

30.01.2024

## F.A.O: TWEEDDALE ASSESMENT PANEL

We write to provide additional information as requested by the Tweeddale Assessment Panel at their meeting held on Tuesday 16th January 2024, in order that this response be taken into account when our application is considered by the Tweeddale Area Partnership at their meeting on February 6<sup>th</sup> 2024.

In attempt to better explain our current situation and respond to your observations we have highlighted points below for your consideration. But first, let us provide some background to Oor Space Youthy; who we are, why we exist and who we serve, since the application really needs to be considered within this context.

The 3 volunteer board members who established OSY in October 2021 did so as a result of listening to their own children and friends. It was recognised that there was a need for a drop-in youth service for primary 6, 7, and S1 pupils, focusing on friendships, relationships, high school transitions and early intervention. At the time, this was a gap in youth provision in Peebles. This one night a week club was welcomed by the community and within 6 months our membership reached 200 young people. As parents with professional qualifications, skills and experience in the youth and community field we responded to need and were led by young people, the community, and the families we engaged with. As a result of this approach, by January 2023 OSY was involved in several activities and initiatives, as well as the original weekly drop-in service.

- In February 2023 the weekly Saturday night drop-in service was split into Junior and Senior sessions. Due to the gap in age and stage, we recognised the need to ensure new P6 and P7 children still felt safe in the space, and welcome to attend. However, due to responding to the needs of the now S2 and S3 aged young people, the environment was not always suitable for younger children as we were regularly responding to risk-taking behaviours, such as drinking alcohol, taking drugs, fighting, and anti-social behaviour. Therefore, Saturday night is about issues-based work on responding to these issues which is not appropriate for 10- & 11-year-olds. For this reason, we separated the sessions into more age-appropriate drop-ins with the support of a grant from The CORRA Foundation. This group meet on Friday evenings in The Drill Hall in Peebles and have 145 members. We see an average of 35, 10 & 11 olds weekly.

- Our Senior drop-in sessions focus on harm reduction, which has only been possible due to the relationships and trust we have built with young people since October 2021. This strong foundation has resulted in young people who came to us in P7, S1 and S2, still coming to see us on a Saturday evening, sometimes in crisis. When OSY first opened, we presumed that when these young people transitioned into S3, they would seek support from established services in the local area. However, they choose to come to us, and therefore have created a space within OSY, and feel ownership and safety within our youth service. As a result of young people's choice, and right to choose, we felt that we had to respond. Now with a membership of 186 young people, and a weekly attendance of 25 - 35 young people, it is clear that this service is needed.

- The Cost-of-living crisis resulted in the creation of a twice weekly youth cafe and homework club. This was piloted as a short-term service in partnership with YouthBorders Warm and Well Fund in winter 2022/23. Young people have the option of a free hot meal, help with homework, free internet access, a range of activities, access to free period packs, access to advice and advocacy support, are encouraged and supported to access Young Scot opportunities, and using a dynamic approach, anything else our young people need, our team supports them with. However, due to the 30+ vulnerable young people we were seeing every week, we explored opportunities to ensure longer



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# Oor Space Youthy

term access through a partnership collaboration approach. In partnership with young people and Revolve, we secured a grant from YouthLink and Creative Scotland to deliver twice weekly Creative Art Sessions alongside our regular youth cafe from September 2023 until June 2024. This well used service has been a huge success and has a focus on improving young people's well-being by providing empowering development opportunities, learning transferable skills, and through targeted support young people strengthen their community connections.

- In October 2022, as a team, we were witnessing parents and carers regularly seeking advice, support and a listening ear on the trials and tribulations of raising teenagers. We received a small Community, Health and Wellbeing grant from Dumfries and Galloway to support our pilot service, 'Oor Space Parents'. This grant was to deliver the service for a year which included bi-monthly gatherings and 1:1 advice and support. Due to the chaotic and difficult situations that some of our families faced, this work for a while became time intensive. Individual young people and families were at breaking point, with many of them feeling they had nowhere else to turn to for support. Our service has supported families in crisis in a wide range of contextual factors, from homelessness, health and education concerns, social work and police involvement. We signposted as best as we could, however it was very clear from parent and carers direct feedback that they felt no other statutory or voluntary organisation in this area were providing the advocacy and practical support we were. This work has been both essential and rewarding, however the demand from vulnerable families was far greater than we could have imagined, and the intense whole family support took many voluntary hours from both board members and paid members of staff. This funding ended in December 2023. However, due to the continued need from Peeblesshire families, we have been able to continue this work through support from Perceptive Action C.I.C who fund 3hrs per week towards staff costs from money generated at School's Out Peebles.

- The local anti-social behaviour issues raised through the community council resulted in the establishment of Peebles Youth Voice. As members of this group, we have fully supported the development and vision. We host the meetings at The Drill Hall. and have provided unwavering feedback, advice and guidance from a youth, parent and organisational viewpoint. The success of the teen events, the design, development, consultation and plans for the teen shelter have all been key pieces of work that OSY have committed numerous hours to in the past year. Our commitment to Peebles Youth voice is provided on a volunteer basis and due to the value, we place on the work of PYV, we endeavour to continue to do so.

- P-Toon flights are the first Borders based junior darts academy which we established in January 2023. This was in direct response to young people who attend the Saturday night drop-in asking for a dedicated junior darts club. Two OSY volunteers attended training with the Scottish JDC, and we are a fully registered Scottish Junior Darts Academy. A grant from Foundation Scotland and local sponsorships has ensured that player membership fees are sustainable. The darts sessions give young people a sense of worth, confidence and pride by committing to a sport and they have plans of competing in national and international competitions this coming year.

- Peebles Place Changers are a result of a group of 8 young people securing Youth Scotland Inspire Award. Together they created their very own 'bringing generations together' family fun day in May 2023, and as a result of its huge success, this community event is intended to continue every year on Tweedgreen in Peebles. A small group of young people aged 12-18yrs, one of whom also attends Peebles Community Council meetings, are actively involved in Peebles Place Changers and have continued to bring their voice to town action planning by actively contributing to Peebles Youth Voice action planning and continue to meet monthly during drop-in sessions to plan and discuss issues affecting them in their local community.



- We have also developed a 1:1 individualised support plan in partnership with Priorsford primary school and Peebles High School for young people facing a range of adverse childhood experiences. This involves weekly visits to the local gym from shopping and meal planning, all support is entirely person centred to the individual young person and agreed in partnership with the school. This work is currently supported by Perceptive Action C.I.C who provide 3hrs per week staff costs towards this initiative. This financial support is ongoing.

We hope that the above not only provides you with a solid understanding of our work but also demonstrates how the demands upon our organisation have increased in recent times. While we do not regret the involvement or dismiss the importance of any of the above pieces of work, we recognise fully that as a result of overcommitting, and at times firefighting, we risked our core service of our 'weekend drop-in services' that the young people in Peebles still need and want. Without the weekly drop-in service, none of the above developments and outcomes would have been possible. And without the weekend drop in many will cease to exist. Their continuation is crucial.

We applied for two longer term grants last year from UK Youth and The Scottish Government, which were both unsuccessful. From July 2023 to December 2023 our board of three full time working mothers faced their own work commitments and family circumstances. This is not intended to excuse our lack of forethought and planning, but an attempt to explain why we took 'the eye off the ball' that led to Oor Space Youthy's current situation.

We as a team recognise our shortcomings and having received your comments, we have taken time to reflect, as we are committed to ensuring we have a long-term strategic plan to be part of caring for the young people of Peebles. While a stand-alone employed fundraiser would be tremendous, we understand that funding this while our core costs are at threat is inconceivable. Instead, we are committed to diversifying and recruiting board members who can support us in our aims. We plan to do this in the coming months and aim to have further board members in place ready to be appointed in time for our AGM in July 2024. In the short term and starting with immediate effect we have been gifted the skills, advisement and knowledge from Sarah Keen (PYT) and Iain Gibson (PYV), who have agreed to advise on fundraising and strategy on a monthly voluntary basis. As a team we are grateful and humbled that both these experienced individuals are willing to gift their time to our service. However, we also understand that both have a vested interest in the continued success of OSY as they witness firsthand the impacts and quality of work we are doing, which in turn supports their own organisations missions.

Compared to many other organisations our core costs are not excessive, and we know the value of money for the work we do is immense. We know this because our small team of paid staff commit as many voluntary hours to their role as paid hours. They, like the board, are members of this community and are passionate and committed to ensuring all young people and their families thrive.

Your assessment of our application mentioned Youth Borders. Youth Borders have been instrumental in the establishment of our service. We are full members of the organisation and have worked with them since the beginning. We attend training, networking meetings and consider them one of our greatest allies. Last year Youth Borders nominated OSY for the National Youth Work Award 'team of the year'. We have always felt valued by Youth Borders and the positive working relationship with their board and staff team have given us the confidence to continue in our efforts.

While the NSF provided a grant in April 2022 to Perceptive Action C.I.C for the continuation of one-night weekly drop-in, and the establishment of OSY as a a charity, this is the first application we have submitted as OSY in our own right. We were encouraged by local councillors and the SBC community

support team on numerous occasions over the past 18 months to submit our application and draw on the support of our local funding opportunities. In summer 2023 we were told the grant request for support for January-June 2024 was too early and understandably other applications took priority due to the timely nature of other projects, which is why we applied again.

While we do not envisage relying on NSF on an ongoing basis, we hope to receive your consideration when other opportunities are unavailable, and in future, if and when new or expanded project opportunities arise, or in the unlikely event there is an emergency situation. We have been supported thus far by national funders including CORRA Foundation, Foundation Scotland, Awards For All, Bailey Gifford, YouthLink, Youth Scotland, Creative Scotland, The Robertson Trust, Crime-stoppers, Tesco, and Youth Borders. These highly sought after, and respected funders value our work and believe in our worth. It will be encouraging for our board, young people, families and wider community to have your support too.

For our future, ideally, we would receive a multi-year core cost grant from a small group of robust funders, supplemented by specific grants from elsewhere. We are currently talking with National Lottery, Children in Need and Youth Link which will allow us to effectively plan and implement a sustainable model to grow. We have many ideas on how this can be achieved through social enterprise, partnership statutory working and customised services. The monthly fundraising and strategy meeting mentioned above will identify other potential sources. However, without your short-term financial support none of this will be possible and the threat to OSY as a local community-built organisation is at risk of closure.

We hope this has answered your questions and gave some further background to the work of OSY. As a small team of Peeblesshire residents working tirelessly to improve the lives of our local young people, we urge you to offer your support.

## Kind Regards

**Clare Swann**  
Chairperson

**Michelle Fraser**  
Treasurer

**Laura Maciver**  
Secretary