

a future

not
our own

Annual Report
April 2017 – March 2018

WEVOLUTIONTM
TURNING COMMUNITIES AROUND

Contents

| | Page |
|--|-------|
| Welcome Letter from Maureen, an SRG Member | 3 |
| A Note from Liz & Noel | 4 |
| About Us | 5 |
| Our work | 6 |
| Snapshots from the Year | 7-8 |
| The Year in Numbers | 9 |
| Stories | 10-13 |
| Where WE are | 14 |
| Partnerships / Financial highlights | 15 |



Welcome letter from Maureen, an SRG member



Hello friends,

My name is Maureen and I am a member of Women@Work in Provanmill based in Glasgow. We were the first Self-Reliant Group starting in 2011, a whopping six years ago and we have never looked back! Our group came together when one of our members Liz Taylor-Main took the chance to go to India, where she met with women who were working and saving small amounts of money to improve their lives and their communities. She thought if they can do it, we can too.

We provide a lunch service to people in Provanmill. It is a local space, a hub where people connect and get to know one another. The lunch club has become a part of us and it goes beyond meeting, saving and providing a place where people can come get a cuppa and catch up.

would never have thought she could have done it. That is the magic of being in a Self-Reliant Group surrounding yourself with people who believe in you and push you to do your best.

You might be wondering, why did we choose to do it on our own? Without funding or support from other places? Which we could have, we had offers of funding right from the beginning but we knew we could do it ourselves, we knew that by working together and saving a small amount of money, we would achieve something and we have. We appreciate it so much more and there is a sense of pride when we all look back and think “We did that”. You can do that too!



Work together and bring what you can to the table, find that spark and do it alongside others in your communities.



For each of us it has improved our lives so much for the better, we have become the best of friends. All of the ladies that are involved are a lifeline to each other, we have somewhere to go when we need a break from our families, people we trust and can confide in. We are all much more confident and feel better about ourselves not only that, we are able to deal with the harder times, because we know we have each other.

When we got started it was important that we worked together on the lunch club but also that every member had the opportunity to be realise their own dreams. For one of our members, Jacqueline Crawley, it was starting a business; a laundry and ironing service. Jake had always dreamed of having her own laundrette so for two years we served lunch to the local community and held various events to generate income for our SRG. The result was that we managed to make £7,000 and with a loan from WEvolution we were able to launch Fluff and Fold Laundrette in 2013. Fluff and Fold has become iconic in our local community, everyone knows Jake and when you need a big load of laundry done, it is Jake you go to. Jake will tell you, that if she was not a part of the group she would never have realised her dream because she

If I could tell you anything it would be to ask yourself “what do you like doing?” Go out there, find people and start a group. So many women have skills they just don’t appreciate, we as women are hardest on ourselves but you CAN do anything you put your mind to, everything can be achieved. Work together and bring what you can to the table, find that spark and do it alongside others in your communities. We couldn’t have done what we did without each other.

The SRG movement has grown incredibly in the last six years and I am always amazed at just how many groups of women (and some men too!) have taken control of their lives and started that journey to do something to make their lives better. People who don’t wait for things to happen to them, they go out and create something for themselves and you can be a part of that too.

Maureen and all the ladies from Women@Work SRG in Provanmill

Hello from Liz & Noel

Dear friends,

The stories and statistics in our annual report bear abundant testimony to the future that we, together with the SRGs, are imagining and constructing. Not just in Scotland but across the UK, Europe and further afield, supported by the partners who have joined our adventure.

The SRGs are a driving force behind people-powered health, culture shift, income, friendships and self-worth. SRGs are, a people in them repeatedly have expressed, “anything we dare!” Stripped to its core, SRGs are about “people who don’t wait for things to happen to them but go out in the world and create something for themselves.” This shift in mindset exists in SRGs to right the inequalities and injustices inherent in our society, to enable collaboration and inspire community-led solutions, to create opportunities and take control of our lives. And as Maureen from the oldest and trend-setting SRG in Provanmill, Glasgow says, “you can be a part of this too.”

So as we take a moment to stand still and take stock of the work of Wevolution and SRGs over the past year, and indeed the lifetime of work since the idea was born - we cannot help but see it reflected in the simplicity and profundity of Archbishop Romero’s words that “we may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders... we are prophets of a future not our own.”

We are on a bold journey to construct a better future, not just for ourselves, but for those who will come after us, and to pave the way for a fairer, inclusive and prosperous Scotland. In achieving this vision, we are eternally grateful to the changemakers, institutions and funders who have joined us on our bold journey, and to them, and to all our well wishers, we say thank you.



Liz Cameron OBE
Chair

 @LizCameronSCC



Noel Mathias
Managing Director

 @Matsnoel

Words of Archbishop Romero (abridged)

This is what we are about.
We plant the seeds that one day will grow.
We water the seeds already planted knowing that they hold future promise.
We lay foundations that will need further development.
We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.
We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing this.
This enables us to do something,

and to do it very well.
It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord’s grace to enter and do the rest.
We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.
We are workers, not master builders, ministers, not messiahs.
We are prophets of a future not our own.

About Us

Our Core Purpose

People are valuable, resourceful, surprising and can inspire change. Collectively, they can empower each other to challenge systems that limit their potential and create opportunities for themselves and in the long term, for their families and communities.

Our Mission

To work alongside people's aspirations in Scotland's least understood communities to grow their confidence, skills and income. We do this by enabling people to come together in Self-Reliant Groups that inspire enterprise, pride and change.

Our Core Values



We believe in the collective power of the group



We believe in people's ability to change their circumstances



We believe in innovation and optimism as pathways to inspire enterprise and change



We believe in equality and hold every single person to be valuable



We believe in working alongside local people as equal partners



Our work



SRG Start-up & Development

WEvolution works alongside communities and individuals to start up and support SRGs. Once a group comes together WEvolution nurtures the group to build a strong collective identity using a series of foundation training sessions. This discovery and learning process enables groups to explore themes like how to work together, set goals and manage group life. As the SRG continues to develop, WEvolution provides ongoing support and networking opportunities to ensure SRGs build a strong sense of identity and purpose.

Income Generation Support

As groups grow more confident, WEvolution supports SRGs to think of ways to generate money for themselves and their families. With staff and mentor support, SRGs receive training to think through all aspects involved in running a business. WEvolution also offers opportunities to SRG members to build and formalise their skillsets through various skills-based training opportunities and makeshops. For some SRGs, ideas around making money will come naturally but for others the thought of developing a product or service can be daunting which is why WEvolution is here to help.

Small Group Loans

If you have an idea for a small business and require some capital to get it off the ground, WEvolution offers SRGs small loans between £25 to £5000 at either interest-free or affordable interest rates. This “WeeChange” microfinance fund ensures that access to money is not a barrier for SRGs to start income generating ideas or to scale ideas into micro-enterprises.

Creating an Enabling Environment

WEvolution is also building an enabling environment to tackle issues that prevent SRG growth. Within this enabling environment, WEvolution has created regional hubs in areas to experiment with connecting spaces for incubating and accelerating income generation ideas. We also offer opportunities for SRG members to come together and develop policy recommendations, for example recommendations around benefit changes, to governing bodies that ensure institutions respond to the movement on the ground. Building an enabling environment for SRGs is ever changing work and our role as an organisation is to continue to respond in ways that give people more control over their lives.

Snapshots from the Year



A trend-setter for the UK-wide SRG movement and still going strong at 71



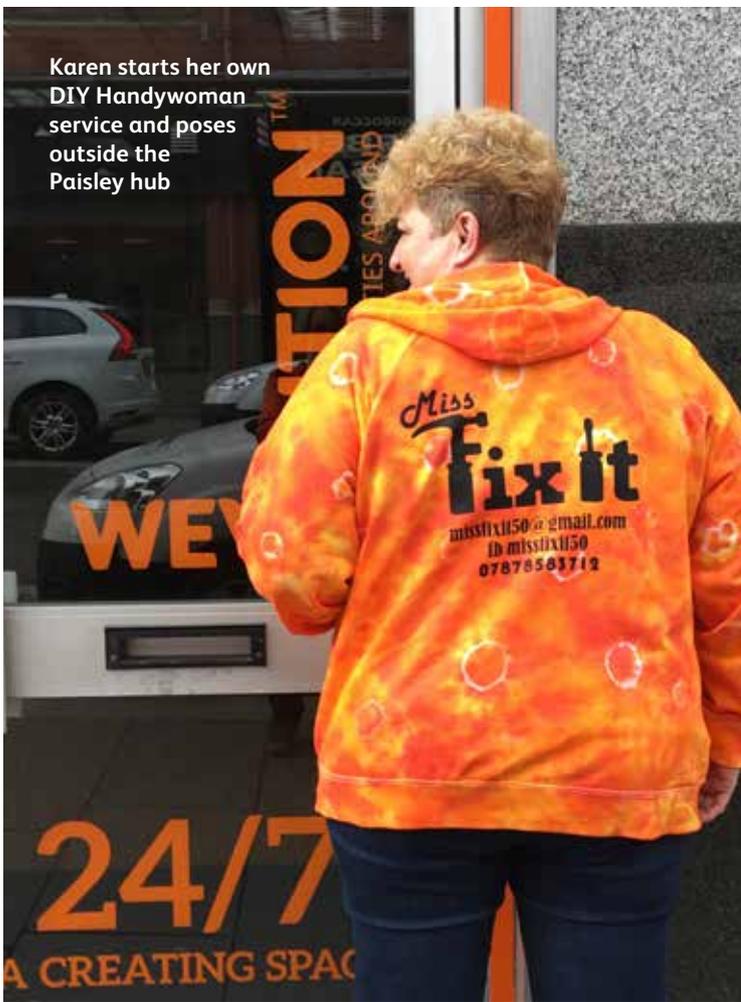
Learning to do SRGs in Wales



The first SRGs in Rotterdam connect with WEvolution and the SRG movement goes international



There's a place for everyone in an SRG: the young & not so young



Karen starts her own DIY Handywoman service and poses outside the Paisley hub



Laura, from Dab Hands SRG, teaches her son Jack how to screenprint



Becky, Greenport SRG, tracks her SRG's savings

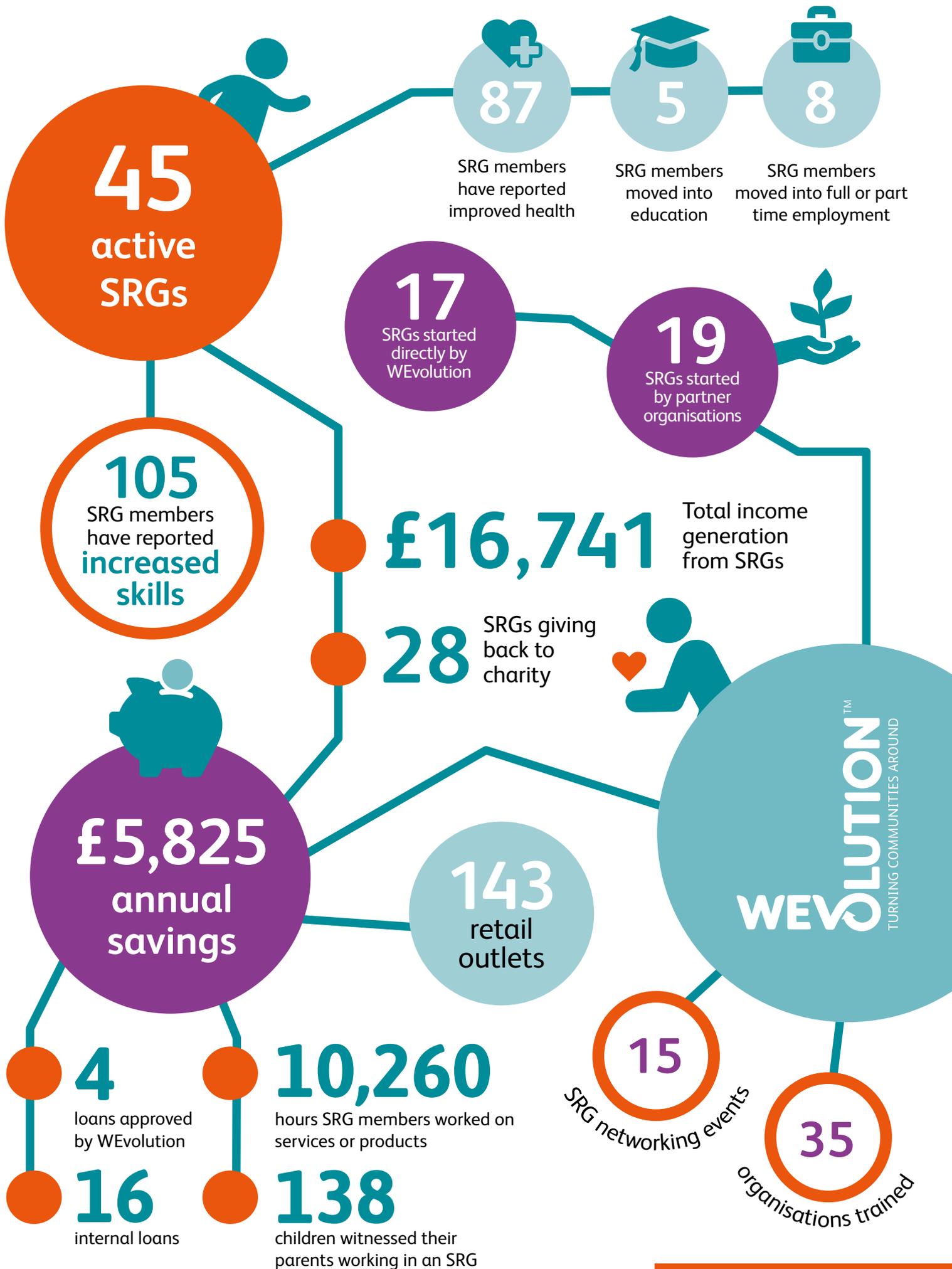


Hands up! SRG Peer Gatherings are such fun



Angie & Marie-Therese, Maryhill SRG, take part in a hand massage course as a way to diversify their SRG's income stream

The Year in Numbers



Stories

It is the stories* of SRG members that give the SRG movement its heart and so this year we bring you more stories from across Scotland. It is in these sometimes messy, occasionally rocky but always worthwhile moments that we find the movement coming to life. For us, it is always good to remember that the real impact is not always depicted in statistics but in the changes individuals and collective groups experience on a day-to-day basis.

Adele's Story

The Power of Possibility

Adele has come from a 'dark, dark' place and since joining an SRG she now finds that she is living again. On her wall in the living room hangs a certificate from the University of Glasgow, which reminds her every day that she has a degree in sociology and anthropology. From a 16 year old who was forced to leave school because her maths was not up to scratch, through working 8 years in IBM via a Skill Seekers project, onto college to do a SWAP course before university, she now has learned book-keeping with WEvolution and manages her own earnings and accounts.



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Adele's mission is to get women and men through the door so they can see it's possible to change their lives by being part of an SRG.

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Adele is part of the SRG, 5 Mummies Make, doing a variety of events for charities. She is particularly proud of the School Uniform Swap project using lost property clothes from all the local schools. Her children's primary school now has their own clothes bank. She works with local businesses and trades to get brilliant raffle prizes for the tea parties her SRG run in order to support Reach for Autism, Inverclyde Children in Poverty and Ardgowan Hospice. She also runs her own small business (making soft toy monkeys and paper flowers) all of which keep her very busy but allow her to be available to her two young children, one of whom is autistic.

Adele found WEvolution after going to a parenting course in Inverclyde with two friends who also suffered from post-natal depression. Adele was already making small crafts and joined an SRG. Through the years, SRGs have become her extended family and have helped her to gain the strength, both physically and emotionally, to face the world. Her self-awareness and confidence have grown and the group is a safe place to try out new ideas, discuss projects, support others and just be herself.

In the past, Adele has battled domestic abuse, gestational diabetes, post-natal depression,

the breakdown of a relationship and anxiety attacks. Today, she still has some anxiety around starting new projects or visiting new places or talking to new people but she knows what to do now. She asks a close SRG friend to go with her for the first visit.

Recently she started teaching a craft class at her children's primary school. She has given a two-minute 'nerve wracking' speech at Inverclyde Town Hall about her work as a member of WEvolution. She not only realised she could talk in front of an audience, but what she said was listened to and her voice was heard. She has also dropped from a size 22 to 14 and is in a supportive relationship.

Adele takes huge pride in the beautiful new hub in Cartsdyke and has plans to develop the space including adding work benches. Her mission is to get women and men through the door so they can see it's possible to change their lives by being part of an SRG.

Adele says, "There's lots to do – maybe I will start to work again when the children are more settled. Maybe I will ask to be on the Board of WEvo in the future when I can get childcare. When the time is right, I will do it".

Catherine's Story

Creativity Bubbling Beneath the Surface

Catherine has always had a passion for making things. When she was young she had wanted to start a business and joining an SRG has helped her to make this dream a reality. However, it was not an easy beginning as Catherine juggled to balance supporting a son with behavioural issues, hold down a full time paid job and homeschool her kids as well as working through changes in her domestic situation involving an amicable re-organisation of living arrangements for the family.

To balance all these challenges, Catherine decided to get together with a group of other home educators. The group provided the space for social interaction for the children and parents but also stimulated discussions around education. When the mothers were introduced to WEvolution they formed an SRG called Free Rangers with the aim of setting up a social café for their families. Later, Catherine, along with some other women she knew, formed another SRG calling themselves So Together which was trying out ideas for small skill crafts.

Bubbling beneath the surface of Catherine's rich and full life (she had also embarked on research at the University of Glasgow on the impact of trauma on learning) and gradually coming to the surface through her engagement with various SRGs was the real possibility that her private love of sewing and making jewellery might grow into a business.

She has given herself permission to let go and to trust others.

Recently Catherine and her friend and fellow SRGer Debbie created Elemental, an SRG business. They are starting on their new adventure, producing beautiful accessories using top quality materials within an affordable budget.



Catherine (right) has always had a passion for making things.

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Being part of SRGs meant that Catherine met women with similar interests who were striving to do things they never thought they could.

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Being part of SRGs meant that Catherine met women with similar interests who were striving to do things they never thought they could. Sticking with the groups, with all the ups and downs of membership, personality differences, changing circumstances and commitment turned into a strong foundation from which her emerging business could develop. She learned about marketing, saving, book-keeping and more about herself.

Catherine knows that she is a better person for learning to share responsibilities within the groups, by waiting and allowing others to lead in their different ways.

Catherine has noted the impact at home of her new found confidence in making things to start a business, including her children's artistic endeavours in photography.

In addition, she recognises that her whole family's involvement in the design, making, marketing and selling of crafts, so wonderfully supported by SRGs through the years, has added to her children's 'fulfilling and broad portfolio for life'.

And for Catherine herself, being part of Elemental 'is the culmination of a dream of 25 years in the making'.

Looking Within For New Beginnings

From School Meetings to Event Organisers

Tracey, Susan and Stef are all mums with children in the same primary school and have been friends for years. They decided they wanted to do something more than meet in the community groups they usually attended. When they discovered WEvolution, they realised that they could save money and share their dreams for the future and work on some products they might sell.

Working together for a joint purpose showed off their strengths. Tracey had been making crafts for years as her hobby. Susan loved to organise and Stef found she was interested in marketing and selling. Becoming the SRG Craftilicious meant that they could get guidance on production, costing, support with budgeting and running their account as well as finding contacts for collaboration within the community.



The ladies of Craftilicious!

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The SRG provides a safe place for letting off steam, discussing feelings and differences of opinions.

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Tracey, Stef and Susan have challenging domestic situations as well as physical and mental health issues and often look for guidance from their Coordinator. Working as a group has helped them lean on each other, learn to trust themselves and each other and participate more fully as members.

During one of their group development sessions they discussed the inequality for some children who were unable to see Santa at the big grotto in town. Families might not be able to pay for a ticket as well as transport and extras in town, especially so close to Christmas. So Craftilicious decided to fill this gap by hosting their own Christmas party for children in their community. It was a brilliant success.

Their confidence has grown immeasurably since organising the party and seeing the joy it brought to others. Knowing they created this opportunity for people in their community has inspired them to think of other ways to provide support.

They are currently working on an exciting ‘necessity tuck shop’ to run alongside the community café. But the group are also good at working out how to change things that have not quite worked out.

The SRG provides a safe place for letting off steam, discussing feelings and differences of opinions. Stef may have been mad at her friends for not being at the venue one weekend to help sell their crafts and Tracey may have forgotten the float, but as Susan pointed out, they were not as organised as they should have been. In the past they would have thought this was a failure and possibly given up. Now they all recognise that learning from their mistakes is part of the process of working together. And working together is what makes them stronger as individuals.

All the women feel that being part of their SRG has made them confident in other areas. Tracey is able to communicate new ideas to others, Stef now feels confident enough to try different ways of cooking for her daughter who has allergies and Susan knows that she is willing to try and make crafts she has never made before.

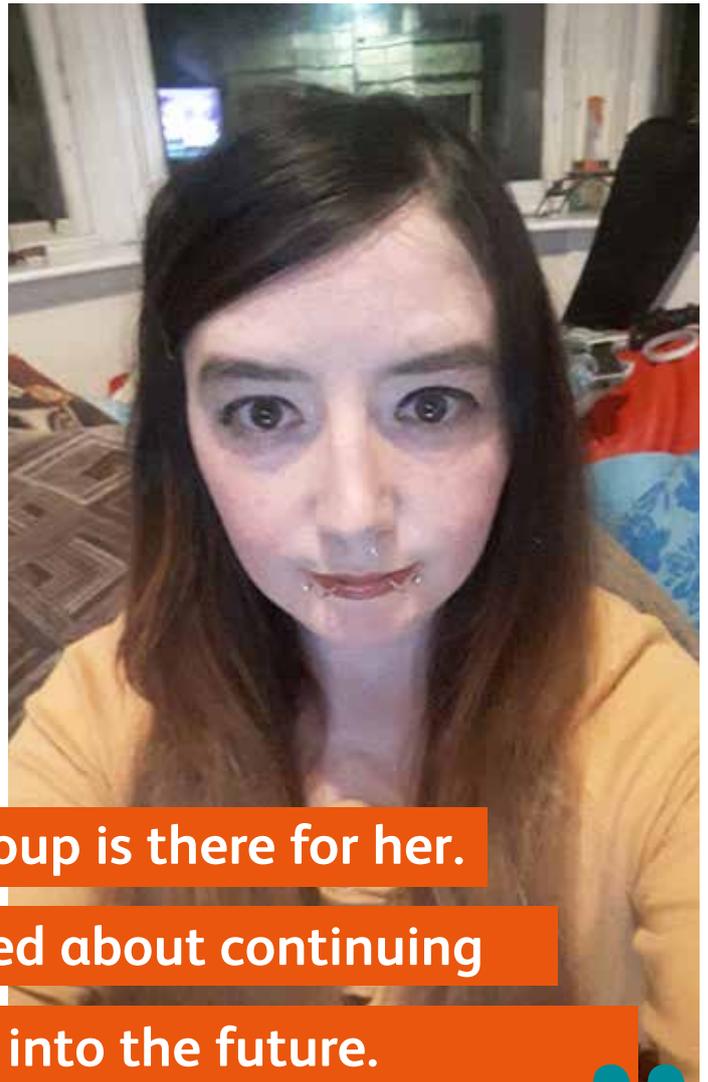
Kirsten's Journey with Creative Ventures

SRG, An Aspirational Family

Kirsten and her three close friends formed their SRG 'Creative Ventures' in Paisley earlier this year. The name they chose is fairly broad as it encompasses their individual talents in fashion, art, photography and digital media and their joint adventure exploring opportunities for their new businesses beyond Paisley. Their monthly savings all go towards travel.

Kirsten was interested in fashion and design from a young age before she learned to sew as a child. She loves to dress in zany colours, shapes and materials. As a fashion student at Cardonald College she loved making clothes from scratch and working with high quality and sustainably grown materials.

She was brought up in Falkirk and had a very complicated early life. She was adopted and raised by her grandparents as a baby and was a solitary child. Later, when she was diagnosed with 'high functioning autism' and dyslexia, she could then understand where



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Kirsten knows her group is there for her.

She is very excited about continuing

her journey into the future.

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her sensitivity to noise and inability to understand verbal instructions came from. With therapeutic support, she began to find people who understood her needs and who she could relate to. The SRG has become Kirsten's family over these past few months.

Kirsten has always been a natural leader. Learning from other WEvolution groups in Paisley, Creative Ventures now rotate their leadership roles and Kirsten has learned to step back, to be more tolerant of others, to recognise what their strengths are and to take pleasure observing others' interactions. She has also been able to access learning support in College and is returning to study after a year's break.

Over time her business ideas have expanded and she has developed a 5 year plan through the Princes Trust and support from her SRG. She gets 'nerve-wracked' when she thinks ahead about where her ideas are

going, how she is going to sell her products, distribute them and source the natural materials.

But she knows her group is there for her. She is very excited about continuing her journey into the future with the support of her friends and partner in Creative Ventures.

If any of our stories have inspired you, please get in touch with us!

Please contact us on the details on the back of this Annual Report to find out how you can turn your life and your community around and make your dream a reality through SRGs.

Where WE are



Paisley,
Glasgow,
Inverclyde,
Dundee,
Scotland
WEvolution team



Stirling, Scotland
Raploch Community
Partnership
3 SRGs



Renfrewshire, Scotland
The Tannahill Centre



Edinburgh, Scotland
Bethany Christian Trust
2 SRGs



Manchester, England
Church Action on Poverty
2 SRGs



Cardiff, Wales
Purple Shoots
9 SRGs



Rotterdam, The Netherlands
WEmove
3 SRGs



Partnerships

Joyce Kay from Church Action on Poverty (CAP), national charity based in Manchester, shares her experience and journey with WEvolution & SRGs.

Our partnership with WEvolution started just over 4 years ago when I went to India with a team from Scotland to see how the Self-Help movement helps millions of women to create a better life for themselves, their families and their communities. This was my inspiration to try to help Self-Reliant Groups set up in the Greater Manchester area.

We now have a small team engaged in taking the SRG movement forward locally. My previous community development work concentrated on working with groups for a 12 week period on issues decided by them with some form of local 'action' at the end. SRGs go further than this as they are completely self-determining; the group make all the decisions – where and when they meet, how much they save, the format of meetings, responsibilities within the group and what they will spend their time doing. An SRG does not end after 12 weeks, but is sustainable for as long as the group wants it to be.

The impact we are seeing in SRG members is huge in terms of increased confidence, self-worth, productivity,

creativity and the increased security of having a support network. SRG members also talk about having increased 'purpose' and structure to their lives.

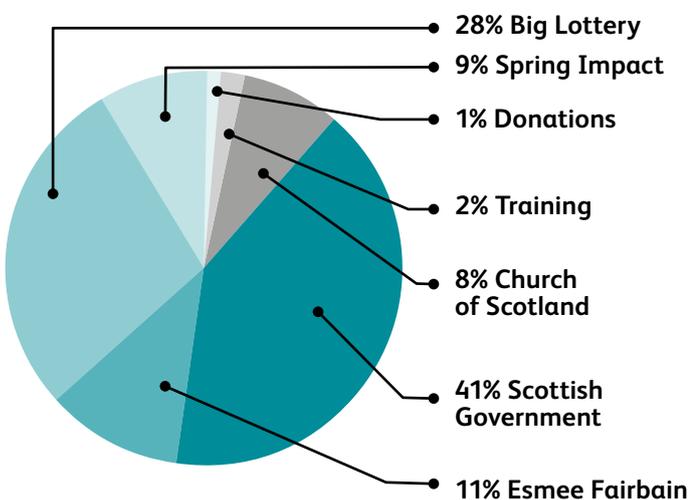


We held our first Peer Networking event in March 2018 where local SRGs came together to share and encourage each other. It was very encouraging for local SRGs to know that they are part of a much wider movement taking place across the UK.

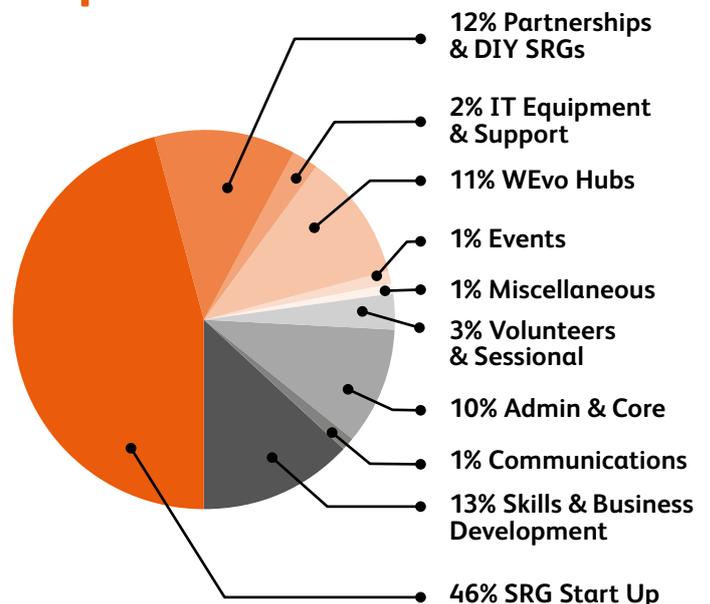
We could not have come this far without the fantastic support of the WEvolution team who have supported us throughout our SRG journey. It has been so inspiring to visit Scotland to meet groups, attend the DIY SRG training and welcome the WEvolution team to Greater Manchester. We love being part of the growing SRG movement and would encourage others to work in partnership with WEvolution to drive SRGs forward UK wide.

Financial Highlights

Income



Expenditure





WEvolution, Head Office, 417 – 419 London Road, Glasgow G40 1AG
0141 550 3755 • wevolution.org.uk • info@wevolution.org.uk

   @WEvolutionUK

Scottish Charity No: SC043994 • Community Interest Company No: SC479596
*Stories written by Jane Blatt

