



Carluke Churches
Youth Project
"Investing in young people"

THE NEWS ON THE STREET

Newsletter

Pentecost 2025

New faces at Street Level

At the start of the year the opportunity arose to grow the Street Level team, so we step out in faith

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

Opening hours:
10am – 8pm Mon-Fri
10am – 4pm Sat

Project leader:
Joanna Howson
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streetlevelcarluke.org

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Streetlevel UC Carluke

Street Level is an ecumenical project established and supported by the Carluke churches:

St Athanasius' RC Church
Forest Kirk
Kirkton Church
Kirkstyle Baptist Church
United Reformed Church

Street Level is supported by funding from Choices, the churches community shop, Hamilton Street, Carluke

Charity No: SC022006
Company No: SC178185

Laura Gilchrist:

In January I was employed by Street Level to continue working with young people from Carluke High School at the Community Garden.

I have experience of working in Community Development within Greenspaces for almost 15 years. I am very passionate about this due to the plethora of research that supports the theory that outdoor engagement bolsters our mental and physical health alongside outdoor activity supporting an individual's personal growth and development. When working with young people this is clear, and improvements are evident in a short space of time.

A wide range of learning opportunities can be found within a garden setting which supports young people's education and employability skills in a more relaxed and informal setting. They are also able to make a positive contribution towards their own community and learn ways to protect and preserve our environment.



After the Summer I plan to be working with five different school groups and next steps are being taken for the young people to achieve recognition for their efforts through obtaining awards such as the John Muir Award, Duke of Edinburgh or Junior Foresters Award.

Sophie Neeson:

Growing up as a Young Carer Street Level gave me a safe space away from home to relax and meet new people. The staff and volunteers supported me to confidently express myself through conversation, music and art. I was encouraged to talk about how I was feeling which is one of the hardest things I've ever had to overcome. 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 fully understand the importance of listening to young people and the impact this can have on their life.



I have volunteered with Street Level for almost 10 years and I am currently completing a placement for my HNC in Social Services. It's been great to continue to support the Young Carers group and become more involved with other activities in the centre as well as Laura's gardening groups.

Joanna has supported me to adopt the reflective practice used in Street Level. Applying this practice has helped me overcome challenges and I have learned so much more than I anticipated, I am very grateful for the continued support on a day-to-day basis.

And a word from Jo ...

It's been a busy 6 months here at Street Level but we are looking forward to what's ahead. The staff team continues to grow stronger with the new faces joining and the unique skills they bring. Street Level continues to be committed to making a lasting and positive impact on the young people of Carluke and the surrounding areas.

Thank you for your support and prayers.

Joanna

Fiona Warnock:

I completed the Community Champion training in 2023 and spent the following year volunteering at Street Level with Universal Connections before starting as a sessional worker with Street Level in January. Each Thursday I support the Junior Drop In (P7/S1). Occasionally I also support the Evolve group where I have been able to facilitate issue-based sessions.



I have a degree in Forensic Psychology and work as a helpline advisor for Beat, an eating disorder charity, when I'm not in the centre. I also volunteer with victim support on my days off. I got involved with Street Level to get involved in my local community and support young people in Carluke and surrounding areas. Volunteering has given me valuable experience and helped me understand the challenges our young people face day to day. Supporting groups has been incredibly rewarding; working with young people brings such energy, fun and laughter to my week and it's a privilege to be part of their journey.

Improving Social Responsibility in Young People

During the period January to March 2025, Street Level employed Laura Gilchrist, a specialist sessional worker, to deliver a variety of general gardening and outdoor activities for three separate groups of pupils identified by Carluke High School who for various reasons struggle to engage in formal education.

The work was funded by a grant from the Community Led Local Development Fund.



Aims and Objectives

The garden and the outdoors provided the opportunity to engage in the '5 ways to well-being':

1. Connect with other people
2. Learn new skills
3. Be physically active
4. Give to others- contribute towards your community & environment
5. Notice – to pay attention to the present moment

The additional benefits associated with outdoor therapy for young people are a reduction of stress and anxiety, improved mental health, increased physical, enhanced problem-solving skills and a connection with nature.

What have "the Grafters" achieved in the gardens?

Laura delivered 19 sessions over 7 weeks and the young people put in 162 gardening hours and gained much:

- They learned safe use of tools; spades, loppers, saws, picks
- Imaginations were sparked on archaeology, history and artefacts
- A neglected piece of land was prepared to be turned into a bio-diversity friendly garden

- They refurbished part of the Quiet Garden to improve the area for other community members to be creative and explore nature.
- Heavy logs and branches from storm tree damage were cleared
- They prepared beds for planting, planting out spring flowers, taking houseplants to school for continued enjoyment
- They weeded and bark mulched a gathering area
- They learned to work as a team
- Duke of Edinburgh Award elements were met by volunteering
- To assess risks and safe working practices
- They learned the principles of hedge cutting & mini-farming
- They learned safe fire lighting practices

Feedback

"It's amazing to see the young people smile here. They were as a team to get the job done which gives them a great sense of achievement" **Teacher**

"The young people have adapted so well to the new environment and have gained skills that they can take further into employment" **Support Staff**

"It's been a unique experience that has been so much fun and we have learned loads of new things" **Participant**

"My confidence has grown because I now know I can do it" **Participant**

"I love being out in nature and I am going to try and plant flowers or maybe grow food at home" **Participant**

Future development

Future development of this work includes gaining recognitions and awards such as:

- John Muir Award
- Scottish Jr Forester Award (in partnership with the Pathfinders at Carluke High School)

CELEBRATION NIGHT 2025

On Friday, 4th April, the annual Awards Night was held at the Carluke Lifestyles Centre. This was organised by the Youth, Family and Community Learning staff within Street Level with Universal Connections and attended by young people and adults who use the centre, their families, Carluke High School staff, local councillors and SLC representatives.

This annual event celebrates and recognises the hard work, and many achievements made over the past year and is always a joyous occasion. We listened to personal testimonies and reviews of activities including the Germany Youth Exchange, the Young Carers and the Street level "Grafters" who work in the community garden with Laura Gilchrist. It really was a most enjoyable and encouraging event!



See above - The YFCL, Street Level and Carluke High School staff who have worked together to support the young people and adults using our centre over the past year.

Summer Programme 2025

Exciting things are coming this Summer! We are in the process of planning weekly activities and outings for over the school holidays. Keep an eye on our social media for updates. Please don't hesitate to contact the centre if you would like some further information.