

# North United Communities ...In our own words



We support communities and their people.

Our approach is to build and sustain relationships that help local people realise their potential and create a better community.



We seek to **build on the strengths** of children, young people, parents, families and local residents - with a view to supporting happier people and a thriving community.

First and foremost **our approach is to build relationships**. We think it important to **earn trust** before we offer practical support. We take time to get to know people before we give advice and take great care to make sure we offer **relevant and effective support that is centred on the individual**.

Our youth and family workers are highly trained and skilful in one on one support. We encourage people to **express their needs and their aspirations**.

For **young people** we engage through streetwork, drop-in activities, groups, sports and the arts, in particular football and drama. We use these activities as tools to build rapport. Ultimately we seek to build young people's confidence and awareness of training and life opportunities.

We recognise that the quality of family relationships that young people have is vital to their well being, and for that reason we **extend our support to parents and families**. We operate outreach and parenting support programmes and increasingly **we reach out to the full spectrum of individuals** in the community. For example, we offer **tenancy support** in conjunction with our local housing association.

Our **centres** are safe and nurturing places: somewhere to hang out, have fun, get active, become inspired, learn something new and get help with the first steps towards realising an ambition.

When people face complex challenges such as drug and domestic abuse we can play a vital part, befriending them and forming trustful relationships that are a part of **their support network**.

**We work closely with other organisations** such as social work, schools, police and other agencies in the community to realise local, city-wide and national strategies.

Though our rapport and sustained commitment to the people in our community we are a bridge that enables them to **grasp opportunity and achieve a better quality of life**.

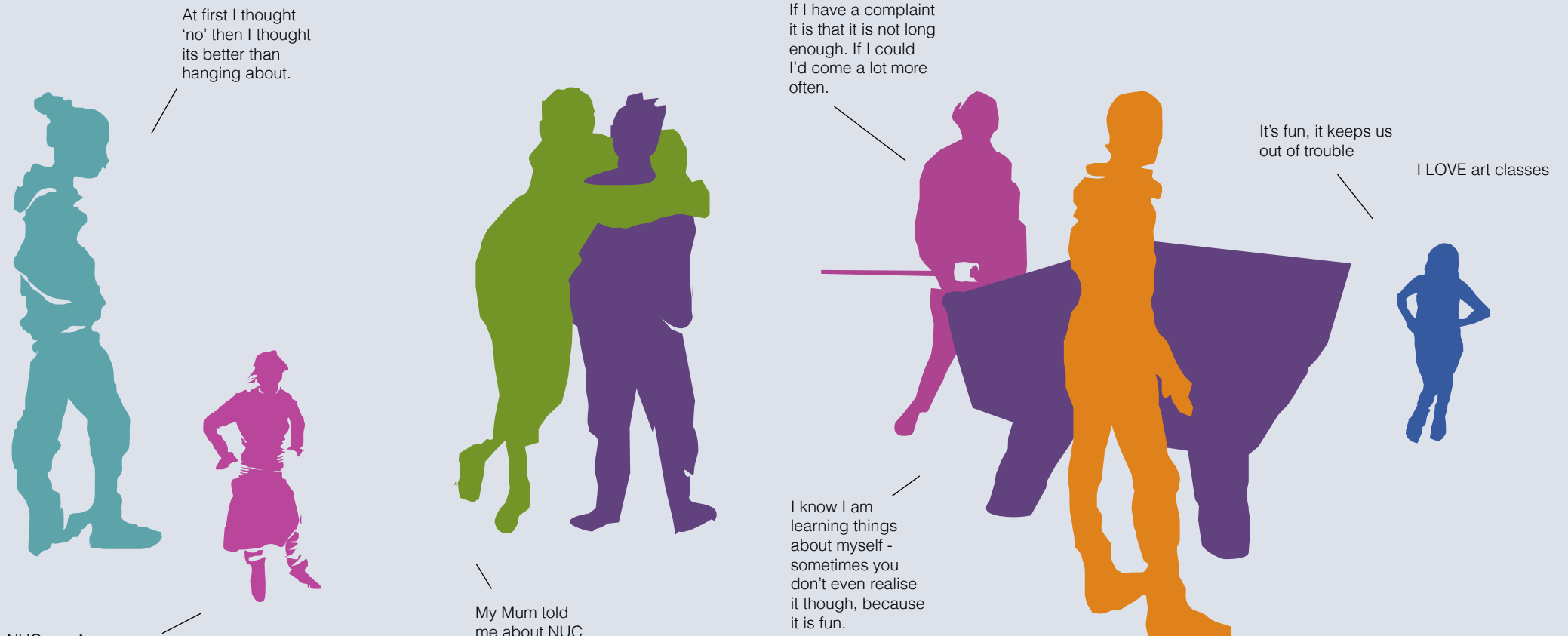
### **Our services are delivered not only 9 to 5 but at evenings and weekends.**

Home and family visits  
Tenancy support  
Streetwork  
Drop ins  
Holiday programmes  
Positive Parenting Programmes  
Art classes  
Football  
Awareness raising participatory and community events  
Youth Theatre  
Growing and gardening

Educational and learning programmes  
Drugs and alcohol education support  
Self and agency referrals  
Health, citizenship and other issue-based group discussion work  
Employment and Training  
1-to-1 support  
Advanced sports training  
Targeted diversionary activities when young people are most at risk of gang fighting and street drinking  
Homework groups  
Support student placement at all levels  
Training services for other organisations



# How it works



**NUC meet young people through street work.** Initially it is a question of allowing them to get to know us. We are trying to get a rapport. We tell them what is available down at the Centres for them and encourage them **to drop in.**

**Step 1 - Streetwork, drop-ins, agency referral, word of mouth**

**Step 2 - Getting to know each other. We provide fun activities that help young people stay off the streets.**





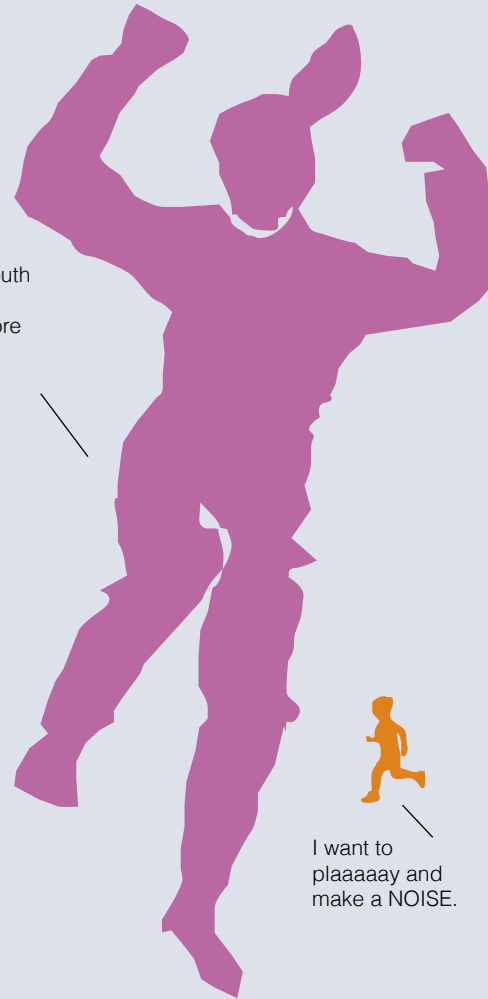
I want to get all the best for my baby. She's 6 months. For a while I was quite fed up stuck in the house. But now I've got some family support and life is better.

I lost the first job I ever had and nearly got evicted but now I have managed to get my benefits sorted and I know I can stay where I am.



I want to do hip hop

I go to our Youth Theatre and I have a lot more confidence



I want to plaaaaay and make a NOISE.



We keep a note about who has come along, what they have done, what they want from the centre, or just generally from life and how we can support them.

**Step 3 - Specialised services, family support, group work, wellbeing education**

**Step 4 - working one to one, employment and training, linking to external services**



# Case studies

## Leeanne and Jame's story

The turning point for us was when our kids were taken away from us.

That day we swore we would get them back, somehow. It took us three long hard years.

You see us today, we look just like anyone else: back then you wouldn't recognise us. We were in a bad way. We were addicts. Not only were we shoplifting, to support our habit, we were selling drugs.

Our home was a cramped tenement flat, three kids in one bedroom, us in another. It was in a street where there were other people with addictions. We could not get away from the scene. Not that they were worse than us - no one was worse than us, we were terrible neighbours. We were constantly getting busted by the police and we ended up in court on charges.

Neither of us can claim we came from a bad home, in fact we had great parents, both of us. The children's granny and grandpa suffered such pain, because they were worried for us, and we pressed them to loan us money too. That's how bad things became, taking money off pensioners.

The day the children got taken away our first thoughts were we were terrified at letting them into someone's care. Our children Jordan, Josh and Jamie are the dearest, most precious things in our lives. Our second thoughts were how we were dreading telling their grand parents that we had our children taken away. Those thoughts were more than we could bear.

Probably it was the realisation that we'd failed the people we cared about most that made us turn round and take a look at ourselves. We did not like what we saw. At that time we thought maybe it is for the best - maybe our children deserve better, maybe we are not good enough parents for them.

We'd get a couple of hours of supervised visits and when we saw our children we knew the love we felt was too strong to let them go.

We got to know the children's foster mother, Jeannette. At first we were not sure how we would get on with her but she was just amazing! The children just loved Jeannette and her family: meeting her turned out to be a lucky break: she inspired and encouraged us.

Jeannette said: if you want your kids back you've got to speak up and tell the social workers that! You've got to find a way to fight and win them back! In addition she said - I am taking care of your kids, but I am taking care of them for you! So they will be fine when you get them back. Jeanette's belief that we were good for our children was the first chink of light.

Joan at NUC helped us find our way through the maze of support that was available to us. We started to get clean. We were helped by the addiction support people at Phoenix Futures. We attended a wee club where we were encouraged to talk and share experiences with other addicts. It helped us to find our voice and speak up, and that gave us more confidence.

We needed all the confidence we could get when it came to attending meetings with our social workers. There were times when we really hated them. It seemed sometimes they had all the power.

There was one meeting we will never forget: the permanency review. When children get placed in foster care the social workers will consider whether they should make fostering permanent. James stood up and said there was no way that this should happen and we wanted them back and we were going to do everything we could to make it happen. We realised from their reaction that they wanted this for us, provided we were able to look after the children properly. We had realised that if we 'owned' our problems we had the power to fix them and get our children back.

We went on parenting programme Triple P, which is first rate. We learned how to deal with not just being clean but staying that way. We had setbacks, we let ourselves down by getting caught with possession. There was one point when we had to say - we want our children back but we need more time, we are not ready.

Though at first we did not much care for our social worker over time we came to respect her. Joan from NUC helped us by explaining how the social work team were managing our case and she encouraged and reassured us when we felt everything was against us. Sometimes it seemed a confusing and harsh way of doing things, but Joan helped us realise our social worker was just doing her job. Now we think of our social worker as someone who was doing her best for everyone: when she said that ours was the most successful case she had worked on we realised how much the well being of our family, especially our children mattered to her. The day she said we could get our children back was the best day of our lives!

Now things have moved on: James' father passed away not long ago but he lived to be reunited with his grandchildren.



Unexpectedly we were allowed to stay on in his home and now we have a great house with a garden that is big enough for our three active sons. We are so proud of what we've done.

But every day we live with a little fear that some how we will slip. I do not know when that will go away but we know that Joan is always there for advice. Leeanne is working towards getting a job now and we would love to get involved with helping people who have their kids taken away from them. So many people give up hope when that happens. They just go to pieces. But you can fight back and win. We are the proof.



## Coach Sweeney's story

I am a fully qualified sports coach and I have over 30 years experience. We host football games and coaching three nights a week. For most it is a chance to get out the out of the house, off the streets and have fun with friends. For some it could be the start of a lifetime in sport.

What do people get out of it? They learn what it takes to be a sportsman: commitment, developing skills, resilience in the face of challenge, a willingness to work hard to improve yourself. In a word, stickability.

But even more important is the great football atmosphere: mutual encouragement, enjoyment of the sport and sharing time together as players, as families and as a community. It's good for young people and it's something I am passionate about.

I've seen some talented young players start out here, and I have supported them to junior club level. But they can't always attend training - which can be 3-4 times a week - as they progress in the sport. A hurdle as simple as travelling a long way to practice or play can stop a player developing, or stop friends and family coming to support them.

It scares me that we have great players and we're in danger of losing them. Why? Families don't always have the resources, even if they would like to support the youngster. That is why we are planning a Football Academy so we have the support right on our doorstep.



### Hannah's story

When did I start coming to NUC? I feel like I have always been coming: they have always been there for me, and I have worked for NUC, too. I am working towards a qualification in Social Care, then I am going to do a degree in Social Work. It is going to be hard, but I will get there.

What motivates me? My experiences growing up: I had to grow up too soon and later, I had to overcome the past. Now I want to help other people.

It started when I was about 9. My Dad was involved with drugs and some bad people. One time things went wrong and he was shot: he didn't die, but he was in a bad way. Then he disappeared from hospital while they were treating him. My Dad got in touch by phone briefly, afterward, but I have not seen him for 12 years. My family had to get away from the area as we were thought to be in danger. My Mum was alcoholic and suffering from bi-polar disorder and my older sister, who was only 16 at the time, became very troubled and suicidal. There was a lot of conflict and fights at home. My Mum found a new boyfriend, someone younger than herself and I did not get on well with him.



I started coming to NUC about then. I was difficult, 'a wee bitch' some might say. People would try to be friends and I'd be horrible to them. Looking back I realise that I had a lot of issues. I did not trust anyone. At NUC I would walk in and swear and scream and fight with the youth workers. I played truant and my education suffered. But at NUC they did not give up on me, no matter how appalling I was. I realised that no matter what I threw at them, they could take it and not be put off by it. Somehow I kept on going, week after week. It took a long time but gradually I learned it was a safe place and I could reach out to other people. It was then at the age of 12 that I decided that this was the kind of work I wanted to do.



A year later I met my partner Jason. I felt so safe when I was with him. He was a bit wild, because that is just how it is where we lived, there are gangs and fights. But he never destroyed or stole stuff. Jason had a great Mum and I got along well with her. When I was 15 she invited me to come and live with them both because, she said, she couldn't stand by and see me living the way I was.

Jason's Mum was a nice person but I had problems joining in with the family, I used to stay in our room and not mix. I suppose it was the one place I felt I could call mine, and yet it was not mine. How would I describe myself then? The only word is lost. The people I needed and wanted were not there for me. My sister left home, my Mum had mental health and addiction problems and my Dad was, well, nowhere. I did not have a normal home life. Even now I feel embarrassed and bad about it, even though obviously, it was not my fault. The

fact is: no one wants to be the object of pity, with everyone in the neighbourhood talking about your family. When I was 16 I put my name down to get a flat. Within a year I was living in my own place at last and I invited Jason to move in with me. I began work after leaving school with few qualifications, starting with a wee cleaning job and then moving on to become a care assistant. But I never forgot my dream of doing social work. NUC helped me find a training course and they offered me the chance of a placement. I really enjoyed it and I have been told I have good potential. My schooling was patchy but it has not held me back. Though the essays are difficult, I have got round that and found help I needed. I have been though a lot but one good thing about it is that I am not easily beaten.

I still feel sad sometimes, I admit. My Dad's family has sent me presents at Christmas but recently I asked him not to send me any more: I want a proper relationship with him, not presents from his family. Maybe one day I will see him again, but if this never happens I know I will cope. There are some things in my past that are difficult to forget and my Mum and sister still don't get on. Finding a partner, a home and training has given me confidence and makes me feel happy. All along the way NUC helped me with these things. I owe them so much.

I am looking forward to studying social work! It is going to be tough but it will open so many doors: I want to get more understanding, I want to meet new people and maybe make a difference. But I am under no illusions that it will be easy for me. It might sound strange but my Mum is a role model to me in the road ahead. There were times when she was not there for me, but she had a lot to contend with that was not her fault. She kept trying to do better no matter how bad things got, and that's what counts.



### Jess's story

I live locally in Ruchill and I have been coming to NUC since I was 8 years old. Today I am a youth worker. I love my work and I feel I understand the young people round here. Things are going well; but it was not always like that.

I used to be difficult, challenging you might say, confrontational. Not very nice. I hated everything and everyone. Yet despite that I still came along to NUC, if only to pick an argument. I'd yell 'I hate you' to the youth workers and I'd give anyone who crossed me a hard time. I must have been a total nightmare: but NUC never gave up on me.

After a while I began to see that I could be as horrible as I liked, it would not change their attitude. Eventually I got tired of being a pain in the neck.

How did I get like that? Truth is, it was not a bad home we had. Maybe it was me, and maybe it wasn't just me, I am not sure. What I am sure of is that I had a lot of anger.



It impressed me that the youth workers, even though I was pretty nasty to them, were never nasty back. I think that this showed real strength. After a while I realised I needed to do something, because deep down I was not the person I was making myself out to be. I knew I could be a person people could turn to for help.

So I started volunteering at NUC. Jill, the leader, got me some training courses, and when a placement opportunity came up with a neighbouring youth project, I put my name down. Then my big break came: I did so well they kept me on as a member of staff. I have been working there for 2 years now. I think I am good at working with young people, but I am at my best with the wee ones.

If I could give a young person who is not coping some advice I would say – come in and talk to someone. You will feel better, maybe find a way through and change your life. It worked for me.

# What makes us different

We know local people - and we care about what happens to them.

**We actively seek to build trust.**

We provide a nurturing, safe and non judgemental environment.

We are not a 9-5 service we are on hand at weekends and evenings. We are accessible.

We are guided by the needs of young people but not limited to the young. **We work with people of all ages.**

There are different levels of engagement on offer, so **people can choose what they want to take up.**

Our activities are carefully designed; they are tools for getting to know people.

We are powered by a belief that people and especially young people are influenced by a range of factors including family, community culture and expectations, peer groups and education. **We have a holistic outlook.**

**We are about hands on, tailored 1-2-1 practical support. We give value for money.**

**We provide family support and tenancy programmes** to assist the full spectrum of the community.

**We can act as a bridge to schools.**

We offer flexible learning that helps young people learn from their experiences and **move toward independent choices and greater self esteem.**





We know we can't do it all ourselves so we pro-actively seek **effective partnerships with other organisations** in the community such as the police, schools, the council and housing associations.



**We do not offer quick fixes: our work is the culmination of outcomes: we work for long term impact.**

We help people learn from their experiences and **move toward choices and behaviours that work for them.**



We help people represent their views and **find their voice.**

There are loads of good opportunities - we put people in touch with what is available, whether it is addiction services or just better healthcare or education - we can **help people find the pathways** to get what they need.

We work with other support agencies and refer issues that are outwith our field of expertise.



We think it is important to have **a kind word** for young people, it is all they need sometimes.

# Experience and evaluation

## **Maggie**

We record how frequently every young person attends and the number of contact hours we have with them.

**Once a young person or family's needs have been met they will be monitored and tracked regularly and be kept in the assessment loop.**



## **Jim**

We keep attendance sheets, photographs, consent forms, individual case files, record our meetings with other organisations and agencies.



## **Gil**

It is important parents know they are here, and they feel safe talking to us.

## **James**

I think our core skill is building a rapport so we know exactly what is right for each individual.



**I absolutely love working with the young people, by the way.**

## **Craig (8)**

They often ask for our feedback - that doesn't happen in school...

they are quite strict but not like school.





**Gary**

We are regularly evaluated to check that we are meeting our aims and objectives - which is to make sure we are providing value to young people and their families.

We spend a lot of time in training. Initially watching other youthworkers and then being supervised.

**Greg GSCS**

I like to get hands-on and we have a wide variety of activities. We say we 'try to grow the young people's capacities', and we grow our own too! I've got hunners and hunners of capacities!

**Alice**

I became a youth worker because I came to this place when I was wee and it really made a difference

**John**

The young people get to know us and see us out and about - I think it makes all the difference that we know about the area and what it is like to live here.

**We are trusted. We could not do what we do without trust.**



# Our community



## **Housing Association Leader**

We are one of the longest partners of NUC: they are now an integral part of Cadder community. Together with NUC we have developed tenancy support schemes that help us help our tenants to look after their tenancies. In the worst case scenario this removes the possibility of losing their homes, but we also value their support in more positive settings: for example helping our residents to simply get more out of life in the Cadder community. If NUC were to leave next week they would be missed by many families and young people who have improved their lives as a result of NUC's work.

## **MSP**

NUC work across a number of areas of my constituency and provide real opportunities for the young people. They can also reflect back the interests of the young people they work with and the issues that concern them most. This is a valuable tool for me.



## **Councillor**

NUC Communities has forged ahead in developing strong relationships within the Planning Partnership. Organisations like NUC that recognise the value of the Partnership make far greater positive impact.





**Social Work Manager**

NUC workers work with their clients and the views they put forward at professional meetings are honest and realistic. They maintain good professional relationships in the area and can be trusted to undertake the tasks they agree to undertake.



**Lecturer, Caledonian University School of Social Work**

NUC should be proud of what they have achieved. A shining example of what good practice is in terms of a valuable learning experience for social work students.

**Police Officer**

At Maryhill Police Office we go out of our way to foster links with the whole community: businesses, housing associations, local groups, the council to name a few. With everyone going in the same direction, areas of conflict can be defused, not just by the police but by everyone in the community. We work well with NUC. For example, we had some disorder recently with youngsters which we both tackled promptly; ourselves from the enforcement standpoint, while NUC put on extra activities at that time to provide diversion. The problems cooled off. There is a real will in the community to help each other and head off problems early.



**Head Teacher**

A modern secondary school is the hub of a neighbourhood. We want people to reach their full potential: not just the most academic learners, but all of them. As we move forward we recognise that increasingly, education will be sourced from a wide range of opportunities in the community. For example, we have local firms and even parents delivering learning. From here onward our focus will intensify on partnering with local agencies. We are encouraged that NUC have the same goal as ourselves to foster deeper and more sustainable relationships and we look forward to the future together.

# Our structure, governance and management

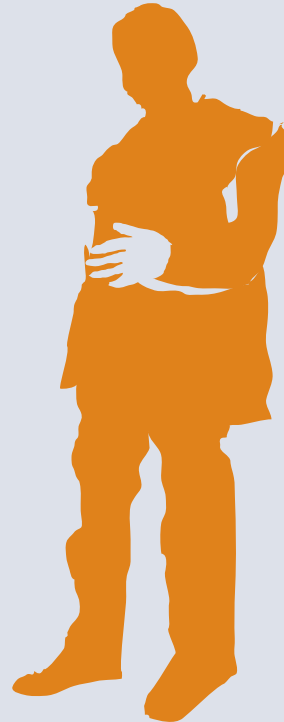
## Jill Mackay, Chief Executive

I have been involved with the organisation since 1999 and have watched it grow and develop from a small youth work project to a large youth and family organisation. Although this has been a long and arduous undertaking, it has been aided by a strong and experienced staff team who have been invaluable contributors in this development.

Today we can confidently claim that we offer a wide range of supportive components which are of a high standard and quality. The range of provision we now deliver includes: educational and diversionary group work programmes for young people, family support, sports and outdoor activities, arts music and drama, employment and training advice and support and regular street work/outreach delivery.

The key to our overall success is being able to offer long term, community based services that are locally accessible. In addition to this we see the importance of developing effective relationships with local residents and external partner agencies – effective relationships that build trust and promote independence.

Lastly our appreciation goes out to the many funders who have believed in the strength and quality of the organisation, thereby enabling us to deliver sustainable services in partnership with local people and communities. We have also established a network of key partner agencies and organisations who have contributed so much in terms of delivery and support. This has allowed us to put together a more comprehensive package that can promote change and improve quality of life.



## Mark Langdon, Chair

In its 30 years since its inception as Ruchill Youth Project, the services delivered have never been so varied, widespread and required. Now as North United Communities Limited we have matured as an organisation and have developed a model of practice that delivers real impact and successful outcomes.

Every week our staff team engages with over 400 young people and over 80 families mainly within the communities of Cadder, Ruchill, Wyndford, Summerston and more recently Milton. Our approach is based on forming and sustaining real partnerships between local residents, groups, organisations and our staff. These partnerships are based on mutual trust and understanding and lead to better life chances for many of the most isolated and vulnerable people in Glasgow. Indeed for many we have become the most consistent and accessible supportive framework in their lives.

So where do we go from here? We know that the issues which face our communities look set to become even tougher – restructuring of the welfare state, rising youth unemployment, growing inequalities and widening divides in society. We will endeavour to put ourselves in the best possible position in order to react to changing political landscapes and continue to deliver a needs-led, high quality service.

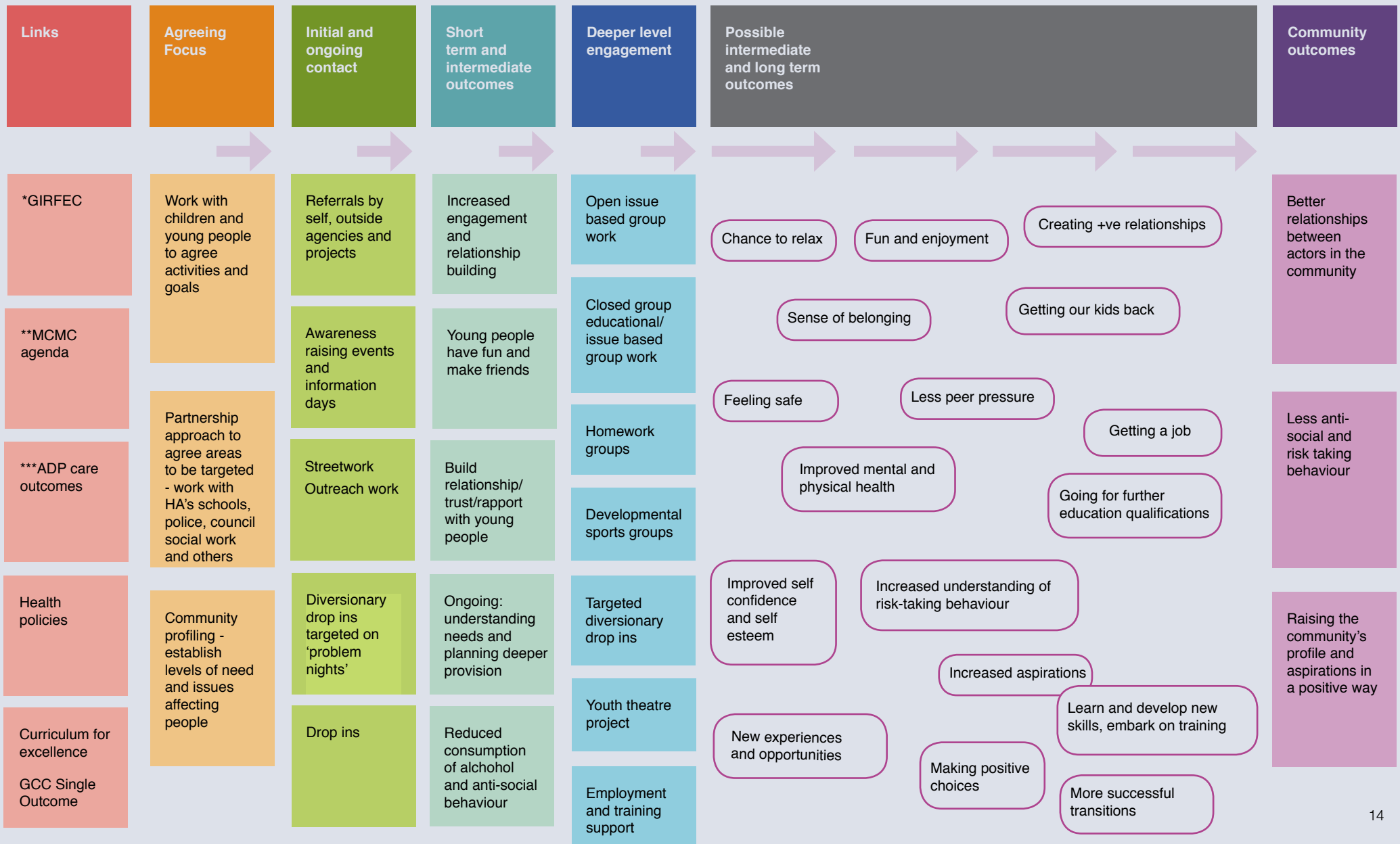
On a more personal note I would firstly like to thank the staff for their continued commitment and support to local people and the organisation as a whole. Without this energy we would not be the flexible and dynamic organisation that we have become. Secondly I would also like to extend my gratitude to the funders who have invested in our model of practice and shared in our vision in a future which offers more equality and opportunity.

In many respects we look forward to what lies ahead but acknowledge there will be many barriers and issues that we will have to overcome on the journey!

The prospect of alienation, isolation, poor health and low expectations is too grim to be tolerated: NUC provides a constant focus for betterment and a lifeline to a fairer sharing of the resources the community helps to create.



# Overview of our process



\*GIRFEC - Getting It Right For Every Child \*\*MCMC - More Choices, More Chances \*\*\*ADP - Alcohol and Drug Partnership

Supporting young people,  
parents and families.

Contact:

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[www.nuconline.co.uk](http://www.nuconline.co.uk)

NUC is a charity.  
Our funding comes  
from government  
initiatives and  
trusts: we receive  
no continuous  
funding. In future  
we will seek  
support from a  
wide variety of  
strategic partners.

We welcome  
visitors. Please  
get in touch and  
we look forward to  
seeing you soon.



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