



# #tryitout

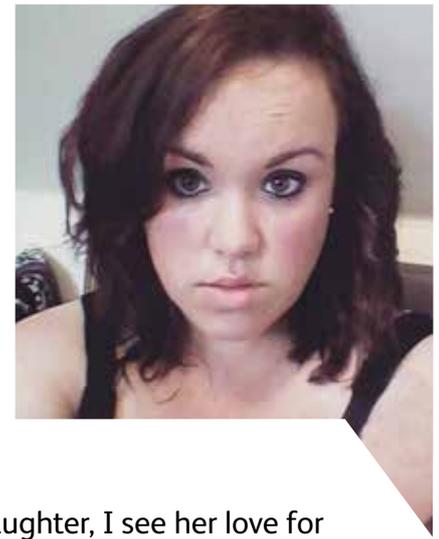
**Annual Report**  
**April 2016 – March 2017**

**WEVO** <sup>TM</sup> **LUTION**  
TURNING COMMUNITIES AROUND

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# Welcome letter from Gaynor Moir, an SRG member



**Hello everyone,**

My name is Gaynor and I am a member of West End Makers and Bakers SRG in Dundee. We are producers of artisan chocolates, crocheted items and children's clothing and accessories amongst other things. Our journey started early in 2016 when we realised that as well as being mums to young children, we all loved to make. We took a giant leap of faith to try our first local craft fair with products we had been working on, wanting to test the market and see if anyone would buy our products. A year or so earlier, one of our members had heard of WEvolution and we saw that the SRG way of working was the perfect next step for us to grow our group in the direction we wanted.

I see myself in my daughter, I see her love for making things and her wild imagination and I want to be her inspiration. I want her to see me and know that she can do what she loves and she never needs to dull her spirit or try and fit in to a box to become something people think she should be instead of doing what she loves and I know that my fellow SRG members feel the same. It is for this reason that I believe SRGs are a real solution for the future. It is so common to hear people complain that they can't source some product or service that people in community could be providing themselves. By growing the SRG movement so that everyone knows of the opportunities the SRG way

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Being a member of an SRG has changed my life dramatically. I have struggled with varying levels of depression and anxiety my entire adult life and have always felt very alone and misunderstood. I now have a group of people who are not only my SRG members they are also my support system, my inspiration and my very best friends.

As we are all mums of young children it is great to have a place to go that is just for us to build on our dreams for the future. With the support of my SRG and WEvolution, I can do what I love while supporting my family and be taken seriously as a producer. The feeling of creating something that someone is willing to pay for is indescribable and even now every sale means the world to us.

of working can offer, communities will discover that they can make and offer these things themselves! The confidence in your own ideas and thinking outside the box attitude that being in an SRG offers could make such an impact to a community. I hope someday soon you can tell people you are in an SRG and others will know what you mean, looking on with respect and admiration for what you have achieved. Who wouldn't want to be a part of that?

# A Note from Liz & Noel

## Hello everyone,

We have always believed that our ambition to make WEvolution successful would only ever be achieved if it was truly driven by individuals who work and live in our communities across Scotland. If there was ever any doubt, we highly recommend you read the letter from Gaynor. It demonstrates, from the heart, the richness and diversity of the experience that we call our Self-Reliant Groups.

The year has again demonstrated the dreams and aspirations of WEvolution and our Groups. It has been eventful and above all fun. In December 2016, we said farewell to our Chair, Jim Spowart. Jim's drive, determination and outstanding support enabled us to develop and grow over the last four years. He was instrumental in setting up a number of opportunities for WEvolution, ably supported by a commendable Board of Trustees. He has left a great legacy and a strong foundation for us to move forward with confidence to achieve our next phase of growth. On behalf of our Trustees, our SRG's, and wider partners, we formally acknowledge his outstanding commitment.

In Jim's departing, it is worth reflecting on and noting his comments – "It was great to be part of WEvolution and see many people develop and see their aspirations come to fruition. I wish you all well, and everyone who has benefited from WEvolution's support. I am confident with the excellent team in place, it will continue to flourish"

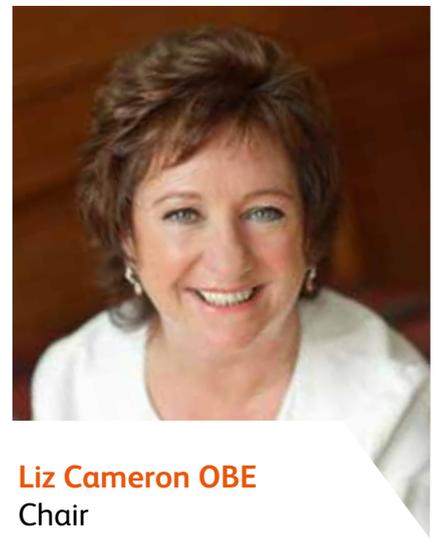
One of the standout events of the year was the 'The Economics of Friendships' National Gathering" which took place in March 2017. This brought together participants from

across the United Kingdom, Europe and India. It excited, it informed, and it disrupted. It challenged culture, approach and perceptions. This quote stands out as the one that captures what we wanted to achieve: "these groups are so bottom-up, determinedly independent that they make what we think of as community led appear almost top-down".

We must also thank the Scottish Government and the Church of Scotland for having the vision and confidence to continually support what we do. Our message remains simple – those in our communities are best placed to drive change and have shown, through creating Self-Reliant Groups across Scotland – it works. We would also acknowledge the support of the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation.

In closing, our success is due to those individuals throughout our communities who took the enormous leap of faith and courage to set up and grow their own Self-Reliant Groups. To them and to all our volunteers and supporters who give their time and help us create a movement, thank you.

Read on, be inspired, and join us - #tryitout!



**Liz Cameron OBE**  
Chair

 @LizCameronSCC



**Noel Mathias**  
Managing Director

 @Matsnoel



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# 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



# Snapshots from the Year



**Left:** Jyoti Mhapsekar from Stree Mukti Sanghatana (Women's Liberation Movement) in Mumbai, India visited the SRGs in Scotland and shared her experience of the Indian Self-Help Group movement

**Below:** WEvolution launched MakeShop where SRG members make products designed by local Scottish designers





**Top left:** WEvolution started the Leap Programme where selected SRG members get intensive and accelerated business mentoring to grow their ideas to the next level

**Top right:** The International Centre for Social Franchising (ICSF) selected WEvolution and the SRG Model as one of the programmes to join their Scale Accelerator- meaning more SRGs across Scotland and the UK in the coming years

**Mid right:** Team WEvo welcomed new staff members, Kirsty Slater and Jade Adcock, to help resource the development of SRGs

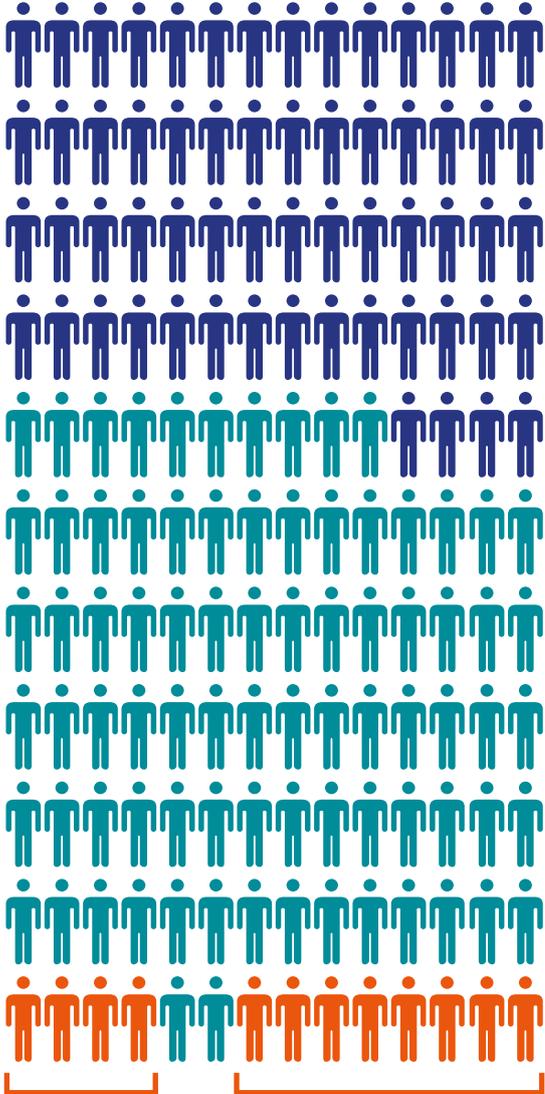
**Left:** With visitors from India, Netherlands and across the UK, WEvolution hosted 'The Economics of Friendships' National Gathering where we looked at the impact SRGs have on the individual, the collective and the community

# Creating an Enabling Environment

**154** People in SRGs

**£39,000**

Total income generation from SRGs



**60**

Number of people who say their health is improved because of SRGs

**48**

Number of SRGs started directly by WEvolution

**15**

Number of SRGs started by partner organisations

**TWELVE**

SRGs giving back to charity



**12**

Number of SRG Networking Events



**35**

Number of Organisations Trained



**£5,879**  
Annual savings

**FOUR**

Number of people going into education

**EIGHT**

Number of people going into full- or part-time employment



**8**

Number of loans approved by WEvolution

**£8,800**

Total loan amount approved

**24**

Internal loans

**£2,800**

Total amount internally loaned



**85**

Retail outlets

**134**

Number of kids that have seen their parents turn their communities around



# Stories of Bonding, Hope & Making

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.

## From a Small Quiet Mouse to a Roaring Lioness

### Grabbing Hold of the Opportunities

Born and raised in Inverclyde, Lorraine Edwards is a woman of many different life experiences. As a teenager, she took part in the Prince's Trust at the James Watt College. This was something out of Lorraine's comfort zone but it motivated Lorraine to enrol in college and work towards a qualification in childcare. Lorraine became a mother but found herself in an unhealthy relationship that led to isolation and worsened her post-natal depression.

Although Lorraine was in a dark place she managed to reach out to her sister who was part of 5 Mummies Make SRG. She encouraged her to attend the WEvo Hub with her.



“

**My life has totally changed since joining an SRG.**

**I am much more confident, outgoing,**

**outspoken and have made so many more friends.**”

Lorraine recalls feeling welcomed by everyone and was encouraged to get involved with an activity at the Hub. Lorraine decided to start an SRG after attending a Peer Gathering in January 2016. She attended various workshops facilitated by WEvolution and this helped her decide on the type of group she was going to start. As time went on Lorraine became empowered and felt she had a sense of purpose. By June 2016, Lorraine had already become a speaker at some WEvolution events!

Lorraine is now part of Outside the Box SRG, which is made up of five women who meet regularly and save £1 a week each into a common group account.

Their plan is to start individual business ventures but, most importantly, also encourage each other. Lorraine hopes to start a Bakery of sorts as she is currently the WEvolution Queen of Tea Loaf's in Scotland! At just a year old, this SRG is making enormous leaps in the right direction.

‘My life has totally changed since joining an SRG. I am much more confident, outgoing, outspoken and have made so many more friends. My three-year-old wee boy has noticed the difference in me and has said ‘Mummy is happy now’. George loves coming to the hub, he would rather be at the hub than at his nursery.’

## From Disconnected to More Involved

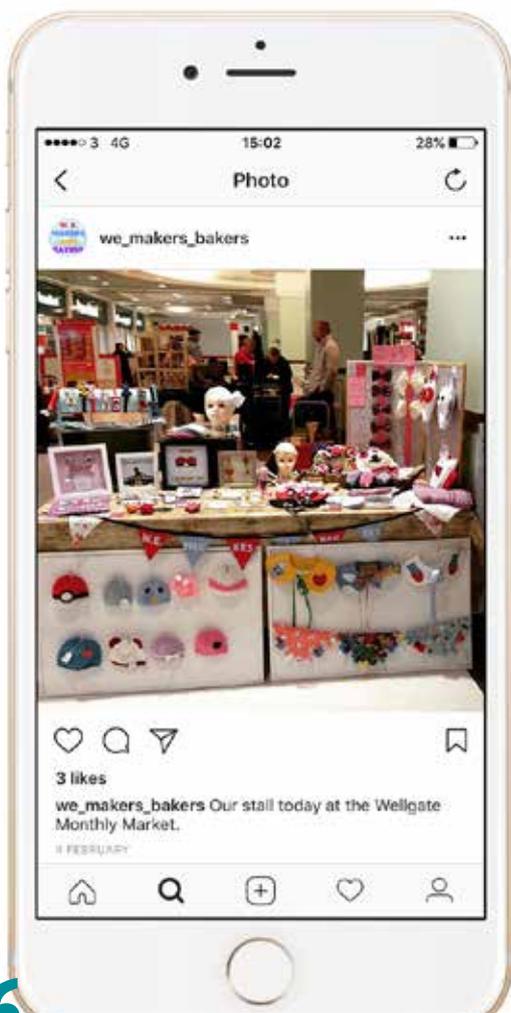
### Dundee SRG Women Pave the Way

The West End Makers & Bakers SRG in Dundee started out in 2016 with two mums, Alison and Gaynor, who enjoyed crochet and sewing. They were looking for a next step to add value to the hobbies they had at home and joined a free sewing class. After meeting a few times, they began to think about how they could begin

of working. Alison reached out to WEvolution where she felt allowed to dream about where their creativity could take them. A third member, Caroline, then joined their group so they began meeting and saving regularly, setting their goals and working out ways of generating income.

Now, West End Makers & Bakers SRG are able to offer a wide range of products, specialising in custom orders, from children's clothes, hair bows and blankets to delicious chocolates and caramels and are always looking to market trends and innovating new and exciting products to bring to market. While they each have individual projects, their group continues to develop 'group makes' that offer a financial cushion for group endeavours. At Christmas they sold Santa Keys and Reindeer Food as group makes. They recently completed an order for Footasylum's staff awards evening in Dundee. All of the proceeds went in to their group bank account and can be used to reinvest in group activities, such as booking stalls.

Each of the women have grown in confidence through offering their cross stitch and crochet expertise at skillshare events at the WEvo hub space or hosting stalls and speaking to the public. They share the SRG way of working with others, encouraging them to try it out. And Caroline, who specialises in chocolate and sweet treats is now looking at courses in patisserie that will add value to her baking skills and with help from the WEvo Leap Programme, she hopes to develop a sustainable business that will continue to support her and her family, allowing her to work flexibly around her children's schooling.



**The women have become more confident both in selling their products but also in the way they participate in their community...**



making some money from their creations and tried out their first craft fairs; learning important lessons in pricing, product placement and location.

During this time, as they tried out different things, Alison remembered a conversation she had had with someone about Self Reliant Groups and a different way

Throughout their journey as an SRG, the women have become more confident both in selling their products but also in the way they participate in their community for which they have raised over £480. Please follow their journey on Instagram [@we\\_makers\\_bakers](https://www.instagram.com/we_makers_bakers) or Facebook [fb.com/wemakersandbakers](https://www.facebook.com/wemakersandbakers).

## Tapping into the Possibilities

### Using Newfound Skills to Explore Bright Business Opportunities

Five years after Maryhill SRG started, they welcomed Angela to join them in saving and creating products to grow their income. Over the last year Angela has never looked back: finding friendships and courage to begin working towards her own dreams of starting a business.

However, her journey to joining the group was not easy. Her Auntie Fiona had tried many times to persuade her to get involved but it just never seemed to be the right time. With four young children at home and a sudden illness within her extended family, Angela had two new members join the household, after her father in law suffered a stroke. As she began to care for her father in law, Angela began to feel isolated and depressed, with a busy house to run and with an inability to say 'no' it left her with little time for herself.



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You leave what you have at the door,  
drink a cup of tea and share what is  
going on in your life if you want.

”

It was while working with the Carers Centre that Angela had a lightbulb moment! The most important thing to her was to get back into the world and learn something new for herself, as she had been putting her family and children first for such a long time. That is when she decided to take the plunge and find out more about Maryhill SRG. Their speciality was sewing and learning some hemming skills along the way was not a bad idea, right?

Much to her surprise it was not quite what she expected. Each group member saved £1 per week and used sewing as a way to generate an income for their group which then allowed them to use the money to buy equipment and materials but also gave them a little extra capital to do some fun things like go out for a meal together with their children. Angela quickly realised that this was the right group and environment for her, a place for her to escape and be herself. You leave what you have at the door, drink a cup of tea and share what is going on in your life if you want.

The best part of the group for Angela has been meeting other SRG members in the movement and finding out

what they do. Recently Angela joined Make Shop, a new initiative at WEvolution where SRG members work alongside a Product Designer to learn the skills needed to create well-made, high quality products. She has learned new skills like leatherworking, screen-printing and the importance of packaging and presentation. It has created a space where she feels she is constantly learning and able to use all of the skills that she has gained through this programme within her own SRG. The friendships she has made not only within her own group but also from other SRGs have inspired her and to see that her own dreams are possible. Angela has found a passion for creating bespoke wedding items; after helping her cousin make headbands, favours and wedding baskets, she realised that not only did she enjoy it but that she was very good at it. Before being part of an SRG, Angela would never have thought it possible to try to make some money doing the things she loves but now she knows there is a space where the sky is the limit.

## Kids Changed Me

### Seeing the Balance Between Kids and Work

Before having any children, Adele had a full-time career and a dream of becoming an Advanced Education Teacher. After graduating from University, she settled down and started a family with her partner. It seemed as if life couldn't get any better until she developed post-natal depression and increased anxiety. When she had realised the severity of these conditions, Adele began to look for things that might help. That is when she found WEvolution. Initially it wasn't easy but after she sorted out her personal life, she found 5 Mummies Make SRG which has now become an extension of her own family.

"Once I learned how to work the sewing machine I found making soft toy sock monkeys was my calling. I loved how each one turned out different as if they all had their own little story to tell and their own little

personalities. WEvolution has helped me to develop my monkeys by exploring other selling platforms, ensuring that they meet the current CE regulations and providing marketing assistance. My monkeys are now in different homes all over the world thanks to the push from ALL my amazing friends in WEvolution, especially my 'Mummies'."

Adele also explains that her involvement with the SRG has meant that her bouts of depression are almost behind her. Her anxiety levels are much more manageable and she is in a much happier place. She expands on this, "I have had many opportunities to encourage others within the SRG movement, including running workshops at the DIY SRG events, telling my story through SKYPE chats and helping SRGs in other areas to push their products to the next level."

“

Each member of 5 Mummies Make

SRG is now working on our own new

products and dreaming big for our future...

”



"The realms of WEvolution extend to all of our personal lives. Some of the girls in Inverclyde have been concentrating on our health and wellbeing and with their support over the past year I have managed to lose just over 3 stone and because of that I feel F\*\*\*ING amazing!"

"Each member of 5 Mummies Make SRG is now working on our own new products and dreaming big for our future, but alongside this also have big plans for our group and taking that to the next level with us."



**Jake Crawley from Provanmill SRG**  
at Fluff & Fold Laundrette  
Serving local members of the community

## Opening New Doors

### Doing it in Style

Being part of a group of amazing women has given Women of Courage SRG the opportunity and nerve to chase down their dreams and all the while, doing it in style. With plans of owning a shop space that can also serve a community, this group went after their dreams together.

It started when Dotto was looking for a new job, saw one that would do and decided to take the plunge and apply but shortly after realised that applying for a job, just for the sake of it was never going to work for her. She wanted to go down her own path, follow her dreams and start making money from doing something she loved. That is when she came across WEvolution

Dotto now runs her own shop, a place that is hers and she loves every day being her own boss! Admittedly, she does say that she would have done it without the group. However, being part of a Self-Reliant Group has meant that she went after her dreams quicker and she would not have had the emotional or financial support that the group provides. Her advice to everyone thinking about starting an SRG and wanting to change her life is this...

“If you think you can, you can. People think they cannot start their own business but everything can be done. If you say you can, you will. Prove it to yourself.”

“

If you think you can, you can.

People think they cannot start their own

business but everything can be done.

”

and along with a few other women she knew decided to get in touch and find out how WEvolution could help get their ideas off the ground.

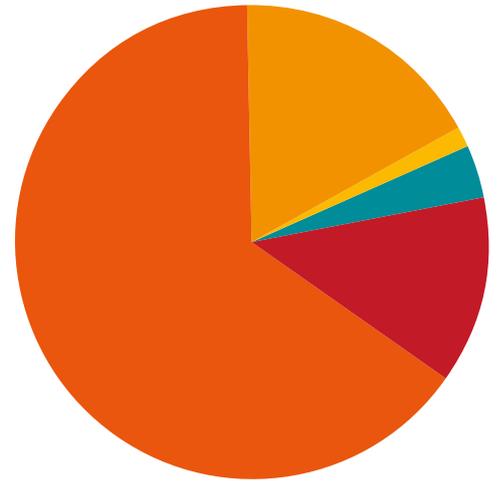
Commitment was key and Women of Courage decided very early on that if they were going to do this then they were going to give it one hundred percent. They began saving a whopping £25 per week, savings that have been crucial to the group providing them with financial stability. They say ‘it has been a great experience to have a pot of money that can be used to support one another, particularly when someone needs a little financial help’. Now the group are using their savings to invest in themselves; they don’t have to wait or rely on anyone to believe in their idea they can just get on with it.

For the group, the collective environment provides a space to be outrageous with their ideas and dreams. Each member of the group brings something unique. Emma is the group nurturer and mother of the group, while Dotto sees herself as a powerhouse coming up with new strategies and plans to grow their ideas. Dina challenges authority and thinks outside the box bringing a creative perspective and Irene is logical and grounded supporting the group to think through the best way to move forward.



# Financial Highlights

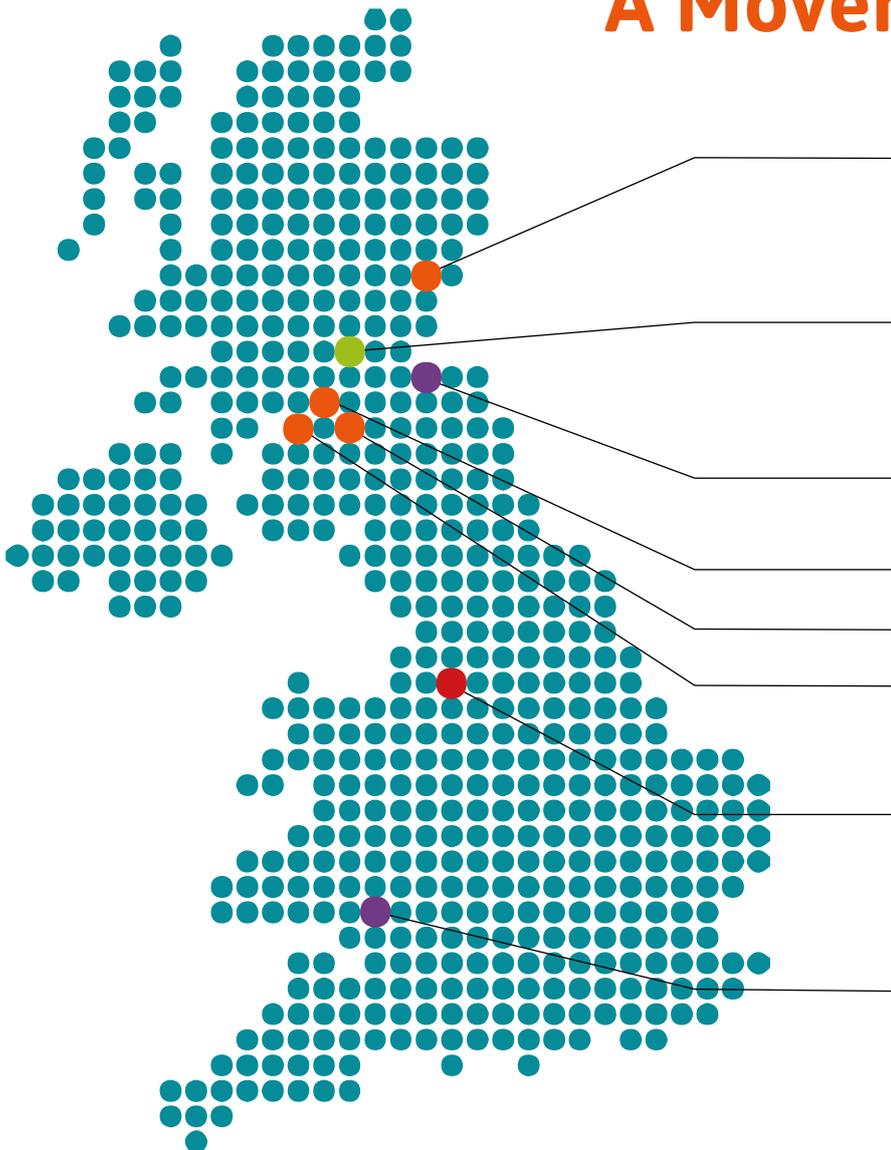
## Expenditure



## Income

<b>Scottish Government</b>	65%
<b>Esmee Fairbairn Foundation</b>	17%
<b>Church of Scotland</b>	13%
<b>Donations</b>	3.5%
<b>Training</b>	1.5%

# A Movement Develops



**Dundee, Scotland**  
WEvolution team



**Stirling, Scotland**  
Raploch Community Partnership  
3 SRGs



**Edinburgh, Scotland**  
Bethany Christian Trust  
1 SRG



**Paisley, Glasgow, Inverclyde, Scotland**  
WEvolution team



**Manchester, England**  
Church Action on Poverty  
2 SRGs



**Cardiff, Wales**  
Purple Shoots  
9 SRGs

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