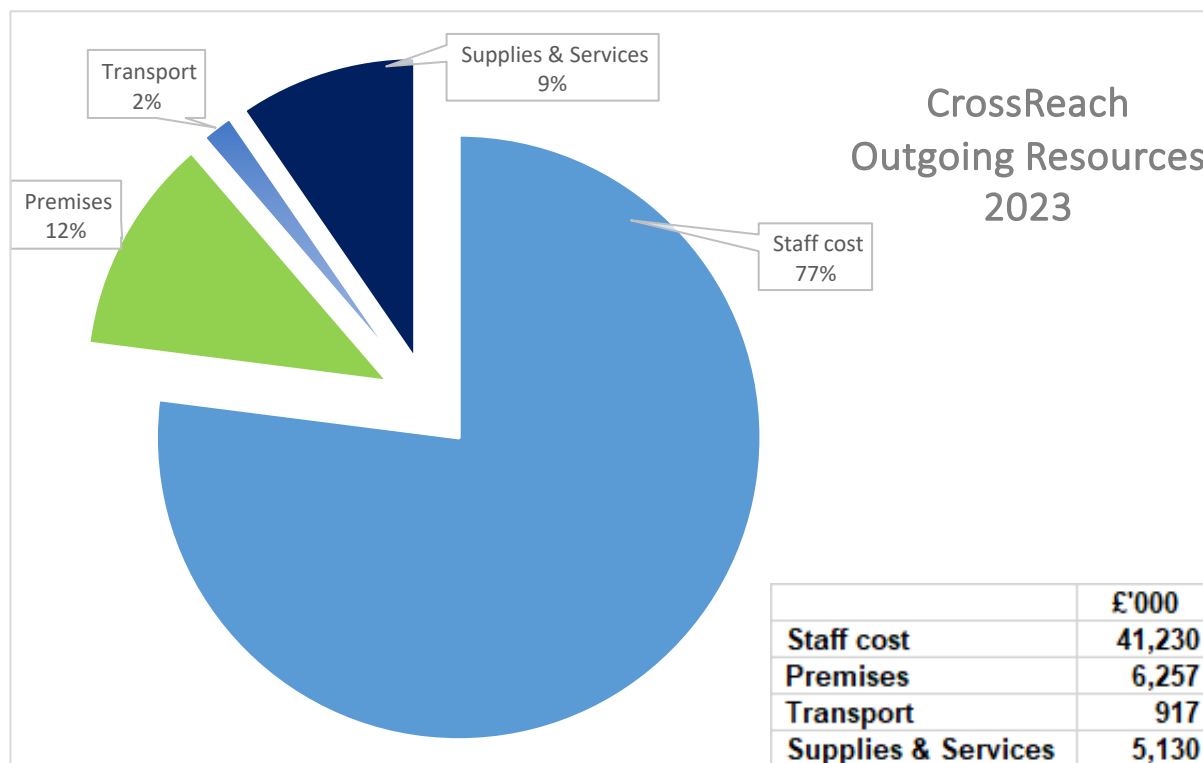
5. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE 2023

5.1 Financial graphs

Graph A



Graph B



5.2 Financial performance

5.2.1 2023 was another challenging year for CrossReach from a financial perspective, with Service Delivery costs up by 4.5%, and income from Charitable Activities up a similar 4.4%. Support costs in respect of Charitable Activities reduced by 3%. As in 2022, the increase in Service delivery costs and Charitable Activities income derived from an increase in the Scottish Living Wage which was passed on to staff, but which was only partly funded through Government and Local Authority contracts. This continuing trend of partly funding official pay increases, whilst also refusing to fund non-staff cost increases, has been challenging for the whole third sector.

5.2.1.1 There continues to be a heavy reliance on agency staff, mainly due to recruitment challenges, with costs rising by 5.7% in the year.

5.2.1.2 The reduction in support costs reflects an easing in Utility prices.

5.2.1.3 The net effect of these increases is that the net outgoings of CrossReach, before property disposals, gains on investments, and property impairments, increased from a deficit of £(2,745)k in 2022 to a deficit of £(3,142)k in 2023.

5.2.1.4 After property disposals (2022 surplus £204k; 2023 surplus £118k), unrealised gains/(losses) in the value of investments (2022 £(1,149)k; 2023 £672k), and property impairment (2022 £(715)k; 2023 £(72)k), the overall net outgoings improved from a deficit of £(4,405)k in 2022 to a deficit of £(2,424)k in 2023.

5.3 Local Government Pension Scheme

5.3.1 During 2023, CrossReach de-risked its balance sheet by exiting two Local Government Pension Schemes (LGPS) at a time when the markets were favourable. This brought a net cash benefit of £3,450k to CrossReach.

5.3.2 The net inflow of £3,450k from the LGPS exit outweighed the 2023 deficit of £(2,424) mentioned above, leading to a £320k reduction in the overdraft from the General Treasurer in the course of the year.

6. QUALITY AND IMPROVEMENT

6.1 Annual survey of the people who are supported by CrossReach

6.1.1 Of the 411 responses received from supported people:

- 94% Strongly Agree/Agree that CrossReach staff treat them with respect.
- 94% Strongly Agree/Agree that CrossReach staff are kind and caring to them.
- 89% believe they receive the right information at the right time in a way that they understand.
- 80% believe if they make a complaint or raise a concern then it is acted upon.
- 89% feel safe and are protected from neglect, abuse or avoidable harm.

6.2 Care Inspectorate

6.2.1 CrossReach has 53 services which are inspected by the Care Inspectorate.

6.2.2 During 2023, 19 services were inspected. Grades are awarded for each inspection theme ranging from 1 - unsatisfactory to 6 - excellent.

6.2.3 The inspection themes are:

- How well do we support people’s wellbeing?
- How good is our leadership?
- How good is our staff team?
- How good is our setting?
- How well is our care and support planned?

Not all inspection themes are assessed in each inspection, but most inspections cover the following two areas:

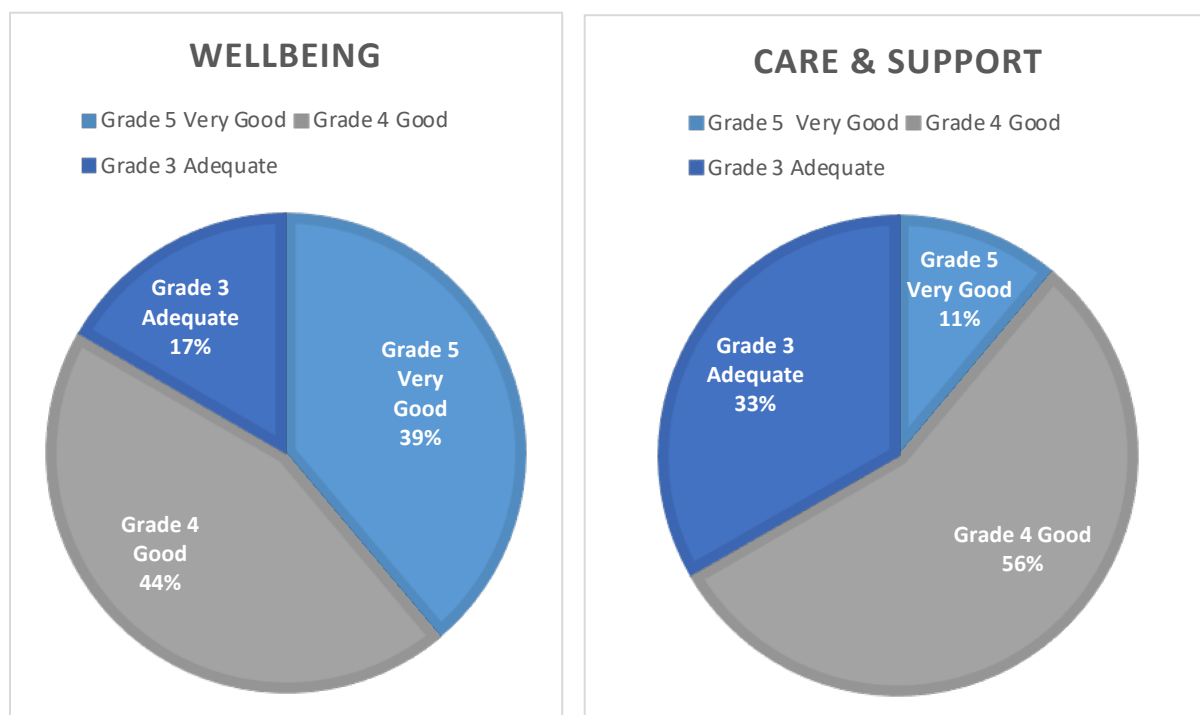
Area A - How well do we support people’s wellbeing?

- Of the 19 services inspected during 2023, 18 were inspected on this theme.
- 84% of our registered services inspected on this key question achieved a grade of at least 4 (Good), with 39% achieving 5 (Very Good).

Area B - How well is our care and support planned?

- Of the 19 services inspected during 2023, 9 were inspected on this theme. 67% on this key question achieved a grade of at least 4 (Good), with 1 service achieving 5 (Very Good).

Graph C and Graph D



6.3 Numbers of staff

6.3.1 Table A

Employee Numbers @ 31st January 2024

	Full Time	Part Time	Total	Full Time Equivalent
Operational Staff	364	693	1057	814.77
Relief Staff		385	385	87.21
Executive Office Support Staff	70	31	101	88.02
Total	434	1109	1543	990

6.4 Staff survey

6.4.1 CrossReach employee survey 2023

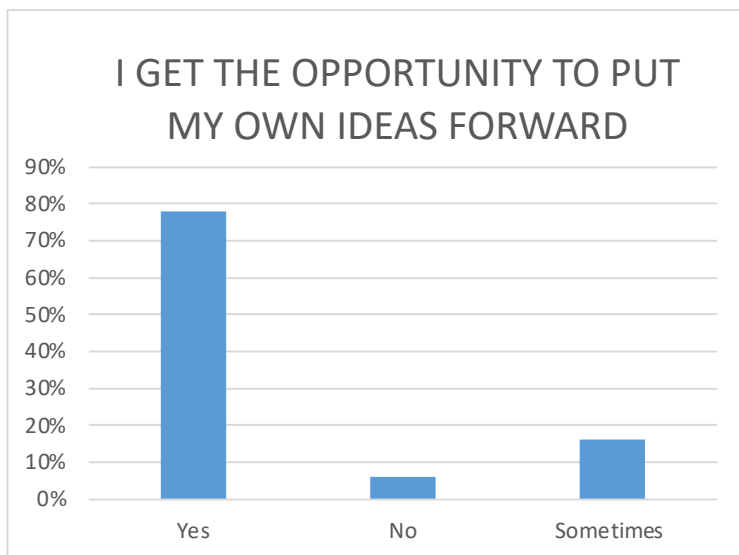
6.4.2 Every two years, CrossReach undertakes a survey of its permanent and relief staff and in September 2023, a survey was circulated to ascertain the view of its workforce.

6.4.2.1 468 people participated, this equating to approximately a third of the current workforce. The findings of the survey were presented to the Board of CrossReach and disseminated to senior managers. Managers review the results and these assist the development of local action plans in services to any concerns raised.

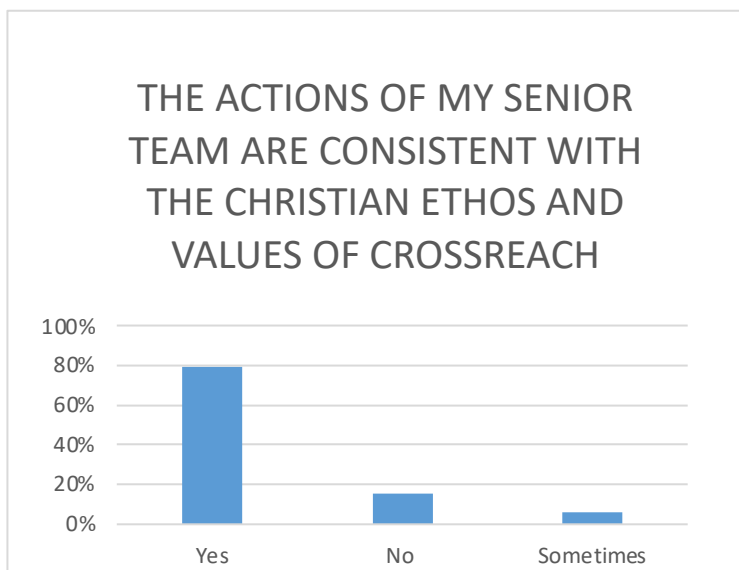
Graph E



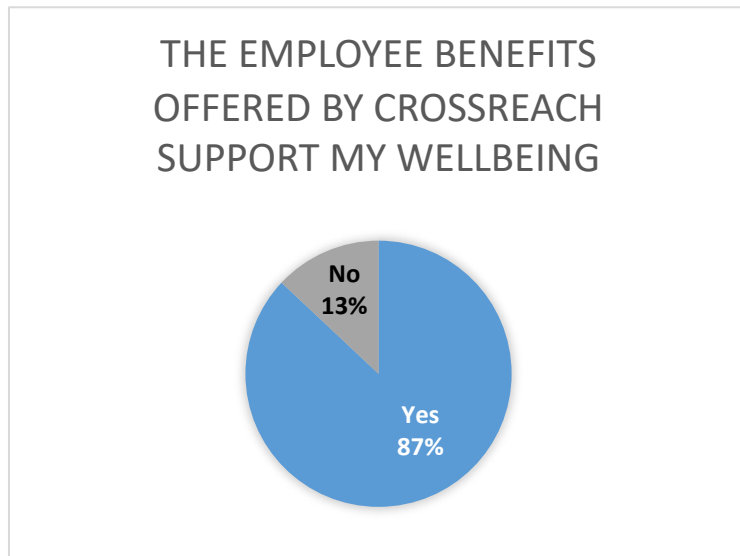
Graph F



Graph G



Graph H



6.4.2.2 The benefits offered by CrossReach have been appreciated by the workforce.

In the name of the Social Care Council (known as CrossReach Board)

THOM RIDDELL, *Convener*
MIKE CANTLAY, *Vice Convener*
VIV DICKENSON, *Chief Executive Officer*

Addendum

Rev Thom Riddell

Rev Thom Riddell joined the Social Care Council in 2012 having previously spent some time on the Council of Assembly. He soon proved an invaluable member of the Social Care Council, bringing with him experience 19 years of ministry in Linlithgow (Livingston Old, then St Michael’s where he currently serves as an auxiliary minister) coupled with an expertise in risk management and health and safety following a career as an Occupational Safety Specialist for Ineos, formerly BP. Thom has been a member of the HR and Quality Group and the Executive Committee within the Social Care Council, assuming the role of Vice Convener in 2018. Following the sad and sudden death of the then Convener, Bill Steele, at the end of 2019, Thom then took on the role of Convener. In 2020 he helped steer CrossReach through the Covid-19 pandemic, which was a particularly challenging and distressing time for social care. By June 2020, Thom had introduced a new system of governance as the Council brought in a more appropriate Board type structure to oversee the organisation and which has helped speed up the reporting and decision-making processes. Thom has done all of that while serving as Presbytery Clerk for West Lothian, supporting the union of West Lothian and Edinburgh Presbyteries, and continuing to act as an auxiliary minister, with all that the role involves. That has been no mean feat and one which few would have the passion and energy for. Thom has been a good and trusted friend to Council members and senior staff alike, and is known for his pragmatism, warmth, humour and deep faith which have been such a blessing to all. The Council and indeed The Church are indebted to Thom for his leadership and loyal service and to his wife Joyce for her patience and good grace while Thom has been out and about visiting CrossReach services across the country and attending to the many duties that come with this position. The Social Care Council wish Thom every blessing as he leaves CrossReach and hopes there will now be more time for Scottish country dancing, golf, and even the occasional day of rest.

MIKE CANTLAY, *Vice Convener*
VIV DICKENSON, *Chief Executive Officer*

Appendix 1 – List of CrossReach Services

Adult Services

Justice Services

- Dick Stewart Service (Glasgow)

Homeless People

- Cale House (Inverness)
- Cunningham House (Edinburgh)
- Kirkhaven Project (Glasgow)

Learning Disabilities

- Eskmills (Edinburgh)
- The Bungalow (Stonehaven)
- Threshold Edinburgh
- Threshold Glasgow
- Threshold Support Services – Housing and Residential (North and South Lanarkshire)
- Threshold Support Services – Community and Short Breaks (North and South Lanarkshire)

Mental Health

- Allarton (Glasgow)
- Gaberston House (Alloa)
- Morven Day Services (Kilmarnock)
- Lewis Street (Stornoway)

Substance Use Services

- Beechwood House (Inverness)
- Dochas Housing Support (Stornoway)
- CrossReach Abstinence Recovery Service (Glasgow)
- Rankeillor Initiative (Edinburgh)
- Tayside Support Service (Dundee)
- Whiteinch Move on Service (Glasgow)

Children and Family Services

Looked After Children (7 small residential houses)

- Carraig View (Port Glasgow)
- Dumbrock House (Strathblane)
- Finniescroft Farm (Lennoxton)
- Millmuir Farm (Gargunnoch)
- Mount Pleasant (Dalry)
- Rockwood House (Beith)
- The Old Lodge (Stirlingshire)
- Erskine Waterfront Campus

Children With Disabilities

- Short Breaks & GO2 (Glasgow)

Community Services / Early Intervention

- Daisy Chain Early Years Project (Glasgow)
- Perth Prison Visitors Support and Advice Centre
- Polmont Prison Visitor Centre

Counselling, Support & Training

CrossReach Counselling West and North – includes:

- Bluebell Perinatal Counselling Services (Glasgow)
- Tom Allan Centre (Glasgow)
- COSCA Counselling Training (Glasgow)
- CrossReach Counselling Inverness – Young People’s Counselling and Generic Service
- CrossReach Counselling Moray – Perinatal and Generic Service
- Workplace Counselling Service

CrossReach Counselling East – Simpson House and Palmerston Place – includes:

- East Perinatal Counselling
- Recovery Counselling
- Sunflower Garden

Older People Services

- Adams House (Elderslie) – Dementia & Heart for Art in the Care Home
- Balmedie House (Balmedie)
- Bellfield (Banchory)
- Cameron House (Inverness) – Dementia
- Clashfarquhar House (Stonehaven)
- Cumnor Hall (Ayr) – Dementia & Heart for Art in the Care Home
- Heart for Art, Broughty Ferry
- Heart for Art, Carluke
- Heart for Art, Carluke – Carers
- Heart for Art, Edinburgh (Morningside)
- Heart for Art, Edinburgh (Charteris Centre)
- Heart for Art, Galashiels
- Heart for Art, Garelochhead
- Heart for Art, Glasgow (Broomhill)
- Heart for Art, Kirkcudbright
- Heart for Art, Musselburgh
- Heart for Art, Perth & Kinross (The Tryst)
- Heart for Art, Stonehaven
- Heart for Art, Dunfermline
- Morlich House (Edinburgh)
- Oversteps (Dornoch)
- Queen’s Bay Lodge (Edinburgh)
- South Beach House (Ardrossan)
- St Margaret’s House (Polmont) – Dementia & Heart for Art in the Care Home
- The Elms Care Home (Edinburgh) – Dementia & Heart for Art in the Care Home
- The Oasis Garelochhead
- Walter & Joan Gray Care Home (Shetland)
- Walter & Joan Gray Day Care (Shetland)
- Whinnieknowe (Nairn)
- Williamwood House (Glasgow) – Dementia & Heart for Art in the Care Home

Further information on our services can be found on our website www.crossreach.org.uk