

Stories of Hope

Addiction recovery



Scotland has been marked by the devastating impact of drug and alcohol addiction in many ways. Today, the nation is at the forefront of addiction-related issues and deaths in Europe, with repercussions in health, economic, educational, and social challenges for families and communities in urban and rural environments. The widening mental health crisis, socio-economic challenges and limited clinical support exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic has led to the highest increase of addiction issues in over ten years.

But we are a nation with hope. For decades, church communities and Christian-based organisations have invested tremendously in the building of in-person and online spaces for drug addiction recovery. Within the last decade, over 2,300 individuals have been directly treated and successfully recovered from their addictions through faith-based recovery programmes, with thousands more impacted in some form

by these programmes.

The Scottish government, having appointed a minister for drugs policy, has promised to increase funding to reduce levels of addiction in Scotland, with £50 million over the next five years committed to grassroots and community organisations. Our hope in producing this report is to demonstrate the value and necessity of directing this funding toward many of the pre-existing faith-based programmes across Scotland.

Introduction

Background

According to a new report published by the Scottish government in July 2021, the number of drug-related deaths (covering all deaths with an underlying cause of drug poisoning or drug abuse for substances controlled in the UK) reached 1,339 in 2020. Both short and long-term residential rehabilitation providers spoke of the need to secure additional resources to better cope with the impact of Covid-19 on the services.

At the beginning of 2022, the Evangelical Alliance approached

churches and faith-based organisations operating addiction recovery services across Scotland. Drawing from this research, our Scottish team reached out to 17 churches and Christian organisations across Scotland, from the Outer Hebrides to the Scottish Borders, from Aberdeenshire to Ayr, and asked them to complete an online survey designed to ascertain a comprehensive, nation-wide map of drug and alcohol addiction recovery services operated by faith-based groups. This survey was also sent out to members and evangelical networks

both within and outwith the Evangelical Alliance. All the organisations we reached out to responded to our requests. This survey asked respondents to detail the location and nature of recovery services that they (individually or collectively) provide, to which both residential and non-residential respondents detailed the number of available spaces for participants annually. Respondents were also consulted on the financial situation of their programmes in respect to the running and sources of their budget. The survey concluded with a series of questions on how faith intersected with the individual

respondents' work in the addiction recovery sector.

Stories of Hope: Addiction Recovery details the number of operational rehabilitation beds, provides numerical statistics for people rehabilitated through faith-based programmes in Scotland and highlights the types of services provided. In addition to the survey, web-based research was conducted to gather data available through organisation websites and government research conducted into addiction recovery services. We also used data that had been collected by organisations through their own research projects.



According to a report published by the Scottish government in February 2021, the total estimated number of beds available in Scotland for the treatment of alcohol and drug addiction is 418 (February 2021). 121 of these bed spaces for patients are offered by Christian organisations located across Scotland. 30% of survey respondents offer bed spaces to patients. From this group, approximately 80% of beds are offered by the largest, nationwide organisations, with

multiple centres across Scotland. The remaining 20% are offered by organisations located in one city or region only. Residential rehabilitation programmes among these groups were shown to have a high success rate. All respondents reported more than a 50% success rate of recovery when asked to provide numerical data on the patients who had successfully recovered through addiction recovery programmes. The average for residential rehabilitation recovery is 66%.



Bethany Christian Trust Edinburgh

Bethany Christian Trust is a national charity with a missional vision to relieve the suffering and meet the long-term needs of homeless and vulnerable people across Scotland. Bethany Christian Trust works intentionally with “one person at a time, one family at a time, and one community at a time”

to provide bespoke support for almost 7,000 people a year. The organisation assists people in varied ways, from housing, education and employment, to community integration, emotional wellbeing, and addiction recovery.

Here’s what two individuals said about their experiences with Bethany Christian Trust:

“ I found myself at Bethany in August 2019 after years of drug abuse, mainly Heroin. The trauma I experienced as a result of child abuse had a major impact in my life and was the main catalyst for falling into addiction. I felt worthless and unwanted over the years, but Bethany took me in and gave me the chance to rebuild my life.

I am now over two and a half years clean, thanks to the help I received from the staff and the programme at Bethany, but the most important thing I now have is a relationship with Christ. Through the love, care and compassion shown to me at Bethany, and with the Lord’s help, I am very hopeful for the future as I look to get my own place. As long as I put God first, I know it will be ok.

Anonymous

“Before I arrived at Bethany Christian Centre, my life was very sad, and I suffered with depression. I had really lost all hope. I constantly battled feelings of fear and insecurity, but instead of trying to get help, I found an escape in drink and drugs and shut myself away from others. Although I’ve had periods of recovery from time to time, I never felt that I could see a way out and become totally free.

“I came to Bethany Christian Centre to get help for my addiction. I was lost and had no direction or hope. Coming to the centre has helped me see myself as God sees me; that I am fully loved and accepted. It hasn’t been an easy programme for me, but without the help of the staff, I don’t think I would have made it. With their love and the love of God, I have found strength and confidence within me that I never thought I could have. Now I have more to look forward to, and while I do not know what the future holds, I thank God for the people he has put in my life and for the newfound love and security that I have.”

Brian



CrossReach

Edinburgh and Glasgow

CrossReach has been at the forefront of exceptional community work as one of Scotland’s most expansive social care providers for around 150 years by providing respite, residential and counselling services for all ages across a broad variety of sectors. The Church of Scotland’s Social Care Council is accountable for the work of CrossReach, identifying

areas of need and guiding the Church in new approaches that address and respond to relevant problems in society. The ministry reflects Christian values of compassion, faith and love by building and maintaining excellent strategies for leadership, management and working relationships. CrossReach offers 31 beds for participants in Inverness and Glasgow.

Hebrides Alpha Project

Western Isles

Hebrides Alpha Project, six miles from Stornoway, offers a residential recovery-orientated programme for individuals in the Western Isles. Connected with Hebrides Alpha Project is Hebrides Alpha Trading which was established to affirm and support individuals in the community or residential settings who are

recovering from an addiction to alcohol and other drugs by providing them with therapeutic employment from a Christian ethos. In addition to the compulsory ‘in-house’ Recovery Groups, Hebrides Alpha Project supports other community groups such as Road to Recovery and AA (Alcoholics Anonymous).



Discovering hope: Non-Residential

Non-residential programmes have also played a huge part in responding to drug and alcohol addiction issues in Scotland. Offering these forms of recovery services can have huge benefits for people seeking to distance themselves from their addiction. Over 90% of our survey respondents offered some form of non-residential programme. In researching these non-residential programmes, we found that many churches run additional forms of recovery services. Among churches, approximately 30% offer counselling services to patients while 43% perform various forms of advocacy work to help those in recovery. The work of Christians also reaches across Scotland in an intimate way through the testimony and investment of individual people. In the northeast Aberdeenshire villages Crimond and Lonmay, a retired probation officer with experience working with people with addictions continues to devote time to addiction recovery within his community.

St Andrews Church

Arbroath

The Havilah ministry at St Andrews Church in Arbroath began in 2006 as a sanctuary where members of the community struggling with drug addictions, discrimination, loneliness, and feelings of isolation could come for recovery support and prayer. Very few people came to the centre during the first couple of years of its ministry, but by 2009, the number of visitors had greatly increased. More than a hundred different individuals now find comfort and community at Havilah each month. This three-hours-a-day, five-days-a-week drop-

in service operates from Community Spirit, a St Andrew's outreach venture located near the church premises. Although Covid-19 lockdowns limited in-person contact, Havilah remains a place of abundant compassion for those walking through drug addiction recovery, both within and beyond its premises.

Broken Chains

Ayr

Overseen by a number of local churches in Ayr, Broken Chains is a charity refuge for homeless, drug addicted and otherwise marginalised members within the community. Open in the afternoon on Tuesdays, Broken Chains welcomes individuals for information, conversation and more structured support.



Street Connect Glasgow

Street Connect offers hope that can lead to life transformation for people in addiction and who may be facing associated issues such as homelessness, social isolation and poor mental health.

Street outreach is at the heart of the work at Street Connect and, partnering with local churches, staff and volunteers do not wait for people to come to them, but instead go out to meet and support people where they are. From there, people can visit a drop-in café – a safe place to have a warm drink and take the first steps towards recovery. More formal support is offered through one-to-one support, group recovery,

and residential rehabilitation referrals. Street Connect are with people for the long run and offer move-on accommodation and an aftercare support programme.

Street Connect believes that local churches are best placed to know the support that is needed in their local community and currently partners with local churches in Blackwood and Kirkmuirhill, Clydebank, Glasgow City Centre, Glasgow Royston, Paisley Central, Paisley Kilnside and Wishaw. Street Connect plans to develop a number of new church partnerships over the next few years in order to reach out to and support many more women and men in need.

Here's what individuals had to say about the non-residential support they received:



I grew up in a dysfunctional family, my mum was an alcoholic and there was lots of violence at home. I suppose you're just in that cycle. Drinks, drugs, children's homes, foster care. It was always hell, there's no other way to explain it. I was referred to the young alcohol problem clinic at the age of 12, and then moved onto speed, which got me onto heroin, crack.

"At 25, I became homeless. At that point my life was just so chaotic and out of control. It's frightening. Although I wasn't living on the streets, I was wandering the streets. You're cold. You're lonely. It's despair, isn't it? For me, that's what it was. Being a woman as well, I was quite frightened. At Christmas it felt even more empty. You'd everybody smiling and having fun and you'd just really want it to be over. You wake up, and it's heightened that you're not with your family, that you're alone.

"I came for an interview in Bethany and got a bed. It's a big difference, you could go into your room and shut your door. It's your own little space. Bethany House gets you to a place where you can get the help. The first time I stayed I knew there was something different. The staff genuinely cared and would go out of their way to make sure you felt loved. When my life went off the rails again, I knew to come back."

Since then, Allana has been supported through rehab, has a stable home, and supports people struggling with homelessness and addiction. She volunteers at Bethany House now. "It's good to be giving back. To serve dinner to these guys and just show them that they are loved. They may be facing homelessness, but they're not alone. It's just trying to give hope back to people, isn't it? Explaining there's a way out of this.

Allana





I can't remember any happiness growing up, I only remember negative memories. My dad was an alcoholic, in and out of my life. I grew up witnessing domestic abuse from my dad towards my mum, both verbally and physically. When I was 15, my mum left to go to London, and I was left with my sister who was 18. This is when I started drinking and using drugs to numb my pain. I got involved in gangs in Glasgow's East end, and I eventually served a prison sentence for two and a half years for knife crimes. When I got out of jail, I started to drink more. Alcohol numbed everything I was feeling.

I had my oldest daughter when I was 23, but I drank all throughout her upbringing. I thought I was a good dad because I worked hard and was always there, but looking back, I was never sober through any one of her birthdays. My addiction eventually cost me my job. My youngest daughter was born five years ago, and I thought I wouldn't repeat the same mistakes, but alcohol became my master. I lost my relationship with my girlfriend and ended up becoming homeless.

I first heard about Bethany when I started going to church at Parkhead Nazarene. At that time, I was homeless and seeking help with my alcohol addiction. I then went through the interview process, and the programme set me up in a supported flat. Every week I would meet up with a support worker who helped me connect with other tenants who were also being supported by Bethany Homes. A wee bond was formed between all of us, and it gave me a sense of community. Not only did I get the support I needed to maintain my flat, but I also felt like I always had someone to talk to if I needed help.

Bethany has given me a safe base to go about my recovery and build my faith. They've also given me a safe space where I can build family and my relationships with my two daughters; my youngest sometimes stays with me on the weekends, and my oldest enjoys dropping by and spending time with me here too.

Colin



Geoff described his life, before finding Street Connect, as being of despair and disappointment. Geoff was going through a bad patch. He was in a relationship that did not work out; his partner left him with a lot of debt and he was drinking a lot. "They've helped me on a long journey. If it wasn't for Street Connect I'd be living in disappointment."

Geoff came to one of Street Connect's drop-in cafés where he got to know Adam, a support worker, and grew to learn that Adam was interested in him, in his recovery, that he would listen without judgement and would support Geoff throughout each stage of his recovery journey from alcohol addiction.

With support and accountability to his support worker, Adam, Geoff has worked on his Personal Transformation Plan and attends recovery groups. Geoff has been committed to growing in independent living and has been working on his literacy skills.

Today, Geoff's life is very different from how it used to be. Geoff lives in a Street Connect move-on flat and is proving to himself that he can get his life back on track by completing his Level Seven Community Achievement Award through Glasgow Kelvin Collect and volunteering at The Wild Olive Tree and Glesga Roasters.

Geoff



“ Street Connect has given me the opportunity to live independently. They gave me a flat where I have my independence and am able to make it my own. They also helped me by giving me an internship with them where I am learning to build my confidence more.

My confidence has been better since being involved with Street Connect – I now have my own place and I'm accessing education opportunities through doing an SVQ course in health and social care. I'm finishing my counselling course at the moment and have started working as a support worker. I would say that Street Connect are there to support you in everything that you need: they are always there for you, they always point you in the right direction and do everything in their power to support you.

Sharon



Discovering hope: Pastoral

A unique but consistent pattern among survey respondents was how their programmes offered pastoral support. Many of the respondent organisations and individual workers who responded adhere to a Christian ethos and missional vision, consequently incorporating the Christian faith into their programme curriculums. Every programme in the report welcomes people of all faith backgrounds and beliefs, however, in participating, patients are given opportunities to learn more about the Christian faith as part of their rehabilitation. Approximately 30% of survey respondents offer Bible studies as pastoral support. When/ if asked, staff members were invited to share their own recovery testimonies, many having participated in the same recovery programmes years prior. Speaking to individuals from the organisations revealed the way that the self-sacrificial gospel values and transformational faith demonstrated by staff members was paramount to participants recovering from addiction. The staff members' example of acceptance and love resulted in many individuals building a personal relationship with Christ:

Andrew Cameron

Senior support worker at The Haven Kilmacolm, Inverclyde

“The Haven is a special place that sits in between Kilmacolm and Greenock. It sees many men from all over Great Britain come through its doors. These men are often at the end of their tether and have suffered numerous setbacks in their lives. When they come to the Haven, they are introduced to a God

who loves them and are introduced to people who love them. At the Haven, we try and cultivate a familial atmosphere, and this provides the foundation for a loving environment where the process of hope and healing can begin.”

Ross

Inverclyde

“Prior to coming to the Haven, my life was in complete darkness and despair, I saw no way out of the vicious cycle of misery I found myself stuck in. I came to the Haven initially to please my family and never thought I would see myself embracing Christianity, but after a week of coming through the door I had encountered God and felt the forgiveness of sin.

“The Haven provides an excellent place to decouple yourself from the world, spend time with Jesus so that you will be transformed by the

renewing of your mind and lay a solid foundation in Christ, all while learning what the biblical principles of life should be.

“Toward the end of my time at the Haven, God opened a door for me to be enrolled as part of the staff team and develop new skills. My family relationships have never been stronger than they are now, and I believe they too will come to Jesus one day! My life has been transformed by the grace of God and all the glory goes to Him.”

Anonymous

Outer Hebrides

“I went into the Hebrides Alpha project rehab unit in October 2019 to get myself away from my drink dependency, not knowing what to expect. I knew it had a Christian ethos in its programme. As a lapsed Christian, it was a wonderful place to be in; it rekindled my faith in Christ, which was missing in my life. The

Christian teaching and understanding the staff demonstrate is wonderful and Bible-centred, which helped me immensely. There should be more places like Heb Alpha in Scotland because of its Christian ethos and how the Christian teaching helps the residents recover from their addiction.”

David

David reflects on the way that God redeemed his life from a culture of gang violence, in which he began experimenting with drugs and alcohol at the age of 11. By the age of 24, David had racked up 20 prison sentences, 55 convictions and been arrested more than 100 times. Upheld by a local church, David completed a Bible study course, helped plant and pastor Destiny Church in Rutherglen, Glasgow, and is now working with

Prison Fellowship Scotland as their projects manager. “God has taken me from being a notorious convict, drug dealer and gang member to being the pastor of a church, sharing the gospel and trying to love people. I’ve been invited to tell my story in prisons I once served time in, sometimes to people I’ve shared cells with. God can do the impossible. He gave my life purpose, hope and meaning.”

Liam

Inverclyde

“My whole life I struggled with fear and anxiety as a result of traumatic experiences from my childhood. After 20 years of using drugs and alcohol to ease the pain, I was reduced to a level of brokenness I never quite thought possible. Out of my desperation I really cried out to God for help, and this started a miraculous chain of events that landed me in the Haven. I noticed that they really loved me regardless

of anything I did in the past, and this caused me to evaluate my own way of living. The reality is, if it were not for the Haven, I would probably be dead, and my family devastated. I can never repay the staff for the impact they’ve had on me, and my family’s lives. Jesus still saves people, he still heals people, and he still changes people’s lives. I am living proof of it.”

Steven Gallacher

Inverclyde

“I was hopelessly addicted to drugs and alcohol for 20 years. Life was a misery, never living for the future. I had destroyed nearly every relationship that I had. There were moments in my addiction when I even wished I was no longer here. Life felt pointless, and there was no hope. I found out about

the Haven, and it has transformed my life by freeing me by the grace of God through Jesus Christ his son. I now have some hope and a future which I never thought possible in my old life. I can't thank God enough for the Haven and all that is now happening in my life.”

Mark

Mark (named changed for anonymity) recently joined the Bridge to Freedom group following his release from prison. Connecting with the Bethany recovery worker, he now attends two Bridge to Freedom groups each week and is grateful for the one-to-one session he is now able to access weekly.

“‘Bridge to Freedom’ is an amazing group. I'd love to do something similar later on, like run a peer support group. I feel like I have the skills to do that, to run a group and listen to people and connect with them. I've particularly learnt about forgiveness and facing rejection. I'm learning to be patient and

pray and go to the Bible first in tough situations that I'm facing.

“It's so different now that I'm off the drink. BTF is like a family, which is a beautiful thing. We know that what is shared in the room stays in the room, which creates trust and gives you the security to speak and be honest. I do feel comfortable in the group. With being in prison and my chequered past, it means a lot that I'm not frowned upon. I've met up with another participant from BTF a few times and gone for coffee, and we also text each other to encourage each other. Now I've got a community that is supportive, encouraging and a safety net for me.”

Partnerships

It is abundantly clear that the church provides a community response, providing compassionate professional therapy-based and clinical care for individuals pursuing recovery from drug addictions. Many of the organisations recognised in this report partner with churches from different traditions, wider community groups and local statutory agencies to ensure that personalised, longevial care is given to individuals from differing cultural and economic backgrounds. These networks place great value on building and sustaining recovery cultures focused on personal and spiritual growth. While organisations

and charities within these networks place no obligation on individuals to accept Christianity during their time on the respective programmes, the gospel remains central to their work. Their curriculums are established in Christian values of compassion, respect, hope and love. Their volunteers and programme directors operate through the lens of holistic transformation – restoration in all areas of one's life that have been affected by a drug addiction. It is vital that Christian addiction recovery networks continue to receive funding and are recognised for the key role they play in advocating drug addiction recovery in Scotland.

75% of respondents wanted to see more staff employed within the recovery sector, with 60% seeking increased funding for recovery programmes, and 50% keen to see the funding used for improving the communication between addiction recovery organisations, government and health authorities.

40% of respondent organisations indicated that a majority of their funding was received from government and/or government-led trust funds. Of this number, over half stated that over 50% of their operational budget was sourced from government and/or government-led grants.

Additional Research
Collected

24% of groups have an operational budget of more than £500,000. These groups received over half of their funding from government.

Over **354** people (in total) are employed by the groups represented in this report, with over 3,600 volunteers connected to the recovery services.

Final word: hope and renewal

Christians seek to live out faith by following Jesus, who walked alongside people from every sector, rich and poor, the discarded and the outsider. Jesus continually encouraged relationship. His ministry on earth was dedicated to bringing humankind back into communion with the Father. Jesus brought compassion and hope to men and women marginalised by society. Unafraid to criticise or be criticised by the powerful and the proud, Jesus demonstrated a radical vision of humble service and unconditional love by building relationships with those who were downtrodden and weak. Relationship is at the heart of transformative healing. Knowing that there are people who care deeply

to see one's life – livelihood, family, physical body, and peace of mind – restored to a greater health gives individuals the courage and capacity to embark on a journey toward recovery. Recovery begins when an individual feels encountered, loved, known, challenged, understood, encouraged and accepted. Because of this, church communities, organisations, volunteers, directors, and mentoring staff work diligently to build community-centric frameworks for professional, pastoral and clinical care. These networks provide holistic support through one-to-one interaction and recovery groups, with members of staff walking alongside the participants through both residential and non-residential

programmes in the hope of seeing individuals liberated from addiction and despair to begin new lives filled with purpose and opportunity. The stories included in the report allow us to see and consequently invest in the care and commitment of Christians working within drug addiction recovery networks. They provide insight into the countless volunteer hours given by people of faith each week and provide a signpost to a community life that navigates addiction with compassion

and sincerity. The statistics and testimonies featured within the report celebrate hope in the midst of great despair by highlighting the ways Christian communities, organisations and charities have and continue to provide a spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional lifeline for many individuals. The report shows exactly why the church is an indispensable partner to government in tackling Scotland's drug addiction crisis on both a local and national level.

Conclusion

Tackling addiction is essential to achieving social justice and improving the lives of the most disadvantaged. Many individuals with drug addictions find it difficult to cope with daily living and often face discrimination from people who do not understand that addiction is not always a matter of choice. Most individuals with addictions are afraid, overwhelmed and ashamed. What they need most is someone who will walk beside them through the long road to recovery, communities that will hold them accountable during

treatment, and environments conducive for rehabilitation. We believe that it is both a responsibility and a privilege to come alongside individuals working for drug addiction recovery. This report reveals what is possible when the resources of the church are structured in a way that brings accountability and professional aid to vulnerable members of the community and illustrates the remarkable and expansive action that Christian organisations, charities and churches have displayed in responding to drug addiction across Scotland.

Appendix of projects

Alpha Scotland
Annbank Parish Church
Apex Church, Peterhead
Benaiah Teen Challenge, Grampian
Bethany Christian Centre, Lothian
Bethany Evangelical Church, Dumfries
Bishopbriggs Community, Glasgow
Broken Chains, Ayr
CBC Community Church, Aberdeen
Cinnamon Network
CrossReach, Edinburgh
Green Pastures (National)
The Haven Kilmacolm, Greater Glasgow and Clyde
Havilah Project, Arbroath
Hebrides Alpha Project, Western Isles
Hope Connections, Greater Glasgow
Hope for Glasgow, Glasgow
Individual Programme, Crimond and Lonmay
Kidron Project, Inverclyde
King's Church, Aberdeen
Niddrie Community Church, Edinburgh
Parkhead Nazarene, East Glasgow
Prison Fellowship Scotland, Glasgow
RCCG Beautiful Gate, Glasgow
The Reconnection Project, Dundee, and Montrose
Riverside Community Trust, Ayr
The Shed, Martin's Memorial Church, Stornoway
Street Chaplain Scotland, Dundee, Edinburgh and Montrose
Street Connect, Glasgow
Teen Challenge, Whitchester House