



# APRIL 2020 - MARCH 2021 INVESTOR REPORT

INSPIRING SCOTLAND

**Our future.**  
**Now**

Supporting a generation of young people to flourish.

## Contents

Celia's Welcome .....	p.3
Our Future Now 2021.....	p.4
Covid Response and Key Learning.....	p.4
Financial Investment .....	p.4
Sector Leading Data Tracking and Analysis .....	p.4
The Voice of OFN Leaders.....	p.10
Ellie's Story.....	p.12
The Ongoing Challenge.....	p.13

## Celia's Welcome



The second year of Our Future Now was a year when the world changed. All aspects of young people's lives have been significantly disrupted and they are among the worst affected by Covid-19: socially, emotionally, mentally, and financially. The impact is likely to be long lasting and risks employment scarring at great social and economic cost to society.

During the year, the portfolio of 12 charities in Our Future Now provided nothing short of a lifeline for nearly 5,000 young people across Scotland. Charity operations rapidly adapted to ensure young people continued to be supported, not just on their progression towards qualifications and employment, but with their mental and physical wellbeing too.

As an investor, your consistent support to Our Future Now has helped to build a portfolio of high calibre third sector organisations resilient and capable of providing this response, at a time when young people needed it most. The impassioned response provided by the ventures has been humbling and inspiring.

This has also put added pressure on Our Future Now venture leaders, frontline staff and Board members, who were faced with challenging decisions on a daily basis with no blueprint, and with significant risk involved. I am pleased our Performance Advisors have been alongside venture leaders to offer support and guidance as well as the additional expertise accessed through our Specialist Volunteer Network. This has been invaluable. Alongside this, our flexible and responsive model of investment enabled us to direct resources to ventures' needs in the most effective way.

We have worked hard to understand the needs of young people in Scotland during this time and we are helping to form a critical part of the response. I am delighted that the Scottish Government invested an additional £500k in 2020/21 and 2021/22 to work specifically with young people aged 16-17 years old that have been worst affected by the pandemic. The value of this investment is amplified when matched with contributions from private investors.

As we move towards recovery, young people will require holistic support to address the wider impacts of the pandemic, including bereavement, lack of routine, lack of social interaction, conflict at home, lack of confidence, concern about the future and disempowerment. For young people living in poverty and for those facing particular challenges, these factors can result in social anxiety and mental distress. We know that the recovery will not be quick or easy, and a greater number of young people will require support over a longer period.

I hope this report helps to provide you with the full picture of the needs of young people in Scotland and how and with your support, Our Future Now can be best placed to help them.



**Celia Tennant**  
Chief Executive

## Our Future Now 2021



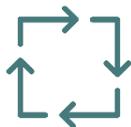
**£10.1 million combined investment**

**12 Charities**



**4,973 young people supported**

**17,315 Soft outcomes achieved by young people**



**3,882 Progression milestones achieved by young people**

**2,104 young people progressed to work or further/higher education**



**389 (18%) young people secured employment**  
**891 (42%) young people in education**  
**824 (40%) young people secured training**

## Covid Response and Key Learning

Our Future Now support helped ensure a rapid respond to the unfolding crisis and a move to digital delivery before lockdown was imposed on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020. As lockdown lifted considerable efforts to return to face to face support were made with remote support continuing where it had proved effective for young people. Despite some resumption of 'normal services' as restrictions were re-imposed the Our Future Now portfolio once again had to rely almost entirely on remote or digital support.

### Speed, consistency, and relevance of response:

OFN moved from face to face intensive 1:1 support within 3 weeks of the first lockdown. By the end of April 2020, almost all ventures were continuing to deliver services on a remote basis, having rapidly sought and gained funding where required to facilitate this development. This response was vital for the young people supported, as they can so easily lose contact and regress without regular, consistent engagement.

### New programmes were developed:

While some programmes could be simply adapted to offer digital support, many did not offer this possibility. As a result, completely new programmes were developed quickly, that provided support and allowed young people to continue on the path to positive progression. Previously, support was almost exclusively based on 1:1 face to face support.

### Keeping the aims and objectives of programmes and providing real hope:

Continuing to focus on supporting young people, operating digitally, and remaining focused on the goal of helping young people move towards positive destinations was key to maintaining young people's mental health throughout the periods of restrictions. In a Young Minds Survey carried out between January and February 2021 with 2,438 young people aged 13-25, **67% believed the pandemic will have a long-term negative effect on their mental health.** Lots of young people had to return to the family home and remain there, which for many was a significant challenge given the home circumstances – many have paid tribute to venture staff, who continued to provide support and hope in some of the darkest times.

### Employer engagement was continued and intensified:

One of the key success areas in moving young people to a positive destination in the OFN portfolio is the commitment that the ventures make to strategic engagement with employers. Trying to ensure that we are aware of potential roles within firms in local areas has meant that we have not been dependent on jobs being advertised but can instead identify opportunities for the OFN cohort ahead of the normal recruitment process. The trusted relationships that have been built have been key as the number of job vacancies has decreased.

## Financial Investment

In 2022/ 2021 Our Future Now combined Fund value was £10.1m.

Scottish Government invested an additional £500k in 2020/21 to work specifically with young people aged 16-17 years old that have been worst affected by the pandemic.

An integral part of the funding agreement between charities in the fund and Inspiring Scotland is the target to attract 100% match funding from other sources. We are pleased to report that the match funding target has been exceeded,

totalling £7.76m. For every £1 invested OFN delivers another £4. This four times multiplier effect is a key feature of the model which enables the portfolio to use OFN investment effectively and levers other funding from a wide range of sources.



## Developing Sector Leading Data Tracking and Analysis

Each young person's route to success is unique and far from linear. From the outset of OFN we were determined to find ways to deepen our understanding of a young person's journey through OFN seeking information on a much more granular basis, that could be analysed. In October 2019 we introduced The Matrix, which has gathered anonymised data on each of the young people supported by the Fund as they move through programmes.

This data is creating a growing body of evidence that will allow detailed analysis of young people's experiences and their current circumstances (including the barriers that they face), and will track their journey to a successful outcome. We have secured expert data analysis support through the Specialist Volunteer Network to review the data and further develop the system going forward. It is particularly beneficial that we were able to conduct this analysis during a period when support models had to be radically changed due to Covid-19 restrictions. We believe that The Matrix will prove invaluable in supporting young people most effectively in the challenging times that lie ahead.

## The Voice of the OFN Leaders

Our Future Now benefits from a portfolio of exceptional venture leaders. Their knowledge, determination and commitment to young people has been unwavering in the face of Covid-19. Over the course of the year, the portfolio has gathered on a fortnightly basis to share experiences, challenges and help motivate and support each other. This has provided a rich source of intelligence from communities across Scotland, and of the needs of young people. The following four leaders provide a sense of their work over the past year and a view to the future.

### Leona McDermid, Chief Executive - Aberdeen Foyer

The last 18 months have tested young people's resilience in ways we could never have imagined. As an organisation Aberdeen Foyer has had to adapt in many ways, and we started by improving digital inclusion for young people by distributing kit and developing digital skills through coaching, training and encouragement so that over 100 young people could access support and continued communications online.

We also issued Wellbeing Packs to over 50 young people and found new ways of communicating and staying in touch such as piloting the use of VR technology; using social media and WhatsApp to sustain and build strong relationships and using exercise and counselling sessions to promote improved mental and physical health.

Our young people have taken part in virtual work experiences (enabling some to complete apprenticeships), online mock interviews, some have started college, others have completed vocational training, moved into work and achieved accredited learning during this time. We are incredibly proud of all of their achievements and developments.



Being part of the Our Future Now portfolio has literally provided a lifeline for some young people and enabled The Foyer to greatly mitigate the impact of the pandemic on their lives; this has included helping them maximise their income and in some instances that of their families too

## Ashley Ryan, Assistant Director of Development - Enable

ENABLE Works has been at the forefront of supporting young people with learning disabilities throughout Covid-19. Our schools transition programme 'Stepping Up' has supported more than 350 young people in 2020 and continues to achieve a 98% positive destination rate for disabled school leavers. Our teams have delivered throughout the pandemic and have been a lifeline for many young people.

Young Disabled People have been disproportionately impacted by Covid-19 as a result of disrupted transitional support, key services being paused and higher than average representation in sectors like retail, hospitality and customer services. Youth Unemployment is at a high not seen since 2015 and with the end of the Job Retention Scheme in September and Kickstart coming to an end in Dec we are fast approaching a critical point which could see youth unemployment reach levels not seen since the recession. It is vital that we offer sustained, specialist support for young people in Education and Post Education to reach their goals. Through tailored support for young people and employers we can ensure a diverse Scotland for all.



Support from Our Future Now is ensuring no young person will be left behind in this pandemic. It is closing the gaps for disadvantaged young people and with the support of the portfolio we are ensuring a bright future for young people in Scotland

## Jimmy Wilson, Chief Executive - FARE Scotland

In March 2020, FARE Scotland embarked on a year like no other; changing how it delivered all its programmes including Our Future Now. Covid-19 saw FARE Scotland raise over £1.5m to tackle food insecurity, fuel poverty and connectivity at the height of the various lockdowns. It saw the organisation pivot to provide employability assistance and courses online.



At ground level, we witnessed firsthand the hardship of poverty and the impact on young people's ability to learn online, while observing the serious deterioration of young people's mental health. To counter this, FARE established podcasts led by young people tackling various issues such as self-harm and bereavement

When guidance permitted, FARE provided face to face support, delivering employability courses and an extensive outward-bound sports programme during the summer of 2020 for our young people to assist with their health and wellbeing. FARE Scotland has continued to look at how to build back better and the organisation developed a post Covid-19 strategy in the autumn of 2020, focusing on youth unemployment and FARE's social enterprise portfolio.

Despite the difficulties, as with most major events, there comes opportunity. Stepford Football Centre was struggling to reopen due to financial issues, and FARE Scotland recognised the opportunity to develop a sport and recreational training academy for young people. FARE has now signed a 25-year lease and has been managing the centre for eight months. In addition, FARE has opened a nursery which will support a training academy for young people interested in early years careers, and has also secured re-development funds (£1.6M) from Social Investment Scotland. This venture is supporting a training academy for young people supported by OFN wanting to enter a career in the sport and leisure industry. As we leave Covid-19 behind, the need for young people to grow their own business has never been greater!

## Isobel Grigor, Calman Trust

Through the lockdowns of 2020 and 2021 Calman Trust's work was focused on the wellbeing and safety of those engaged with the organisation, offering opportunities to learn new skills and to continue to work towards a future in employment. Ways were found to build relationships with young people referred for the first time, whom we had never met, many transitioning to young adulthood with little or no family support, and not engaging with mainstream services.

As restrictions reduce and the world opens up again, we see generally that what young people coming through the organisation have gained in this time is more than matched by a step back in how they feel about themselves. They have difficulty in engaging with expectations, and feel less equipped for the world before them – the expectations of others, what to wear or how to behave in an appointment or interview, or even a shop, and their expectations of themselves; their fears are magnified and they say there's no point in trying.

Our response is to enlarge the offer of participation in our social enterprise activity, by expanding our Café Artysans operation in Inverness city centre. Young people can now undertake work experience from the start, with support to sustain this, so they immediately see themselves as someone who can work, who does work, who has a future.



We are so grateful for the insight and support of Inspiring Scotland throughout this time, which has helped prompt these changes which are already proving quite transformational. Beyond this period, whilst as an organisation we seek to build sustainability through our enterprises, the next great challenge is to navigate the end of EU funding, which has been such a vital strategic support to vulnerable communities in the Highlands.

## Ellie's Story

“Ellie has left school and was referred to Calman by Social Work while she was living in temporary homeless accommodation. She is estranged from her family, and has a history of mental health issues. She was registered with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, now passing to Adult services, but there has been no contact yet. She has now been allocated a flat and receives support on tenancy related matters from a housing support worker. She has been enrolled in a course at Inverness College, but is not attending consistently, and for some months she has had a part-time job locally, in a small business operated by her boyfriend.

Ellie was referred to Calman Trust as she was extremely socially isolated, anxious, not ready to manage a home of her own, and without a plan for the future. At first at Calman she participated in regular cookery sessions delivered 1:1, progressing to participation in a small group, latterly through Zoom. Through lockdown she progressed to participating in other Calman online groups including digital skills and safe online practice, where she developed the ability to contribute regularly, talk with others, plan ahead and make decisions, including decisions for her personal safety. In parallel, she has met with one of our youth workers for a regular walk, which she has used to reflect on her concerns and her hopes for the future. Through these contacts it has become evident that Ellie comes under pressure from her boyfriend. She has described abusive episodes, and talked of her self-harming, including thoughts of ending her life. The Calman youth worker has Ellie's agreement to share these concerns with mental health and social work services to ensure that they are acted on and she receives the support she needs. In the meantime, Ellie continues to plan for the future, and she decided to repeat the last year of her College course, which she is arranging with the help from the Calman youth worker. The opportunity to engage with Calman activities and support will continue until she is settled.”

## The Ongoing Challenge

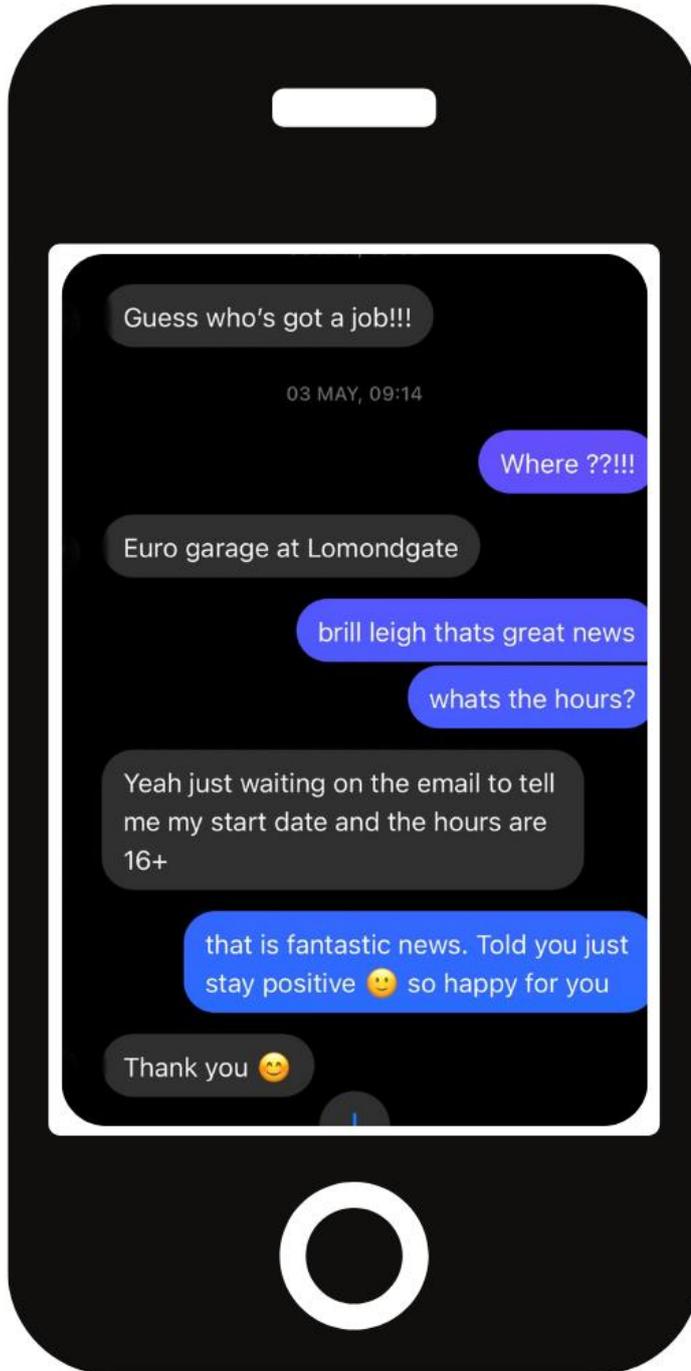
We are relieved to be emerging from Covid-19 and focusing on recovery. We are experiencing a sharp rise in youth unemployment in Scotland. Based on the most recent Scottish Government figures the current rate is 13.5% which has not been seen since 2015 (*Labour Market Stats for Young People March 2021*). This is the equivalent of 45,000 young people – almost double the number that were unemployed pre pandemic, and this is set to rise further. This is not surprising given that 63% of those that lost their job between February 2020 and February 2021 are aged 16-25 years old.

According to the Scottish Government's Central Forecast, economic recovery to pre-pandemic levels is expected by the end of 2023. Overall unemployment levels are expected to reach pre-pandemic levels towards the end of Q1 2025. Given the complex lives of the young people supported through OFN the negative impacts of the pandemic will be worse and will last longer.

Our continued support will be crucial. We can and we must do more to respond to the increase in need, and volume, and we are redoubling our fundraising efforts to ramp up support to prevent lifelong scarring of young people and to avoid a lost generation.

We are confident that our past experience together with the momentum, expertise and commitment of the OFN portfolio will be able to support and equip young people to seek out and secure the opportunities that will undoubtedly arise in the post Covid-19 economy.

**Thank you for being with us, and for making such a difference to so many young people across Scotland.**



The best text message you could receive.

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