



Friday 25th August 2023

Hi Folks,

Welcome everyone to this week's Roundup. We hope you are well.

There's lots going on, and this week's roundup provides the regular monthly update from the service user engagement and logistics teams; the Kiltwalk; "hold the date" for a garden party; Tom's regular update and the Volunteer Fair.

**SUE monthly update:** we realise that since a lot of the work we do deals with sensitive information, we're not in the habit of sharing our process. So this week we thought it would be good to give you a wee peek behind the curtain of the work that takes place within the Service User Engagement, Logistics and Welcome Desk teams.

Every new service user is taken through a short onboarding questionnaire to build an initial picture of why people are accessing our service. This is followed by regular contact through a 12 week period, assisting service users with the immediate food need as well as signposting and referring to other services in order to help alleviate what is often the underlying cause of them needing our service.

We field hundreds of calls and emails each week directly with service users and their support workers, and respond to any concerns raised by the delivery team.

For some people, 12 weeks or less is enough time to fill a need between other supports activating, e.g. Universal Credit after a life change, but others continue to stay with us for longer if needed. The Service User Engagement and Welcome Desk teams are very fortunate to have wonderfully compassionate and dedicated volunteers that means we can stay on top of everything.

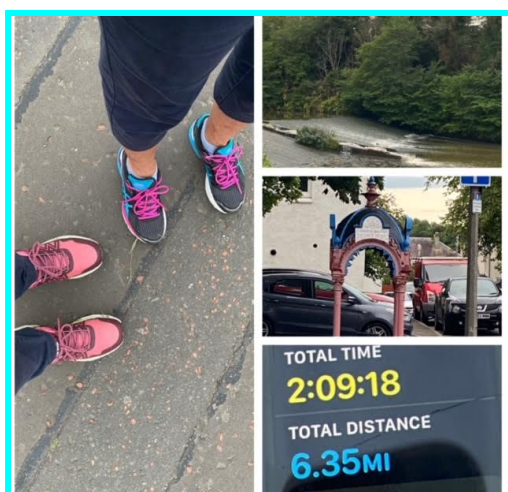
In the past few months, we saw a sharp increase in service users suffering from financial hardship and have made referrals to Community Help & Advice Initiative, City of Edinburgh Council Advice Shop and DWP Debt Management Centre. Many of our service users are also struggling with their mental health; be it ongoing mental health challenges or severe mental health crises. We have sign-posted to The Edinburgh Crisis Centre and Samaritans, as well as other charities and organisations such as the Stafford Centre and CAMHS. Social Care Direct have been prompt and helpful with housing and eviction concerns, as well as wellbeing checks where we've had a particular concern. We have also seen an increase in asylum seekers who are being referred to us by charities we contacted previously for sign-posting, and who now turn to us to provide meal support - the majority are young women, some with children who are in temporary accommodation or womens' shelters.

We receive plenty of positive feedback about the food, so thank you to the chefs and kitchen volunteers - "the soup is amazing", and the food has been described as "smashing," and "braw," and "bloody brilliant." The venison was a huge hit as attested by T.C.: "This venison meal is the best we ever had thank you."

In addition to compliments for the kitchen, many of our service users express special gratitude to our delivery drivers. D.G. is grateful for the meals, but he also thanks the delivery drivers for being patient, giving him time to answer the door, and for being friendly. C.P. said "Everyone that comes round is so nice. This morning the delivery person untied the bag for me." R.M. is grateful for the effort the drivers put in to make sure the meals are delivered: "The drivers are doing the best to ensure we get the items and can you pass my big thanks to them too."

The cancellation of meal support is due to many reasons. Mostly, it is due to improved circumstances such as benefits coming through or being increased, finding employment, getting out of temporary housing and into a flat, and improved health. Other reasons include hospitalisation and sadly a couple of deaths. Service users who cancel the support sometimes share the reason. R.S. explained: "I have managed to get my job back so I won't be needing the service anymore, but I want to thank you all for your kind support and helping my family through this extremely tough time, I will never forget it."

If you would like to have a chat about any of this, please do speak to Leila ([leila.willis@emptykitchens.co.uk](mailto:leila.willis@emptykitchens.co.uk)) or Janet ([janet.jones@emptykitchens.co.uk](mailto:janet.jones@emptykitchens.co.uk)).



And now for our next **Kiltwalk** update: Janet is taking part in the 15 mile Big Stroll!

"Plans were hatched with Susan sometime ago to get regular walks in, and unfortunately life has somehow gotten in the way of the training schedule. The school holidays are always a bit of a juggle for me, but enough of the excuses ... Susan and I had a lovely walk on Wednesday evening from Portobello to Musselburgh, picking up the path by the River Esk and coming across this fountain erected in 1907 to posthumously honour Dr Andrew Balfour who dedicated himself to the welfare of the mining community of Newcraighall. We'll be heading out

again this Sunday, and we'll keep you posted on anything interesting we find along the way - please share your favourite routes with us too, we're aiming for 9-10 miles (small hills accepted!)."

You can still join the team, too! [You can sign up to walk 5, 15, or 21 miles here.](#)

It really helps us if you can share our social media posts about the Kiltwalk to get the word out and help with fundraising - please do share with your networks if you can! We're aiming for an ambitious £5k fundraising target as a team, so the more you can [share our link](#) the more chance we'll get there - for context this would support over 20 families to receive food support and receive the wraparound care provided by the service user engagement team for around 6 weeks whilst more longer term support is accessed.

## Harvest Garden Party - Friday 22nd September!



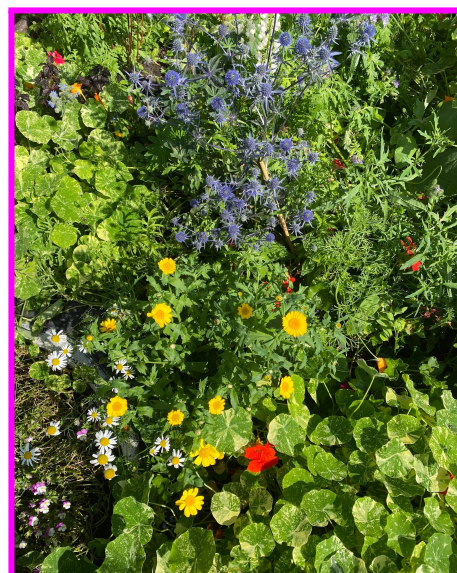
We're excited to announce that our **Garden Party** will be taking place on **Friday 22nd September!** We are so looking forward to us all getting together as a team and celebrating our lovely garden as we move into the harvest season. We will be providing some food and drinks, but also wanted to invite everyone to bring along some of their own dishes if they can, as a lovely team potluck! If you have any ideas/questions, or would like to get involved, please do reach out to Sarah ([sarah.hutchison@emptykitchens.co.uk](mailto:sarah.hutchison@emptykitchens.co.uk)). Looking forward to seeing you there!

Speaking of the garden, here's this week's update from **Tom and team...**

"A busy day on Monday this week, we spent time weeding (as usual!), also we did a bit more pruning of the trees at the front. We picked lots of delicious tomatoes, more aubergines, cucumbers, kale, chard and courgettes too. The chillies have started to ripen, and so are the tomatillos.

With an eye on autumn, and next year, we are planning to dig a couple of large beds over the next few weeks. These will increase our area for growing, and allow us to plant a larger variety of veg and fruit.

Hoping for some sunshine next week, and more lunches in the garden!"



## Volunteer Recruitment Fair 2023

A poster for the Volunteer Recruitment Fair 2023. The poster features a blue background with a geometric pattern of colorful triangles. The text on the poster includes: "ST PAULS &amp; ST GEORGES CHURCH YORK PLACE EH1 3RH 13.09.23 10.30 to 18.30", "VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT FAIR CELEBRATING 25 YEARS", "2023", "voled.in/fair", and the "volunteer edinburgh" logo. There is also a QR code and a small logo in the bottom right corner.

And finally, a reminder that you can still join us at the **Volunteer Recruitment Fair on the 13 September!** This is a really great opportunity to chat to people interested in volunteering, and helping them learn more about our work.

There was a great turnout at last year's event, and we had lots of new volunteers sign-up to Empty Kitchens.

We will be there from **9.30am-7pm**, and would love any volunteers who are keen to come along and join us for however long they can spare. The event takes place at **St Paul's and St George's Church, York Place, EH1 3RH**. If you would like to get involved, please chat to Sarah, or drop her an email on [sarah.hutchison@emptykitchens.co.uk](mailto:sarah.hutchison@emptykitchens.co.uk).

Once again, thank you for all your support this week and wishing you all a wonderful weekend!

[Mike](#), [Janet](#) & [Martin](#)

P.S. Do please let us know what's on your mind by email at [et@emptykitchens.co.uk](mailto:et@emptykitchens.co.uk) or just come and have a chat.

## THE NOTICE BOARD

### **Volunteer Services & Rota Central**

Shift availability is now live for September for all departments. October rotas will go live W/c 4th September.

Gardeners and those considering coming along, please note that the Monday & Thursday shifts will continue all the way through September.

We will again be attending the annual **Volunteer Edinburgh Volunteer Fair** and would welcome your support on the stand if you have an hour or two to spare. Sarah, our Volunteer Coordinator, is leading the day so let her know if you are interested in coming along either when you are on site next or drop her a note [sarah.hutchison@emptykitchens.co.uk](mailto:sarah.hutchison@emptykitchens.co.uk) The date: **Wednesday 13th September**. The venue: **St Paul's & St George's on York Place**.

**If you are not receiving the Wednesday rota email or you are but the role(s) are not the one(s) you signed up for, do let us know.**

Let us know if you wish us to add or remove roles, have any volunteering or shift queries or problems with Rota Central or are leaving us.

Contact us via the WhatsApp channel (07918 121606) or to **Volunteer Services** at [volunteer@emptykitchens.co.uk](mailto:volunteer@emptykitchens.co.uk) Our **Volunteer Coordinator**, Sarah, can be contacted on [sarah.hutchison@emptykitchens.co.uk](mailto:sarah.hutchison@emptykitchens.co.uk)

## **Health & Safety**

**Thank you all who were on site when we conducted the recent practice evacuation drill. The evacuation went well and two more are scheduled for the early autumn.**

Our focus on handwashing continues.

Please remember to not take whites and aprons into the bathrooms, and leave them inside before heading out to enjoy the garden on the fine days.

If stepping outside for a cigarette or vape, can we ask that you distance yourself from the building - there's plenty of space on the greens for example, and certainly away from the kitchen windows.

## **The Kiltwalk - 17th September 2023.**

Could you join the team walking Miles for Meals and help us turn miles into meals by walking **5, 15, or 21 miles**? Take part in the **Wee Wander**, the **Big Stroll**, or the **Mighty Stride!**

### **Here's how to get involved:**

1. Sign up for your chosen distance at <https://www.thekiltwalk.co.uk/events/edinburgh>
2. Go to <https://emptykitchens.enthuse.com/cf/edinburgh-kiltwalk-2023> to register as part of our Empty Kitchens Full Hearts team and create your fundraising page

By registering with us and creating a fundraising page - which works in exactly the same way as a GoFundMe or JustGiving page - it's already built into our website and donation platform, and means we can claim GiftAid on relevant donations. Get in touch with Emily ([emily.gifford@emptykitchens.co.uk](mailto:emily.gifford@emptykitchens.co.uk)) if you have any questions!

## **Board of Trustees**

If you are interested in attending future Board meetings (the next one is on 19th September) do let the Secretary, Sam, know.... [sam@emptykitchens.co.uk](mailto:sam@emptykitchens.co.uk)

## **Membership:**

We always welcome new applications to be Empty Kitchens Full Hearts Members! As a Member, you have oversight of what we do, you'll influence strategy, and be voting on matters of constitution and governance including electing our Trustees. Members' meetings take place approximately twice a year, so we hope it's not too big a commitment! You can always come and talk to us about it if you'd like to know more before you apply...

Registration forms are available from the Welcome Desk. New Membership applications will be reviewed at the next Board meeting in September.



## Kitchen Assistant Programme

We have more places available for our **Kitchen Assistant Programme!** The programme is run in association with Edinburgh College (Granton) and offers the opportunity to develop practical kitchen skills in a supportive environment with us in Granton, alongside taking an accredited course '[Introduction to Cookery and Hospitality Skills](#)' at the Edinburgh College Granton Campus.

The course at Edinburgh College involves a time commitment of 2-3 days (a maximum of 16 hours) per week for 6 months, starting on **August 28th 2023**.

Alongside this, we ask for a commitment of approximately 2-3 shifts (four hours each) per week here with us, but there is flexibility about the days of the week on which these hours take place.

If you know somebody who would be interested, please get in touch with Mike. The programme is supported by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

## Content Corner:

- BBC Radio 4: [The recent UN summit focused on the global food system](#)
- BBC Radio 4: [Ultra-processed foods](#)
- BBC Farming: [Lauriston Farm](#)

