

a) Financial Help in Early Years

Referrals for the year exceeded 500 which represented a 35% increase over last year's figure. The total gains at £1.25m stayed approximately the same however and this was due to more people who were already receiving benefits making contact regarding general money worry issues. Many of the parents involved were able to claim additional Scottish Government benefits or were referred for Crisis or Inclusion fund grants or fuel poverty advice and help.

During the last 6 months of 2021 the Welfare Benefits Assistant spent time working with Primary School Head Teachers and parents to assist them to access available information on benefits which is contained within the [Financial Help in the Early Years leaflet](#). Scottish Borders CAB managers were involved in this joint initiative and the information was placed on the recently developed NHS Money Worries App. All the FHTEY benefit information is now available on the App with a "one click" link access. Primary School parents will be informed of this positive development via their Schools Xpressions App.

The Welfare Benefits Assistant has been exploring options for short term / immediate funding for families who are unable to meet even the smallest of costs such as a buggy for a baby or an unexpected bill. Crisis and Community Care Grants cover many of these but there are some occasions where the immediate need falls short of the necessary criteria for these grants. One such case was a 16 year old within a very low income family who was unable to join the Army as he could not raise the £300 needed to get him to and from the training course. Funding was eventually provided to meet short term crisis issues not covered by existing sources.

Immediate and urgent needs have been met from the new Inclusion Fund within a couple of days of submission and this rapid response to a crisis situation is exactly what will be needed over the difficult months ahead.

One notable success recently was in a coercive abuse case where the mother was unable to leave her partner as he controlled all the finances including benefits. When the relationship completely broke down he gave her no money even for her own and the children's food and other family members had to provide this from their own limited funds. The Welfare Benefits Assistant presented evidence to the local Job Centre and a full benefit package was put in place. The homeless team were contacted who arranged alternative accommodation and the mother and her children were finally able to leave her abusive partner with a level of income that supported them.

Referrals for the period up to May 2022 were 88 resulting in a benefit uplift of £212,570. This rate of referrals and uplift has been consistent but it is envisaged that the cost of living crisis will affect more people and referrals are likely to increase.

b) Youth Borders Winter Fund

In February 2022, YouthBorders administered the Winter Fund from the Scottish Borders Council Financial Inclusion Fund. YouthBorders comprises 45 voluntary and community-based youth organisations from all over the Scottish Borders. The organisations work together to promote good quality youth work. Youth Work facilitates young people to understand themselves, their community and the world they live in better, and supports them to achieve positive change. The Winter Fund allocation of £71,150 was split into two elements: a financial hardship fund, and funding for additional youth work activities.

The hardship funding was allocated to 18 YouthBorders membership organisations, who were able to purchase a total of 274 vouchers to allocate to Borders families. They were used for food, homeware, fuel, clothing, heating, data and transport and reached 549 children and young people in the Scottish Borders.

The funding for additional youth work activities was allocated to 32 membership organisations, who were able to fund youth work activity in February and March 2022. This allowed 1170 young people experiencing hardship to participate in youth activities without any barriers, and also reduced holiday hunger by providing food.

The youth work activities covered indoor and outdoor activities, health and wellbeing, education activities, volunteering and day trips. Day trips were much appreciated by families struggling with financial hardship, as otherwise children would not have had these new experiences. One young child was able to visit the city for the first time, and have fast food for the first time.

c) Kingsland Shed

The Pupil Council at Kingsland Primary School in Peebles had identified some challenges around the cost of living, so in April 2022 they launched their swap and share shed, the first to be set up by a Primary School in the Scottish Borders, to help support equity and sustainability in their community.

The Pupil Council were awarded funding from the SBC Welfare Trust Fund to enable them to purchase the shed. The swap and share shed is available for those in the community in need, while also striving to reduce waste, by re-using and sharing. Items available in the shed include school uniforms, food, educational supplies, toiletries and children's books. The shed users can take what is needed for free, but also ask that the community donates items to the shed to be re-used.

Not only have Kingsland established the swap and share shed, but they also held a showcase event in May 2022. The pupils had realised that we are now all facing harder financial times, and that for some families this can be really overwhelming and at times unmanageable.

The event showcased the extensive support available in the Peebles area to help children meet their potential, and covered topics such as finances, parenting, wellbeing, housing, digital, health, disability, learning, childcare and access to opportunities. The showcase gave attendees the chance to meet the people behind the organisations. There was representation from the following groups at the event;

- Scottish Borders Council
- Volunteer Centre Borders
- Social Security Scotland
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Peebles Foodbank
- Peebles Community Trust
- Welfare Aware Borders
- Parent Space
- Scottish Borders Housing Association
- Eildon Housing
- Outside the Box
- Tweed Togs
- Change Works
- Live Borders
- Dementia Friendly Tweeddale

Another Showcase is planned for September and will look to welcome families of new children starting at the school, and will encourage these families to access support for the school year. This event will be combined with a whole school open day to encourage attendance, and will be open to members of the public as well as parents / carers from other Borders schools.

d) Get into Summer 2021

Get into Summer 2021 was delivered by multiple organisations within the Scottish Borders. These organisations include Scottish Borders Council, NHS Borders, Youth Borders, Live Borders and Quarriers. .

Funding was provided to the Local Authority by the Scottish Government in order for holiday activities and experience to be coordinated and delivered. These activities and experiences would be targeted at low income families, children and young people adversely affected by the impacts of covid19 and those in the following categories;

- Children from low income households
- Children from those priority family groups identified in the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan: larger families; families with a disabled child or adult; young mothers; families with children under one; and minority ethnic families
- Children from families who have been shielding during the pandemic and whose ability to engage in activities and socialise will have been very limited
- Children with a disability or additional support need
- Care experienced children and young people
- Young carers
- Children in need of protection
- Children supported by a child's plan
- Children who have undergone significant transitions during lockdown or will experience them this year, including starting in ELC, starting primary school, moving to secondary school and leaving school.

Sessions were run in various different areas including;

- Multi Activity Camps
- Church Run holiday club
- Den building
- Video games
- Natural Art
- Activities for children with additional support needs
- Sports Camp
- Touch Rugby
- Football Camp
- Rugby Camp
- Outdoor Activities
- Family Time (Early Years Centre)
- Early Years Play Camp
- Pony Care sessions, riding, obstacle course
- Family Cinema Screenings
- Mountain Biking
- Kayaking
- Canoeing
- Woodland Play Sessions

- Attending venues such as Textile Towerhouse, Old Gala House, Mary Queen of Scots House etc. for outdoor painting and other creative activities
- Animal handling sessions
- Finding the escaping prisoners at Jedburgh Jail
- Activity Trails
- Helping in the community Garden
- Building Bird Boxes
- Access to Jim Clark Museum
- Toddle Waddle at Harestanes
- Access to 3G/2G pitches
- Gym access for teenagers
- Access to swimming pools for family pods or fun/flume sessions

Healthy snacks and water were provided through YouthBorders Partners, who also signposted families who faced additional financial barriers to the Community Assistance Hubs for support through the Scottish Borders Financial Hardship Fund. Transport was also provided where required and additional staffing was provided to include young people with Additional Support Needs.

Lunches, snacks and water were provided by SBC and there was a Quarriers presence at camps for emotional wellbeing support.

SBC Quotes

Children's Quotes	<i>"I had lots of fun and made lots of new friends"</i>
	<i>"I enjoyed the sports camp and I want to come back. Usually I am stuck in the house and this made me come outside"</i>
Parent's Quotes	<i>"My son was apprehensive to attend the holiday camp and I initially only booked 3 days. He loved the staff and activities so much we booked the whole week. He came home keen to show me new skills he had learned and creative things he had made. The staff took the time with him and this was clear when discussing his days activities. The staff showed genuine interest and enthusiasm for the camp and children. I felt safe leaving my son with them and my son felt safe for me to leave"</i>
	<i>"This had a massive impact on my children they all thoroughly enjoyed it and made lots of new friends. The staff were brilliant also"</i>
Activity Leader Quotes	<i>"Being employed as part of the team had such a positive impact as it allowed me to build great partnerships with colleagues and relationships with the children, along with becoming a more confident leader and being a person for children to look up to and approach if they had questions"</i>
	<i>"I felt it has increased my social skills not only with how to speak to the children but also to the other leaders, I felt it was very easy to talk to everyone throughout all the camps"</i>

Live Borders Quotes

Children's Quotes	<i>"I have loved meeting lots of new people and it has been amazing".</i>
	<i>"Holiday camp is great it gets a 1,000,000,000,034/10".</i>
Parent's Quotes	<i>"My son had an amazing week at the activity camp at Gala Academy. So glad I managed to get him in....had a ball and met lots of new friends. I can't thank Ewan and all his lovely staff</i>

	<i>enough....thank you...."</i>
	<i>"As a parent of a child who attended 2 days at Earlston activity camp, my child had a much needed break from being stuck at home during the summer holidays. Def will send her again as she it gave her some much needed respite from her disabled brother"</i>
Activity Leader Quotes	<i>"I have been able to put my coaching qualifications into practice as well as gaining knowledge in different sports. This has led to me being more confident in my ability"</i>
	<i>"I have gained a sense of achievement out of my summer"</i>

Youth Borders Quotes

Family Feedback	<i>"My son has dug out his old nature books and bug pots, he's totally inspired by the nature connection sessions, thanks"</i>
	<i>"Thank you so so much for the woodland afternoons. My son had the best time! He said you guys have the best tools, loved the saw and the tools that removed bark from sticks. He said the s'mores were amazing too! Massive thanks"</i>
Session Leader Feedback	<i>"Several children made new friendships as a result of the sessions and parents swapped phone numbers to arrange future play dates"</i>
	<i>"Working outdoors and exploring nature was uplifting and inspiring for the children. Some were just so happy collecting some leaves and flowers"</i>

Quarriers Quotes

Young Person Feedback	<i>"Thanks for all you have done and for meeting during the summer it made such a difference to me"</i>
	<i>"This has been the best summer I wish we could do these things all the time"</i>
Parent Feedback	<i>"Thank you so much for taking them out and being so kind to them both- what a lovely idea. We really appreciate it."</i>
	<i>"You have provided her with great opportunities this summer, she is always smiling when she leaves the house to meet you"</i>