

LOUD and CLEAR

For friends of Sense Scotland **Spring 2024**



We care.
We connect.
We communicate.

LOUD and CLEAR

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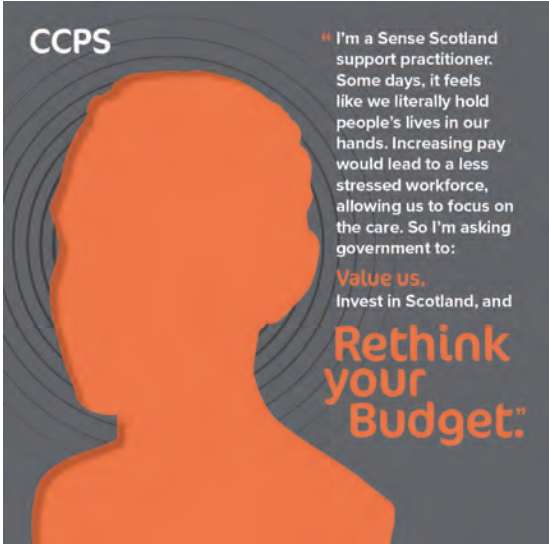
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Sense Scotland is a Scottish charity and specialised care provider supporting people with communication support needs associated with complex and sensory disabilities, and their families, where individual needs and choices come first. Every service we provide is tailor-made and designed with individual wishes, potential and independence in mind.

Sense Scotland now supports hundreds of families all across Scotland. We are recognised as leaders in our field and still hold true to our family values, caring for children through adolescence and into adulthood whilst supporting them through all the challenges and opportunities along the way

Your donations fund all the things that make Sense Scotland unique: music, art, social groups, play and communication sessions – fun, fun and more fun. But serious stuff too – making sure people we support are included in decisions which affect their life, are able to choose where they live and how they spend their time.



CCPS

"I'm a Sense Scotland support practitioner. Some days, it feels like we literally hold people's lives in our hands. Increasing pay would lead to a less stressed workforce, allowing us to focus on the care. So I'm asking government to:

Value us.
Invest in Scotland, and

**Rethink
your
Budget."**

Valuing People



People are at the heart of Sense Scotland. The people we support, and the people who support them – our incredible team of staff. I am extremely proud of all they do and all they achieve, in what is one of the most underfunded, unrecognised and undervalued sectors of employment. I know, from the many messages of support from you, and from our families, that you value our staff too. But the message from the Scottish Government and Local Authorities is very different.

The vast majority of our social care funding comes via Local Authority contracts. The funding we receive for our services is based on the Social Care Rate for Support Practitioners set by the Scottish Government. In the spirit of honesty and transparency, I must tell you that your donations often go some way towards filling the gap between what we are paid to provide care (£10.90/hour) and what we pay our staff for delivering it (£11.20/hour). Our staff need and deserve more. As a member of the Coalition of Care and Support Providers, we have been lobbying the Scottish Government to increase the rate to £13 per hour, to no avail. From April 2024 the Social Care Rate will be £12 per hour, which, although better than the current rate, is still not what it should be.

Our staff embody astonishing levels of compassion, empathy, commitment, and kindness to ensure the people they care for are made to feel they belong, are safe, loved and valued. They also provide personal care, administer medicines, monitor health conditions and develop specialist communication skills, including sign language and Makaton. They require to be registered with the Scottish Social Services Council, a professional body, but are classed as unskilled workers. It is definitely not an unskilled job.

Despite our Herculean efforts to recruit and retain staff, turnover is high and we increasingly, like so many other providers, have to employ agency staff at a far higher cost than we can afford. Cards on the table – we are facing a challenging budget for 2024/25, through what we feel is no fault of our own. What the implications are, will only be realised in time, but there is no doubt that difficult times are ahead.

So what can you do to help?

In the Summer, we will launch a special appeal, asking for financial support. However, if you are able to donate now, that would be incredibly helpful. A monthly direct debit donation, or a commitment to leave a gift in your will helps us plan ahead with some certainty of income. More information is on the back page of this newsletter. You could also write to your local MSP to raise awareness of the pay inequity in social care.

In the meantime, I hope you enjoy reading more about our staff, and how what they do brings joy and fulfilment to the lives of people we support, and their families.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Angela Bonomy'.

Angela Bonomy,
Chief Executive

A Place To Thrive

“There is nothing more heart-warming than knowing that someone knows your child, embraces him for who he is, really gets him and sees through any barriers he might have.”



Isaac, 17, has been attending Touchbase Glasgow Children's Services since he was 9 years old. Everyone knows Isaac and Isaac makes it his business to know everyone, and everything about them. He is described as “a complete character”, “unique”, “the TouchBase Comedian” and a very special “Shift Leader”. If Isaac was ever on Mastermind, his specialist subjects would be popstar Harry Styles, the film “Wild Rose” and the mobile phone numbers of Sense Scotland staff...

Isaac was the first young person Ian worked with when he started as a Support Worker in September 2022. “Isaac and I bonded over music and board games (he likes to cheat). He can sometimes be quite anxious and needs to know exactly what is happening. He's very wary about trying anything new so it was a challenge to help him push his boundaries. But he loves music and that's where we started. Isaac has a playlist of Harry Styles songs. We agreed that during snack time, Ian could choose a song. So I started with Joni Mitchell as I'd discovered

she was one of Harry's influences. Week by week Isaac let me add one of my songs to his playlist. We give each song points out of 10. Every one of my songs gets a 0, but Harry Styles gets at least 70!"

Isaac was persuaded to attend short music sessions with tutor Dave. Dave would record their conversations in a podcast style and Ian would film them. Eventually Isaac started singing (Harry Styles songs of course). He also decided to rewrite Harry Styles songs (just a few words), and says he is going to have a concert at Ibrox and invite all the Sense Scotland staff to it. In preparation for this, he performed at our Christmas Concert, in front of a huge crowd. A major achievement and one mum Phillipa, an arts professional herself, couldn't be more proud of.

"I was so delighted – Isaac was amazing. He loved it, singing a few Harry Styles songs as well as one from Wild Rose. Isaac had put barriers towards doing that at school but then he came here and did it. After the concert, staff took all the children to a panto and out for dinner. He just had the most amazing day.

We couldn't be happier. The staff are a huge part of our lives, like an extended family. We could not



speaking more highly of Ian – he's really excellent at what he does. He tunes into what Isaac likes but then uses it as a way to widen it. Isaac accepts this and that's quite a lot for Isaac as he can be quite defiant."

Ian said "My job is a lot of fun, but it's also a huge responsibility keeping children safe because of their complex needs. I do a lot of training so I can administer medicines, feed and give physio. For the short time the children are here, I want to make it as special as it can be, the best few hours of their day. I love to see them laughing. I've loved this job from day one – I only wish I had done it sooner."

Isaac loves making people laugh and is particularly drawn to staff, of whom he said "I like all the staff members here. No favourites but I do like Ian, Dave Stephen and Jamie. My best friend at school is Matthew and I'd like to bring him here one day too".

We care.

Making Dreams Come True

When Francis revealed his dream was to be a rock star, his support staff pulled out all the stops to make it happen.



Francis, a 49-year old with complex needs, has been living independently with the support of Sense Scotland staff in Dundee for the past 19 years.

Linda Douglas, Registered Manager for Dundee Supported Living Services, told us more about him: *“There are no limits to what Francis wants to achieve. Concerts, travel, writing and performing music are his passions. He advocates for himself, reminding us that requiring support shouldn’t hinder his dreams. He’s very inspirational and*



always keeps things interesting for the team that support him.”

Two years of careful planning by a multi-disciplinary team from across Sense Scotland led to the culmination of Francis’s dream—the premiere of his music video and a live performance in front of adoring fans at a local venue. A day etched in Francis’s memory forever.

Francis had written his own personal rock anthem - “Now Is The Question”. Dave and Roman from our Arts Team helped put it to music, then shot and

edited a video. Nathan from our Communications Team documented Francis's story and talents through interview and filming, crafting a unique brand for him. The music video and documentary were both premiered at the event, before Francis took to the stage for his live performance and chance to shine. After rocking out to a huge crowd of adoring fans, followed by wild applause and cheering, he graciously took the time to sign autographs and copies of his CD.

From booking the venue to printing tickets, Francis's staff team ensured every detail was meticulously arranged. They assisted Francis with shopping for his stage outfit, ensuring he looked every bit the rock star he was born to be. On the big day itself, they helped with nails, makeup and security (including bouncers on the door) allowing Francis the full celebrity experience.

But Francis's journey doesn't end here. His next adventure? A birthday trip to New York! And he's also secured a job, a testament to his indomitable spirit and the unwavering support of his team.

Linda reflects on the experience: *"Francis reminds me that there is nothing we can't support individuals to achieve. That a*



dream as big as being "a rock star" can be realised with the right attitude, commitment, vision and team. To take the time to celebrate an individual is a priceless memory for them and us. In my opinion this piece of work is our values in action and shows what a can-do attitude can do!"

When asked to give a quote for this article Francis replied *"Rock and Roll Stardom Forever!"*



We communicate.

Rising to the Challenge

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) asserts that every young person, regardless of ability, can take part.



EXPEDITION

Always ready to rise to a challenge, Support Practitioners Davie, Nadine and Sophie from TouchBase Lanarkshire decided to find out if that assertion was true.....

A meeting was arranged with DofE officials Al and Andy, who readily agreed to partner with the team to explore the possibilities.

So who to involve in the challenge?

Rohan, Amy and Ryan seemed like perfect candidates. Not only were they the right age, but they also had some complex physical and communication challenges which would prove, definitively, if DofE really is for “youth without limits”.

Their DofE journey commenced in Summer 2023, focusing initially on the Expedition section – an adventurous self-reliant trek from the Falkirk Wheel to the Kelpies, covering approximately 7 miles over two days. Despite varying levels of enthusiasm and physical capabilities, the group, also accompanied by Al and Mr Chips the therapy dog, embraced the challenge with determination. It was a huge achievement for Amy in particular, who, even though feeling very unwell, insisted on taking part, using her walking frame. Along the way they had loads of fun including a scavenger hunt – counting people

cycling, the number of locks, who was first to spot the Kelpies etc. And upon arrival at the Kelpies AI gave a speech telling them and everyone around how proud they should be. All three were beaming, it was obvious they felt a real sense of achievement.

VOLUNTEERING

To achieve their Volunteering section (1 hour per week for a minimum of 6 months), Rohan, Amy and Ryan dedicated themselves to assisting at the Baby Bank in Hamilton, facilitated by the warm reception from workers Agnes and Sheena. Though occasionally struggling to maintain focus, they loved helping sort clothes, toys and shoes. Expanding links in the community, they are hoping to do similar work in a local food bank, where Rohan will no doubt make sure all the shelves are neat and tidy!

PHYSICAL

For Ryan, just getting off the bus and going new places is an achievement, which is why consistency of activity is so important, to help build his confidence and expand his horizons. To achieve their Physical section (at least 1 hour per week for a minimum of 3 months), the group chose swimming. Ryan is often hesitant about getting in the water, but the vocal encouragement from fellow swimmers has made a real impact on his participation.

SKILLS

The group (including staff!) are now ready to start learning all about



gardening and looking forward to planting flowers, fruit and veg in the TouchBase Lanarkshire garden. They have to learn a new skill over the next 3 months, spending at least 1 hour per week doing it.

FAMILY SUPPORT

Rohan, Amy and Ryan's parents have nothing but praise for the staff and for the opportunity.

Anita, Rohan's Mum, was particularly thrilled:

"Both of Rohan's brothers have completed their Silver Awards and I had never considered that Rohan would also be able to participate. There is great excitement and pride in our house that he is taking part."

Rohan has severe autism and complex learning difficulties so may not fully understand what the achievement means but he will have the chance to participate in activities he enjoys, work as part of a team and further develop his confidence and skills.

Credit and appreciation to the staff at Touchbase who have meticulously discussed and planned Rohan's activities. They have carefully thought about Rohan's interests and abilities

and have come up with great ideas. Their enthusiasm, encouragement, belief in my son and desire to help him push himself is amazing. I feel Touchbase Lanarkshire have seen the person and not the disability."

Amy's parents, Carol & Paul, highlighted the expedition as the most challenging aspect for Amy:

"Amy has a rare genetic condition, multiple complex needs, is non-verbal and has a physical disability. She uses a walking frame to help her balance and coordination but tires easily, so doesn't generally walk long distances. However, we were completely confident she was in safe hands. Although unwell on the morning of the first walk, she was absolutely determined to take part and was clearly delighted with herself for reaching the finish line. Alexa had to play "Congratulations" all week!!!

We are very proud of Amy – she is positively flourishing at TouchBase Lanarkshire. We are extremely grateful to the team for all the wonderful care, hard work and planning that has gone into facilitating her involvement in DofE. It's an honour and a privilege – thank you so much for the opportunity."



Mark and Angela, Ryan's parents, are delighted with the changes in their son:

"Ryan has challenges with communication and so coping with certain social situations means that relatively small steps for us are massively complex and daunting for him. We have to judge his reaction to events in ways other than speaking and listening.

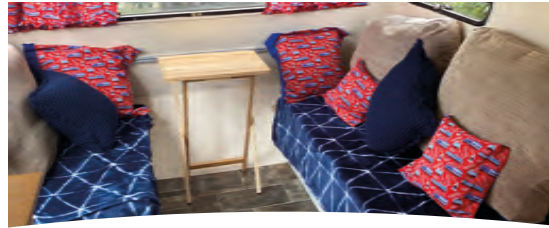
Ryan showed real excitement around the days he was doing the award and the staff (who are outstanding), kept us up to date with progress. In the days following the expedition, Ryan asked to wear his blue Sense Scotland T-shirt - the one he was given for the walk - every day for a couple of weeks. That is the best indication we could have of how much he enjoyed it.

This opportunity has let Ryan push through boundaries and overcome barriers we never dreamed possible."



Can he fix it? Yes Tom Can!

Nothing is ever too much trouble for Tom, who although officially retired, continues to offer his skills and expertise to benefit the people we support in our Forfar Supported Living service.



Rhonda Milne, Locality Manager, nominated Tom for an Inspiration Award in our Staff Awards 2023.

She said "Tom is a very caring, supportive person who is genuinely interested in people and their welfare. He always goes the extra mile and nothing is ever too much trouble. He's a very hands-on person who loves to get stuck in and get on with things. The best example of this is the caravan".

The caravan was picked up for a steal (£60) for a person we support who is fascinated by caravans, trains and tractors. It only just made it into the back garden of our Forfar service! From the outside it looked reasonable, but on full inspection we quickly realised it needed a full refit, new floor and painted inside and out. Tom could see its potential and knew what a fabulous space it could be for the person we support. He spoke with the family who backed his plans wholeheartedly and so the work began!

Over the next year, Tom ripped the insides out and reconfigured it, closely supervised by the person we support, who also assisted with simple tasks. Cleaning, spider removal, new flooring, damp proofing, entrance ramp, sanding, painting... the list seemed endless. But it eventually started to take shape, culminating in bespoke train themed curtains and cushions made by the family, and installation of a table on which to put a fantastic battery-operated train set.

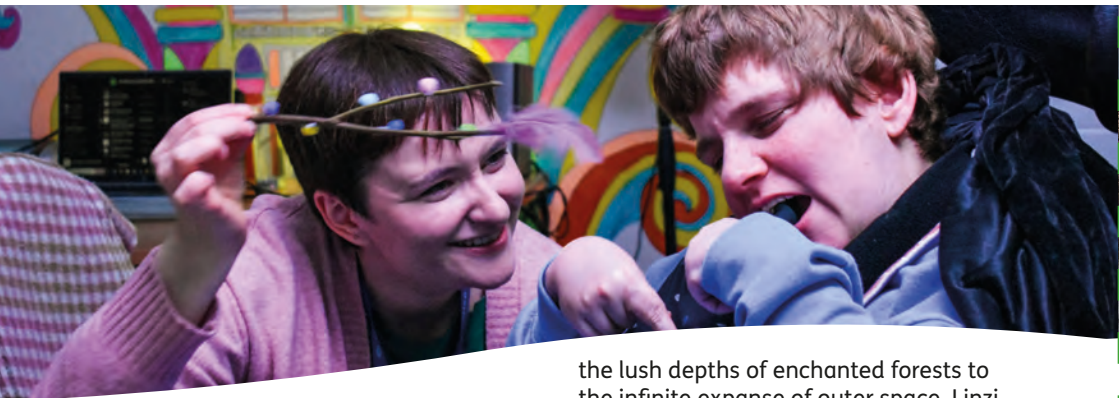
Now that the caravan is finally finished, Tom is preparing to get started on creating a "Man Shed" for another resident.

Why does Tom do it? He says "I want the people I support to have interesting, varied and fulfilled lives - to see them happy and smiling, doing things they really love and want. Those smiles are priceless, and bring happiness to my life too."

We connect.

Once Upon a Time

Once upon a time, in the enchanted kingdom of Sense Scotland, there dwelled a captivating princess called Linzi.



Linzi's passion for storytelling extended far beyond mere words on a page. She revelled in crafting them, sharing them, and weaving them into the very fabric of her existence. Yet her joy was tempered by the knowledge of a group of children who were disconnected from the magic of storytelling. Determined to spark their imaginations, she embarked on a mission to bridge the gap between these children and the wonder of stories.

But how? Undeterred by the children's diverse challenges – some couldn't read or write, some couldn't see, some couldn't hear, some couldn't even talk – Linzi devised a plan.

Drawing upon the enchantment of sound, the allure of tactile sensation, the radiance of light, she immersed them in a sensory tapestry of tales.

The children were mesmerised! They smiled and laughed, squealed and squirmed, expressing their sheer joy and delight at being immersed in the stories. From

the lush depths of enchanted forests to the infinite expanse of outer space. Linzi whisked her eager audience on countless adventures. They could go anywhere and do anything, transcending their physical limitations with every twist and turn. Word of Linzi's extraordinary gift spread far and wide, and her stories were renowned as life transforming.

Yet, Linzi's own story was still being written and it was with a heavy heart she had to turn the page. A new chapter now begins at Sense Scotland – one where Fairy Godmother Louise will carry forth Linzi's legacy, continuing to spread the wonder and magic of storytelling far across the land and ensuring that everyone is able to live happily ever after.

Nathan has been enjoying storytelling sessions with Linzi for the last few years. His mum Joan said *"Nathan loves working with Linzi. She is so fun, charismatic and full of energy. She fully involves him in the storytelling – helping with sounds and actions or using props and puppets."*



A Gift For Care

Pauline Molloy explains why Leanne Cameron rightly deserved her title of Employee of the Year at our recent Staff Awards.



“My son Ryan has been supported by Sense Scotland since he was 13 years old. He has complex medical conditions which pose a risk to his life every single day. We’ve worked hard for 27 years to keep him alive and he’s had so many near misses. It’s therefore vital that the people who support Ryan truly understand how to manage his conditions, follow the protocols, are accountable for how they look after him and are honest. But not only does he have to be safe, he also has to have fun.

Leeanne has supported Ryan at TouchBase Glasgow now for several years. She truly understands both his medical conditions and his communication needs. Although Ryan is non-verbal, he uses gestures, pointing and shouting and Leanne just knows exactly what he is trying to say. She always manages to support him, have fun and more importantly lets him experience new things whilst always risk assessing and ensuring he is safe at all times. Together they attend social groups, for pub lunches, cycling, and to learn life skills like travelling on buses. They’ve become good pals and she treats him like he’s her little brother.

During the pandemic, Ryan was on the

official Shielding List for 2 years, so going back to Touchbase was daunting for us all. We needn’t have worried. Leeanne met us at the front door and pulled down her mask for a second so that Ryan would recognise her. The smile on his face was priceless.

Recently, due to his multiple co-morbidity risks, Ryan has been referred to the Prince and Princess of Wales Hospice. Leeanne has been supporting him to visit their Young People Service. She is building valuable links between Sense Scotland and the Hospice, sharing best practice with them. The staff have told me that Leeanne is “outstanding” and recognised the “very special relationship” she and Ryan have. But I already knew that. She is a true ambassador for Sense Scotland and personifies the core values. I wish she would realise how good she is, she just has what you can’t study for. It’s a gift.”

Leeanne has worked in TouchBase Glasgow for 14 years. She was shocked to be nominated, never mind win the award. *“Ryan is a really happy young man, very bubbly, who just takes everything in his stride. If he’s happy, then I’m happy and I know I’ve done my job well. According to Pauline, I’m not allowed to leave. But that’s ok, I love my job and I’ll be here forever.”*



You Are Invited

If you've loved reading the stories of people we support and our incredible staff, why not come and meet them for yourself?

It would be our pleasure to welcome you to our TouchBase centres to see and experience for yourself the difference your donations make. Please do join us for a wonderful afternoon of talks and activities at our TouchBase centres in Glasgow, Dunbartonshire and Ayrshire.

WE ARE HOSTING SUPPORTER DAYS AS FOLLOWS:

May 9 2024

**TouchBase
Glasgow**

43 Middlesex Street,
Glasgow, G41 1EE



May 15 2024

**TouchBase
Dunbartonshire**

59 Springfield Road,
Bishopbriggs, G64 1PN



June 7 2024

**TouchBase
Ayrshire**

41 Princes Street,
Ardrossan, KA22 8DE



**To confirm your place please contact the Fundraising Team on
0300 330 9292 or email: fundraising@sensescotland.org.uk**

"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much." Helen Keller 1880 - 1968

Fundraising News

We rely on donations from individuals, companies, Trusts and Foundations to provide many of our services. If you would like to organise a fundraiser on our behalf – Quiz nights, collections, coffee mornings, birthday donations etc - please get in touch. We will help in any way we can. Alternatively here are a few events you, your friends and family may wish to get involved in.

NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

Our inaugural Fundraising Ball in November 2023 was a huge success, raising an incredible £75000! Our next Ball will take place on November 16 2024, again at the Kelvingrove Art Gallery. This time it's a Broadway themed Masquerade Ball.

KILT WALK 2024



If walking is your thing, why not get ready to clock up the miles this year at the Kiltwalk and fundraise for Sense Scotland. Contact Fundraising to claim your free space. Dates are: Glasgow 28th April, Aberdeen 2nd June, Dundee 11th August and Edinburgh September 15th.

GINGHAM AND GLITZ



Our first ever country hoe-down at Glasgow's Grand Ole Opry was rootin tootin fun, raising a whopping £13000. It was so good we're going to do it all over again. Watch out for more info coming soon!

EDINBURGH MARATHON FESTIVAL



Whether your aim is to return to running and smash an old PB, or take a challenging step-up to a new distance, there's something for everyone! Choose from 9 distances including marathon, half marathon, team relay, 10k, 5k and junior events and run beautiful routes through the heart of Edinburgh. Claim your free charity place and raise money whilst running for Sense Scotland.

LADIES LUNCH 2024



Our legendary Ladies Lunch, hosted this year by singer and radio presenter Michelle McManus, takes place on Saturday 15th June at the iconic Grand Central Hotel in Glasgow. Tickets are selling fast at £55 per person, or £500 for a table of 10. Price includes lunch and entertainment from Re-Take That, the ultimate Take That tribute band.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE GET IN TOUCH

You can contact us via phone on 0300 330 9292 or email fundraising@sensescotland.org.uk



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Card Number

Expiry Date Valid or Issue Number Security Code

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I would like this gift to be made every: ☐ Month ☐ Quarter ☐ Year

Please start my payments on the: ☐ 1st ☐ 15th of ___ / ___ (Insert Month/Year)

☐ This is a new donation ☐ This replaces a previous donation

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Address:

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Name of account Holder(s):

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