



Carlisle Churches
Youth Project
"Investing in young people"

THE NEWS ON THE STREET

Newsletter

Pentecost 2023

A message from the Chair ...

Youth and family centre:
37 Stewart Street
Carlisle ML8 5DZ
Tel 01555 751818

Opening hours:
10am – 9pm Mon-Fri
10am – 4pm Sat

Project leader:
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*Street Level is an
ecumenical project
established and supported
by six Carlisle churches:*

St Andrew's Church
St Athanasius' RC Church
St John's Church
Kirkstyle Baptist Church
Kirkton Church
United Reformed Church

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churches community shop,
Hamilton Street, Carlisle*

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When Jim McIntyre retired as Project Leader of Street Level at Christmas 2021, I don't think we fully understood the enormity of the task that lay ahead of us. We knew that Jim had left big shoes to fill, but we soon found out that this was not the only challenge. We were in new territory, not having needed to recruit staff for 25 years. And the recruitment market has changed massively over that period. No more newspaper or job centre adverts: everything is now done on-line. So where to start?

Over a period of six months, we advertised on four different recruitment platforms. Two failed to produce any response whilst two thankfully did result in good quality applications.

On two occasions, we reached the point of making offers of employment, only to find that the applicant's personal circumstances had changed and they decided not to accept the position so we had to start all over again.

Eventually – third time lucky?

- we got our (wo)man. We are delighted and excited by the appointment. You can read more about Jo below, and I hope many of you will take the opportunity to meet her. To state the obvious, Jo is not Jim! She is highly regarded in the field of youth and community education and brings her own unique skills and experience to the Street Level project. She will do things a little differently, so expect some changes.

John Wilcox - Chair.

Introducing Joanna Howson

In four words, how do you think your friends and family would describe you?

Loyal, honest, hard-working and fair.

You have worked with young people for more than 10 years. What draws you to this vocation?

I have a passion for empowering others through support and encouragement to achieve their goals and to be happy with where they currently are in life. An individual's values are created from the influence of others around them. Throughout my life, especially as a teenager, I was fortunate to have a positive support around me and I have been able to see the benefit of this presence. I feel privileged to be in a position where I can be this consistent influence on others both in a personal and professional capacity.

Your job title is "Youth and Community Leader". What attracted you to this role?

I had previously spoken with the Street Level Management Team about the Youth and Community Leader role but it didn't feel like it was the right time for me. The opportunity was presented again and rather than relying on my own judgement I chose to see this as God guiding me to this role. It has been a test of my faith but with the same reservations as before, I chose to trust in God rather than making the decision on my own.

What qualifies you for this position?

I studied Community Education and started sessional work with Street Level through one of my placements. When I was younger I lived in Forth so have an understanding of

growing up in a rural community. My family moved from Forth to an area more access to social opportunities for us. Longer term this is an area I would like to see developed in Street Level as opportunities should be available to all irrespective of the area that they live. I care about those I work with and want what is best for them.

Through voluntary experience and employment, I have worked with children and young people for roughly 20 years. In this time, I led the Sunday School in my church for 12 years and continue to serve in this area. I have been employed in varying areas of Youth and Community Work including working with adult experience homelessness, youth work and full family support.

Partnerships lie at the heart of what we do

The Street Level Youth Project has been built on partnerships. In 1994, it was set up and continues to be supported by an ecumenical partnership of churches in Carluke and local people.

In 1998, when Street Level moved into our current youth centre at 37 Stewart Street, Carluke, South Lanarkshire Council was opening up a network of youth centres called “Universal Connections.” As they did not have one in Carluke, SLC approached the Street Level Management Team and asked if we could work together and so another partnership was formed, “Street Level with Universal Connections.”

This partnership of 25 years has stood the test of time and continues to this day. We have faced various challenges together, e.g. changes of staff,

restructuring of services, financial constraints and the Covid pandemic but we continue to survive and adapt. We share the same aim to work with young people to support their access to new and existing opportunities so that they can realise their potential – and have fun!

In 2018, the SLC. Youth Learning and Adult Learning Services were restructured and became the Youth, Family and Community Learning Service. As a consequence, the focus of our work has become more holistic and we now work with young people AND their families.

At present, the SLC team consists of one Team Leader and five staff, and the Street Level team consists of Joanna Howson, Youth and Community

Leader, and two volunteers.

In order to meet the growing need, we aim to recruit more local volunteers again and SLC has agreed to work with us to provide some training.

If you are interested in volunteering and want to find out more, please get in touch with Joanna by email or phone (joanna.streetlevel@outlook.com).



Our volunteers (in their own words)

As a young person I grew up attending Street Level and when I was old enough, I started as a young volunteer. I was able to achieve Young Volunteer of the Year in 2012 and the Saltire award for 500 hours. This was huge highlight for me and I don't know where I'd start trying to figure out how many hours I've done now but it's definitely a lot more. Now that I am older and settled in life I want to continue to give back and help support the young people of Carluke.

Throughout my time at Street Level I was able to build positive and trusting relationship with the staff, volunteers and my peers. I loved my time spent at Street Level and my favourite thing was getting to chat with my friends and the staff. The support I received from Street Level has inspired me and I would now like to be able to do that for another young person.

I have been able to gain valuable experience from volunteering with young people and it has helped me gain employment working with children in a school setting. My experience as both a young person and volunteer has had a positive impact on my attitude to life which also led to me gaining employment, these experiences have been life changing. *Megan*

I started coming to Street Level as a young person to the Young Carers group when I was 9 years old until I aged out of the group at 18. The group allowed me to relax in a safe space which I'd never had before. The staff and volunteers supported me to express myself through conversation, music and art. I was encouraged to talk about how I feel which is one of the hardest things I've ever overcome but having the reassurance that I'd always have my Street Level family to come back to next week kept me on track. Without the support I received from other young people in the group, staff and volunteers, I truly believe I would not be here today. I would always have someone there to help, support, listen, teach me how to navigate through life and help me acknowledge that I am able to achieve what I set my mind too.

As a volunteer I have been able to understand how something as little as listening to young people can impact their life. Being able to see a young person become more confident and feel able to take part in the activities with their peers makes it all worth it. For me that's the biggest highlight of being a volunteer. Being a volunteer

has also let me learn new things and gain new experiences. Leading a session for the young people has improved my confidence in my own ability and given me the opportunity to reflect on things I can do better the next time. As life changing as Street Level has been for me, being a volunteer has allowed me to help other young people to feel comfortable and supported through conversations in this safe space.

Sophie

Volunteering Opportunities



Music

Art and craft

Sport

Cooking

... contact Joanna and help secure the future of our young people.