

FreshStart

helping people make a home for themselves

Annual Review 2026



**Working together
to make an impact.**



It starts with a relationship.

Our CEO reflects on the importance of relationships to the success and impact of Fresh Start's work.

At Fresh Start, relationships are the foundation of everything we do. We believe that positive, trusting relationships empower people to overcome challenges, build confidence, and create lasting change.

Every interaction is an opportunity to demonstrate our values of compassion, respect, collaboration, kindness, and integrity. These relationships are not only with the people we work for, but among the staff, our volunteers, the board and everyone who supports us.

Many of the individuals who access Fresh Start's services have faced significant barriers, including homelessness, trauma, mental health challenges, addiction, or social isolation. Developing strong, genuine relationships helps people feel safe, heard, and valued. By taking the time to listen without judgement and understand each person's unique experiences, we can provide truly person-centred support that promotes dignity, agency and independence.

Relationships also encourage empowerment. Rather than doing things for people, we work alongside them, recognising their strengths and supporting them to make informed choices about their future. This collaborative approach builds confidence, resilience, and the skills needed to sustain positive outcomes long after support has ended.

At Fresh Start, we recognise that meaningful relationships extend beyond our direct work with individuals. By working in partnership with families, communities, and other agencies, we create a coordinated network of support that helps people access opportunities, improve wellbeing, and achieve their personal goals.

Building trust takes consistency, honesty, patience, and empathy. By living our values every day, we create an environment where people feel respected, included, and empowered to move forward. Strong relationships are not simply part of our work—they are the key to helping people achieve a fresh start, rebuild their lives, and become active, valued members of their communities.

Thank you for your continued support and kindness - it really makes such a huge impact.

Biddy Kelly
Fresh Start CEO

More than a set of keys.

In another year marked by rising living costs, continued housing pressures, and deepening inequalities, Fresh Start has remained committed to walking alongside people as they move on from homelessness and begin to rebuild their lives. These pages share the story of our impact in 2025-26, told through the lens of the relationships that make our work possible, and the impact our services have in the lives of those we support.

Making a house, a home.

Our Starter Packs, White Goods and Fresh Rooms services provide practical help at a pivotal point in someone's life. This year, **97% of Starter Pack recipients** told us they would otherwise have gone without essential items. Nine in ten said the support made their property feel more like home, **86% felt more settled** and **83% said it improved their mental wellbeing**.

We delivered **21,757 Starter Packs** to more than **3,000 households**, offering essentials like bedding, kitchenware, small electricals, cleaning products or toiletries, with **115 tonnes of goods** diverted from landfill.

"Having these essential household items has helped me feel more settled, independent, and able to manage my daily life, which has massively improved my overall wellbeing. Thank you so much!"

— Sean*, Starter Packs.



We supplied **311 essential White Goods** (cookers, fridges, washing machines) to **146 households**, helping people maintain a safe, functioning home.

"I feel comfortable now — you have no idea what a difference this has made to my mental health."

— Linda*, White Goods.

121 households were supported to paint and decorate **251 rooms** by our **Fresh Rooms** service. For people like Eleanor*, this kind of support was lifechanging.

Moving into her first permanent tenancy after homelessness should have been exciting. Instead, the poor condition of the flat and the scale of the decorating needed left her overwhelmed. With no DIY experience or support to call on, she spent more than a month preparing only half of one bedroom. A local decorator stepped in to wallpaper her living room, and Fresh Rooms volunteers helped her paint. Working together, they helped Eleanor create somewhere clean, welcoming and truly her own.



Connection is prevention.

Homelessness is **not just a housing issue**. Poverty, poor mental health, isolation, trauma, low confidence and a lack of support can all make it harder to establish or sustain a home. Our prevention services create regular, welcoming opportunities for people to build skills, routines, relationships and connection.

Food, dignity and belonging.

Our Community Pantry was open four days a week, giving households affordable access to good food with choice and dignity. Across the year, membership ranged from **205 to 283 households**, with a total of **6,371 visits**. 65% of members were families and, of those, 70% had more than two children. We also provided holiday support for families facing added pressure when schools were closed.

Food brings people through the door, but the value of the Pantry reaches further. Every member who responded to our survey said it helped their household afford more balanced meals and feel more connected to the community; **88% felt less stressed** or worried about food.

"It has reduced my stress... It helps knowing that you can come here once a week. I am starting to get to know people in the community, which helps and gets me out of the house."

— Pantry member.

Cooking classes and community meals also create connection around the table. This year, **308 people** took part in cooking activities, and we served **4,522 community meals**. Participants learned to prepare healthy food on a limited budget, built confidence and enjoyed time with others. Through partnerships with organisations such as Capital Carers and LEAP, our sessions also supported young carers and people rebuilding their lives in recovery.

Growing confidence together.

Across Ferry Road Drive, Inchgarvie Court and Lauriston Farm, Growing Spaces offered supported volunteering to **258 people** facing barriers to mainstream activities. Gardening provides structure, purpose, physical activity and peer support. People grow food and care for shared spaces, but they also rebuild confidence and become part of a community.

For one volunteer, cooking and gardening became important parts of his recovery from alcohol dependency. Cooking reconnected him with positive childhood memories and helped him move away from microwave meals. In the gardens, he found what he described as *"great mental therapy"* and became a peer supporter for others going through treatment. The relationships worked both ways: supporting others strengthened his own recovery and helped him see a future in counselling.

"Fresh Start gave me more than cooking skills, it gave me a connection to my past, my recovery, and my future. It's been life-changing."

— Blake*, Growing Spaces and Cooking Classes.



Language opens doors.

Across the year, **65 people** joined our friendly, small-group English classes. Learners developed the language and confidence to manage appointments, speak to their children's schools and access services more independently. Just as importantly, they met others, shared experiences and felt more at home in their community.

"It's wonderful that I joined Fresh Start English. It has helped me a lot."

— Mary*, ESOL learner.

Stronger relationships, better systems.

Our Community Hub exists because local people told us they wanted somewhere that helped them feel “at home in their community”. True to its mission, the Hub offers an open door for conversation, connection and practical support, without a complex referral process. This year, the Hub responded to **423 requests for advice, information and support**. Changeworks and Social Security Scotland also delivered face-to-face support from the Hub, allowing people to meet services in a familiar and trusted community setting.

Location-based support.

This relational approach is central to NESSie, our partnership with Spartans Community Foundation, North Edinburgh Arts and Move On. NESSie starts with the person rather than a form or fixed service threshold. Partners listen, learn together and stay flexible, helping people facing poverty, housing insecurity, poor health and barriers to mainstream systems.

Since NESSie began, the team has worked alongside **268 households**. A further 72 have received emergency help through the KPE4 Crisis Fund, administered by Spartans Community Foundation, and 25 have received a Thriving Futures Fund grant through Turn2us.

Jackie* first came to Fresh Start with a question about sick pay. As trust developed, a much fuller picture emerged: bereavement, poor health, damp and mould, and a home with no heating. Consistent one-to-one support helped her raise the problems with her landlord, secure heating, rebuild her routine and begin thinking about college and work. Her progress was not the result of a single intervention, but of a relationship that gave her time, practical help and confidence to move forward.

Collaborating for change.

NESSie is also helping influence wider change. Learning shared with the City of Edinburgh Council has contributed to work on housing repairs and more humane, joined-up neighbourhood support. With Pilton selected as one of the first Neighbourhood Prevention

Partnership areas and £100,000 of Fairer Futures Partnership funding allocated to the NESSie Collaborative, a model developed through local relationships is beginning to inform services across the city.

A city-wide effort.

None of this work happens in isolation. Our **138 volunteers gave 5,141 hours this year**—worth £69,146 at the Scottish Real Living Wage—sorting donations, assembling packs and supporting decorating, cooking and gardening activities. A further **425 corporate volunteers contributed 1,635 hours**. Their time provides practical help, but also warmth, encouragement and vital social contact.

Our relationships with churches, schools, community groups, businesses and individual donors keep essential goods moving across the city. Our partnership with the City of Edinburgh Council and Bethany Christian Trust helps Starter Packs reach people quickly after they receive the keys to a tenancy. Through SHAPE, R2 and other networks, we also contribute to Edinburgh’s wider response to the housing emergency. By sharing what we have learned, we supported six more community pantries to open across Edinburgh.

Looking forward.

As Edinburgh’s housing emergency continues, demand for practical and preventative support is growing. Fresh Start will continue to strengthen the relationships that make our work possible by: listening to people with lived experience; creating opportunities to build skills and social networks; connecting people with timely advice; and working with partners to improve the systems around them.

The problems people face are interconnected, and the response must be too. A safe, secure home can begin with a set of keys and some essential items but it is relationships that help turn that beginning into lasting change.

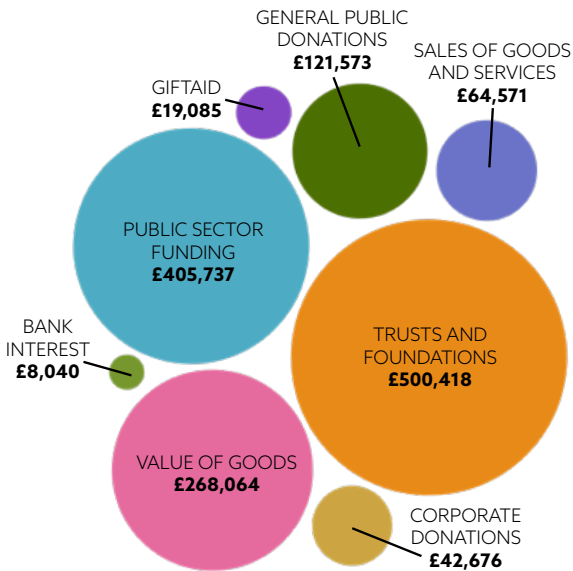
“A sense of belonging and acceptance, and a feeling of love and care. The staff are absolutely amazing. Everyone is so friendly, supportive and giving proper guidance.”

— Service User.

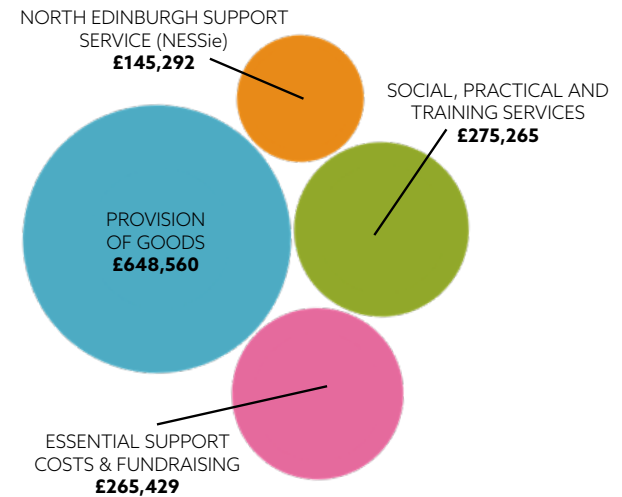
Finance and governance.

We are extremely grateful to every single funder, business and individual who has contributed financially throughout 2025-26. The below spending is essential for our organisation to run efficiently and allows us to help as many people in crisis as possible.

INCOME: £1,430,164



EXPENDITURE: £1,334,546



80P from every £1 donated was spent helping people in crisis.

This information is taken from our annual financial statements, audited by Whitelaw Wells CA. Copies of the annual accounts, incorporating the auditor's and director's reports are available by contacting Fresh Start directly.

Our Board of Directors 2025-26:

Alan Morrison	April 2019
Secretary	April 2024
Gary Cameron	August 2007
Chair	March 2021
Stuart Dobbin	April 2023
Allan Gordon	August 2015
John Loughton BEM	January 2026
David Gaughan	Resigned Sept. 2025
Morag Hutchison	Resigned Oct. 2025
Miriam Newton	Resigned Dec. 2025
Diane McLafferty	Resigned Jan. 2026

Directors Joining Us in 2026:

Elsa Vibert	May 2026
Donald Lindsay	May 2026
Sabrina Tickle	July 2026
Lindsay Hart	July 2026

Fresh Start operates as a company limited by guarantee and is recognised as a charity with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator. The overall governance and management is the responsibility of the Board of Directors.



A fond farewell.

Fresh Start's outgoing Chair reflects on 20 years of impact, and sharing the stories that matter.

As I prepare to stand down as Chair in October, after almost 20 years with Fresh Start, I've naturally found myself reflecting on what has changed and what hasn't.

Fresh Start today is, in many ways, a very different organisation from the one I volunteered for in 2007. We've grown, developed new services, formed new partnerships and responded to challenges we couldn't have anticipated then. But the heart of Fresh Start remains remarkably constant. Many of our core services are still central to what we do, as are the values and purpose behind them.

Helping people make a home for themselves and move forward with dignity, confidence and hope.

That's why I believe we're all, in our own way, custodians of Fresh Start's purpose. We owe a great deal to those who came before us and helped shape the organisation we know today. Our role is to build on what they created, look after it for a time and ultimately pass it on. People and services will change, but our responsibility is to leave Fresh Start stronger for those who follow, while protecting the values and purpose at its heart.

One thing I hope I have contributed during my time with Fresh Start is helping to tell its story – not simply what we do, but why it matters. Behind every statistic in this Annual Review is a person, a family, a volunteer, a supporter or a relationship. The numbers demonstrate the scale of the work, but the stories demonstrate its impact.

I've always believed we have a responsibility to tell those stories well. The more people who understand the difference Fresh Start makes, the more people we can inspire to support it – and ultimately, the more people we can help.

I want to thank our staff team, my fellow Board members and our volunteers for everything they give to Fresh Start. It has been a privilege to work alongside people who care so deeply about the organisation and the communities we support.

I leave the Chair knowing Fresh Start's story is far from finished. I'm incredibly proud to have played a small part in it and am excited to see what the next chapter brings. And while I'll be stepping down as Chair, I won't be too far away – I'll continue to support and champion Fresh Start and the incredible work it does.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gary Cameron', with a long, sweeping underline.

Gary Cameron
Fresh Start Chairperson

FreshStart

helping people make a home for themselves

Donate to Fresh Start!



Can't access the QR Code?

www.justgiving.com/charity/freshstartedinburgh
is the link to donate!

**If you'd like more information about Fresh Start and
how else you can support our work:**

Visit our website:

www.freshstartweb.org.uk

Telephone: 0131 476 7741

Email: admin@freshstartweb.org.uk

Address: 22-24 Ferry Road Drive, Edinburgh, EH4 4BR

Fresh Start (Scotland) is a company
Limited by guarantee and registered in
Scotland No. SC197784. Scottish Charity No SC029184

