

# Annual Report

2012–13

We believe that life is for living

  
**thistle**  
Foundation



“Everyone  
needs a  
little bit of  
Thistle!”

## About Thistle

Thistle is a Scottish charity that believes life is for living. We work, as equal partners, with people with disabilities and long term health conditions to help them live the best life they can, to reach their own personal hopes and aspirations, and to gain confidence, control and self-esteem – and to enable them to make a valuable contribution as citizens.

## What does Thistle do?

1

### **We support disabled people.**

Thistle supports disabled people to live full, independent lives and we work with young people and their families to plan for life after school.

2

### **We work with people to improve their health and wellbeing.**

Thistle supports people who are struggling to live with long term health conditions or going through a difficult time in their lives by helping them develop self management skills so they can improve their quality of life. This includes our tailored support for veterans.

We encourage people to improve their health and wellbeing through various targeted activities - from gym exercises to outdoor walks, from tai chi to pilates classes, and more.

3

### **We help train professionals.**

We develop and deliver training and consultancy to promote good practice to health and social care professionals.

## Onward...

### A word from our Chief Executive

While the past year has brought both challenges and rewards (not surprising, given the world we all live and work in today), it hasn't stopped us from getting on with the job!

I'm pleased to tell you that we are starting to realise the impact of the ambitious strategic plans I talked about in last year's Annual Report.

While we continue to support people with disabilities and long term health conditions to live great lives, we are always looking to the future, and as such, have been working hard to influence, encourage and train others to adopt a truly person-centred approach.

At the same time, we have been trying to strengthen our income streams by raising awareness of the work we do.

It's certainly not easy to balance everything, but we're pushing on.

After all, believe that life is for living – and so do you.

### Diana Noel-Paton, Chief Executive



## ...and upward!

### A word from our Chairman

Welcome to our Annual Report for 2012-13, my second year as Chair of the Thistle Board of Trustees. And what a year it's been.

In 2011-12, I reported that we were navigating our way through some difficult - but vital - strategic and financial decisions.

Thankfully, we've weathered those storms and I believe we're now a stronger, better organisation.

This year, I am happy to say we've been able to focus our efforts where they are needed most – working hard with the people we support to help them live the life they want.

Thank you for supporting Thistle, in whatever way you can. We appreciate it.

### David Giffin, Chair, Board of Trustees



“Thistle has given me confidence to make me realise that I can have the kind of life I would like. For years I've wanted to go to college and now I am!!! I am going independently! I decide where I use my support hours. [I have] more control. Now I am learning a lot about budgeting as well. I feel that I have more control over all aspects of my life.”

# 250,000

.....  
Last year we provided over 250,000 hours of support in Scotland.  
.....

# Planning for Change

## Our new strategy 2012 - 2015

In recent years, things have changed a lot in health and social care – and this means we have had to change as well.

In 2012, we developed a new three year strategy to help us prepare for what these changes mean to Thistle, and to those we support.

By strengthening our internal and external processes, we will be able to support more people to live great lives than ever before.

### We will focus on:

#### 1 Becoming more recognised as a national centre of learning and good practice.

In order to ensure the best possible outcomes for those we support, and others, we want to be at the forefront of the national agenda for changing the way public services are designed and delivered.

Thistle has been an enthusiastic ambassador of a person centred way of working for many years now and we have a well deserved reputation for our work. With the integration of health and social care services taking place externally, we need to begin planning ahead for what Thistle will be doing in

the future, and for how we will play our part in continuing to deliver great outcomes for all the people we assist – but in even more joined up, collaborative ways than is possible at present. The new environment is requiring all of us working in health and social care services to think even more about how to work in partnerships with others within our organisation and across different agencies.

#### 2 Strengthening how we manage and assess our performance.

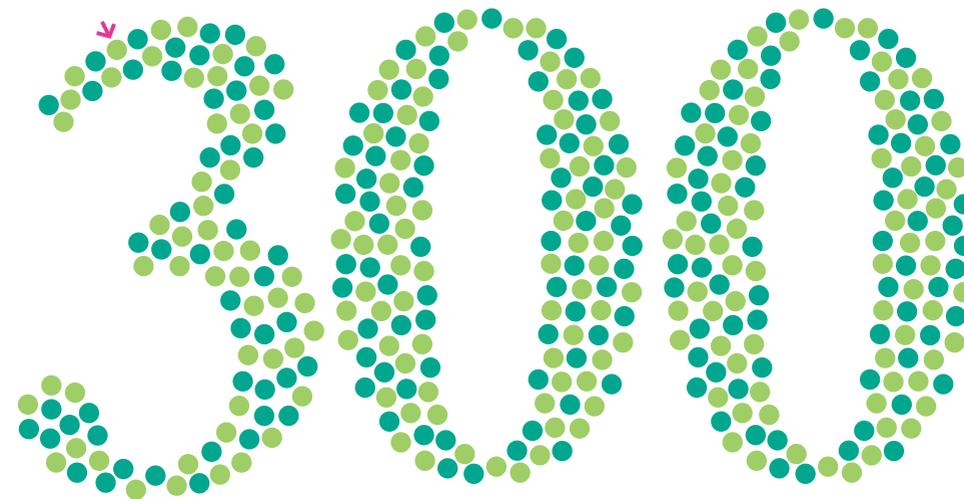
Although we have a good reputation for the work we do, it is vital that we keep strengthening how we measure and assess our performance.

This will help us continue to improve our performance and lead to better outcomes for those we support.

#### 3 Developing participative leadership.

Participative leadership means involving people in decision making, so that decisions stay as close as possible to the people most affected. It means working out the best way forward together.

Developing participative leadership is a priority for Thistle – encouraging staff to perform at their best, be accountable, continually improve and, above all, provide excellent support.



#### 4 Building Thistle Friends.

Thistle Friends is an inclusive, friendly, informal community of folk who want to help Thistle. All we ask is that our Friends give some time, energy or money (or all three!) to help us raise both our profile and much-needed funds. We are devoted to making more Friends and growing our community.

Our lifestyle management courses, support sessions and other health and wellbeing activities helped around 300 people who were struggling with a health condition or going through a difficult time in their lives.

“If it wasn't for Thistle, I wouldn't be where I am now...when I first came on the course, I struggled to talk to anyone, then I realised no one was judging me and that made all the difference.”

# Highlights

## What we've done

### 1 We helped more people to live the life they want.

#### • Supported Living

We supported more than 100 disabled people to live in their own homes across Scotland - whether it be 24/7 or just a few hours a day.

#### • Self Management

We delivered 15 lifestyle management courses last year. We also ran popular weekly drop in sessions in our community space, The Hub.

#### • Young people

After talking to families of people we support, we realised that there is a real need to help young people and their families and friends plan for life after school. We developed and ran a schools-based project in two schools in the Lothians that used drama and The Big Plan (see next column) to help young people think about their life after school and begin to plan for it. It worked so well that we have committed to continuing this project.

#### • Older adults

After a successful pilot, we began to target some lifestyle management courses at older adults.

#### • Veterans

We continue to support veterans through our veterans' programme, which was this year publically commended in our local Community Health Partnership, which recommended us for a Civilian-Military Partnership Award. We have learned that a flexible, adaptable approach works best and we now offer both individual support (in one to one sessions) and group support (in veteran-specific lifestyle management courses).

#### • The Big Plan

The Big Plan is a way of planning for a good life and brings people who need support together with their teams – people who they would like to help them think about their Big Plan. We worked with EDG (Edinburgh Development Group) on delivering The Big Plan and were part of a Big Plan event in Edinburgh, with several people supported by Thistle taking part. We are thinking about how to use the approach more widely.

### 2 We helped more people to make valuable contributions.

#### • Citizenship

Developing our citizenship strategy further means we've been able to support more people to make a contribution when they feel able – whether it's volunteering in our gym, having a say about an issue that's important to them, joining a local political group or exhibiting their artwork in a public space.

#### • Advisory Groups

Our Advisory Groups for Change helped us make some significant changes to the way we work.

#### • Volunteer Programme

We have built up our volunteer programme and now have around 25 volunteers who are integral to helping us deliver our services. From peer facilitating on our lifestyle management courses, to running tai chi classes, to helping out in the gym and working with other departments such as fundraising, our volunteers are finding opportunities throughout the organisation.

#### • Dates 'n' Mates Lothian

We helped set up a new organisation called Dates 'n' Mates Lothian – a member-led organisation that co-ordinates social events for disabled people to find love and friendship through fun and varied activities based on members' interests.

#### • Neighbourhood Networks

We supported the development of Neighbourhood Networks in partnership with City of Edinburgh Council.

### 3 We created a community hub at our Edinburgh base.

#### • The Hub

We created The Hub, a friendly and welcoming open space at our Edinburgh base, Wighton House.

#### • Thistle Gym

Our gym, which is fully accessible and has mobility equipment, continues to have a strong membership, with around 280 current members, and an active participation in activities such as walking groups, tai chi, relaxation, circuit classes and gentle exercise.

### 4 We have helped train more professionals to work in a person centred way.

#### • More training

We are developing our connections and are now delivering more training to professionals within health and social care. The training brings together the learning from our work and much of it is delivered to practitioners in partnership with NHS Education Scotland, the Joint Improvement Team and the Alliance for Health and Social Care through the NHS Person Centred Quality Assurance Programme.

### 5 We've been building Thistle Friends.

#### • Thistle Friends

We've established Thistle Friends fundraising groups in both Renfrew and Edinburgh (where our networks are strongest) and they've been busy organising events and raising money. These groups are made up of people we support, their friends and families, staff members, volunteers and members of the public. →

“I feel more in control and have less stress symptoms. The situation has not changed but I am dealing with it differently – focusing on what I CAN do...”

**Some examples of Thistle Friends activity over the past year include:**

- Our Chief Executive, Diana Noel-Paton, and a group of friends completing a daunting 10 mile, 6 peak hike across the Pentlands, raising almost £2,000;
- Our IT and Facilities teams doing a 9 mile sponsored walk along the Longniddry to Haddington Railway Walk, raising £659;
- Mr & Mrs George Burnet nominating Thistle to be the beneficiary of money raised from the Gardeners of Inveresk open day in June, raising £961.62;
- A recommendation from a Thistle Friend which led to our charity benefiting from a major fundraising initiative – the Sunday Mail Centenary Fund;

• Two Thistle Friends (also volunteers), Caroline Crosby and Theresa Murtagh, holding an event at home with tombola, facepainting, bingo and food, raising nearly £300;

• Liz Hendry swimming 2 miles and raising £296.43 – an amazing feat for anyone, but even more amazing for Liz, who had a leg amputated 14 years ago. Liz says:

“I wasn’t happy at all – basically Thistle changed my life. Having support workers around when I had a problem made a massive difference. The way I saw it, no one cared about me before. The difference I’m hoping to make is to get training for the Commonwealth Games and help Thistle so they can help others achieve a good life.”

**6 We’ve worked to generate a more varied income.**

• Scottish Government funding has allowed us to focus further on our person centred approach by offering more individual support (including outreach and one to one support) for those who need it.

• Our supporters donated an amazing £333,498.

• Support from local authorities, organisations and charitable trusts and foundations has allowed us to plan, deliver and continue a number of exciting new projects.

“The support my brother receives has enriched his life. He lives life to the full. I feel he would not have achieved this if it wasn’t for the support he has. My brother is happy and content. Thank you Thistle for giving my brother a great life.”

# What we’ll do

## We will keep people and citizenship at the heart of what we do.

We will keep delivering a range of health, social care and wellbeing services that demonstrate our person centred approach. These services are the bedrock of our reputation and the foundation of much of our learning. We will support people to reach their own personal goals.

## We will develop our work further.

We will grow our services in a small, local, sustainable way – one person or project at a time.

## We will offer support in more flexible and adaptable ways.

We will tailor our support more to individuals and will develop more flexibility in the way we work.

## We will target groups that are most in need of support.

We will work more with young people, older adults, veterans and other groups who could benefit from our support.

## We will bring our Supported Living and Health and Wellbeing services closer together.

We will try and find ways to integrate our services in a sensible way - so that we are offering a more holistic approach.

## We will increase our training and consultancy work.

Training others in what we know we do very well is an important part of our work and we hope to keep developing this and to keep working with more health and social care professionals across the third sector and the NHS.

## We will make more Friends.

We need our Friends – so we’ll be encouraging old Friends and new to help us raise our profile and raise money.

## We will continue to raise our profile.

We will work hard to ensure that as many people as possible (including MSPs, journalists, donors, the people we support and their families) know about the vital role we play both directly – by supporting people – and indirectly – by influencing others with our approach.

## We will keep raising funds.

We will be relying heavily on our hard-won reputation as leaders in our field to try to increase our Scottish Government and local government support. We will also try to increase our project funding and to win over more donors than ever.



“Having people that weren’t quick to judge, who never gave up, who aren’t too busy to get back to you, is important. It can feel like, if you’ve got something, then you’re on the scrap heap. What a relief it was to discover, in some organisations, there is no scrap heap.”

## Be Our Friend

### Give

You can set up a direct debit, make a single gift or leave a legacy gift. Find out more at [thistle.org.uk/give](https://thistle.org.uk/give).

### Do Something

We believe that people can harness their skills, strengths and resources to make a difference to their lives. And Thistle Friends can do the very same.

### Get in touch

Get in touch through [dosomething@thistle.org.uk](mailto:dosomething@thistle.org.uk) and we can help you do something you love to help Thistle.

### Talk us up

Whether you nominate Thistle as a preferred charity at your local supermarket, as a beneficiary of any Trusts you know of, or as “Charity of the Year” at your workplace – or just tell people about the great work we do – it all helps.

### Corporate Support

Working with Thistle is an excellent opportunity to partner a well established, pioneering charity brand and help even more people live the life they want. Get in touch through [dosomething@thistle.org.uk](mailto:dosomething@thistle.org.uk) for more information.

### Like us

 [Facebook.com/thistlefoundation](https://Facebook.com/thistlefoundation)

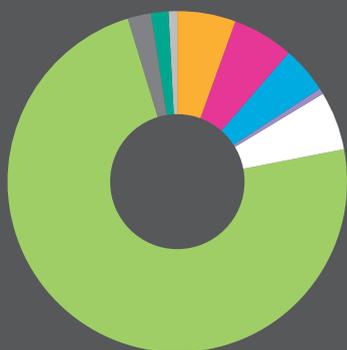
 Follow us @[thistlecharity](https://twitter.com/thistlecharity)

## Our finances

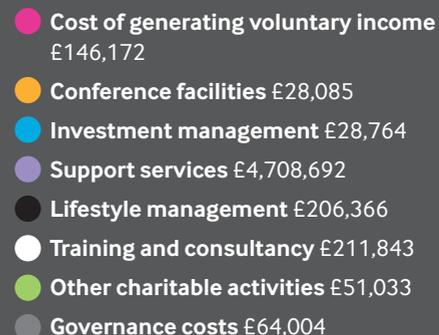
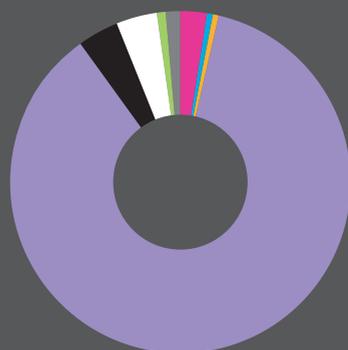
During this period, income increased by **10%** to **£5,844,364**, showing steady growth from charitable activities and legacies. Our main source of income still comes from funding for supported living services, which grew by £255,621 (6.3%). Gifts from individual donors remain the biggest contribution to our fundraised income.

In future, we will continue to raise money to fund the services we currently provide and to deliver against the strategy we've outlined, as well as looking at options for a new home and community base in Craigmillar (needed because of planned development of the current site).

Income 2012-13



Expenditure 2012-13



## We couldn't have done it without you

**A huge amount of work goes into supporting so many people – and we couldn't have done it without you. Thank you.**

### Special Thanks

A M Pilkington Charitable Trust  
 ABF The Soldiers' Charity  
 Arthur F Cummings  
 BP Amoco Corporation  
 Caledonian Society of Holland (Lincolnshire)  
 City of Edinburgh Council  
 E H Graham's Trust  
 Edinburgh Women's Aid  
 Edmesh  
 Emily Irving  
 EVOC  
 First ScotRail Limited  
 Forestry Commission Scotland  
 Glebefoot Charitable Trust  
 Greggs Foundation  
 Hugh and Mary Miller Bequest Trust  
 Inner Wheel Club of Musselburgh  
 Jessie Simpson  
 JTH Charitable Trust  
 Kathleen Ellen Coster  
 Kenneth Barge Memorial Trust  
 Liberton Northfield Church of Scotland  
 Lloyds TSB  
 Lodge Lockhart St John No 248  
 Lodge The Gael No 609  
 MEB Charitable Trust  
 Miss Rachel E Duncan's Charitable Trust

Mother Lodge Kilwinning  
 Mr W J & Mrs C G Dunnachie's Charitable Trust  
 NES  
 NHS Coventry  
 NHS Lothian  
 NHS Midlothian  
 NHS Retirement Fellowship  
 Northumberland & Durham Caledonian Society  
 Parkinsons UK  
 Paths for All Partnership  
 Peter Harrison Foundation  
 Poppy Scotland  
 Royal British Legion WS – Bucksburn  
 Royal British Legion WS – Lossiemouth  
 Scotland's Gardens – Gardeners of Inveresk Village  
 Scottish Veterans' Fund  
 St Andrew's Club  
 O'Berwick-upon-Tweed  
 St John's and King's Park Church Dalkeith  
 St Margaret's School for Girls  
 The Andrew & Mary Elizabeth Little Charitable Trust  
 The Health and Social Care ALLIANCE Scotland  
 The Hospital Saturday Fund  
 The Scottish Government (Autism Development Fund) (Person Centred Delivery Group Fund) (Voluntary Sector Development Fund)  
 The Shaw Trust  
 Third Sector Internships Scotland  
 Thistle Friends Renfrew Fundraising Group

Thistle Trust  
 Trinity Church Guild Vocal  
 Voluntary Action Fund  
 VSA Aberdeen  
 William Grant & Sons Charitable Trust

### Our details

#### Patron

Her Majesty The Queen

#### Honorary President

Bryce K McCosh

#### Members of the Board of Trustees

David Giffin (Chair)  
 Jane Ballantine (now resigned)  
 John Dalrymple  
 Chris Dunlop (now resigned)  
 Julia Fitzpatrick (now resigned)  
 Chris Murphy  
 Ken Rutherford  
 Ian Williams

#### Directorate

Diana Noel-Paton (Chief Executive)

John Campbell (Director of Corporate Services & -Company Secretary)

#### Auditors

Henderson Loggie  
 34 Melville Street  
 Edinburgh EH3 7HA

#### Bankers

Royal Bank of Scotland plc  
 36 St Andrew Square  
 Edinburgh EH2 2YB

## We believe that life is for living.

If you, or someone you know, would like support to live life to the full, please visit [www.thistle.org.uk](http://www.thistle.org.uk) or call us on 0131 661 3366.

If you would like a copy of this Annual Report in larger type, please call us on 0131 661 3366.

### Contact us

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