

# ANNUAL REPORT

# 2023/24



**Enabling Children to achieve**

This report focuses on our service delivery and achievements, a **complementary detailed financial statement** is available on our [Website](#) and can also be accessed through [Companies House](#).

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**Craighalbert Centre**  
Enabling Children to Achieve

**The Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments**  
Craighalbert Centre, 1 Craighalbert Way, Cumbernauld, G68 0LS  
[www.craighalbert.org.uk](http://www.craighalbert.org.uk)

# Chair's Statement

As Chair of the Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments, it is my great privilege to introduce this year's annual report, during a landmark moment for children's rights in Scotland. The Incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into Scots law has been a historic step forward in protecting and promoting the rights of all children. This legislation is particularly transformative for the children we support, ensuring their rights are not only acknowledged but actively upheld. At Craighalbert, we are committed to embedding the principles of the UNCRC in all aspects of our work, ensuring the voices of our children are heard, respected and central to every decision made.



We are excited by the remarkable achievements made this year, particularly in our communication and literacy work. The development of these programmes has opened new doors for our children, allowing them to engage more fully in learning and self-expression. Additionally, we have made significant progress in our use of assistive technology, which will be a major focus for us in the year ahead, further enhancing the ways in which we can support children with complex communication needs.

Our Early Intervention Programme continues to thrive, offering vital support to families of young children with neurological conditions. The strides we have made in this area reflect our commitment to expanding the range and quality of therapeutic services available to those who need them most.

This has also been a year of strong partnerships, both new and established, and we are deeply grateful for the invaluable support of our collaborators. Engagement with families remains central to our success, and the contributions from our Parent Council have been instrumental in shaping the services we provide.

Despite the challenges posed by the cost-of-living crisis, we remain resolute in our commitment to delivering the highest quality care and learning. We are proud of the resilience shown by our staff and the unwavering dedication of our donors and partners.

Looking forward, we are ambitious about the future and confident that, together, we will continue to make a lasting impact on the lives of children in Scotland with complex communication, learning, health, and care needs.

Lesley Anne Vannan

Chair, The Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments

# CEO's Report

It is with immense pride that I reflect on what we have achieved at The Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments over the past year. The 2023/24 period has been a time of significant growth, innovation, and impact, and I am proud to share some of the highlights of our journey.



One of our standout achievements this year has been the progress in our communication and emergent literacy programmes. By implementing a highly personalised approach utilising state of the art assistive technologies and a wide range of augmentative and alternative communication aids, we have been able to meet the unique communication needs of each child more effectively. This tailored approach has empowered children to express themselves in new and meaningful ways.

Our Early Intervention Music Space Programme, a collaborative effort with Nordoff & Robbins, designed for families with children aged 0-4 years who have diagnosed or suspected neurological conditions, reflects our commitment to providing critical early support during the most formative years of life, offering families specialist guidance and resources when it matters most.

Following the launch of our report on the challenges faced by children with profound and multiple learning disabilities in accessing their full Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) entitlement, we were invited to present the findings to the Minister for Children, Young People and The Promise and to participate in a Scottish Government working group to further explore and progress the recommendations of the Report. Engaging with policymakers is a crucial part of our mission, as we work to drive systemic improvement and ensure that all children have access to the services and support they deserve.

These achievements would not have been possible without the dedication of our staff, the invaluable support of our partners, and, most importantly, the trust and collaboration of the families we support. We are unwavering in our focus of promoting and supporting the development of children in Scotland with complex communication, learning, health and care needs to achieve their full potential while they experience the highest level of wellbeing possible. That is their right.

Together, we will continue to break down barriers, push boundaries, and ensure that every child no matter what their challenges, is supported to reach their full potential.

Bob Fraser

CEO, The Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments

# Unique Working Methods

At the Craighalbert Centre, as is the case in many organisations, the concept of the multi-disciplinary team around the child is embedded in practice. However, we have taken this concept further applying a trans-disciplinary, holistic and person led approach to achieve the highest level of wellbeing possible.

To do this in the most effective and enjoyable way requires creative and responsive approaches that in turn require flexible, integrated, collaborative 'professional' working when planning and delivering learning, therapy, and care.

Taking a trans-disciplinary approach means that our practitioners, such as teachers, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, and learning, care and therapy practitioners, plan, share goals, share skills and work frequently together directly with the child as a dynamic team to deliver on holistic goals. Evidence tells us that the collaboration of practitioners from different disciplines embracing the overlapping of skills and blurring traditional professional boundaries to address complex problems is the most creative, effective and holistic way to address the challenges of individuals affected by complex, multifaceted and changeable conditions. Blurring the edges between the professions means that the whole of the SCCMI's workforce capability is greater than the sum of the individual parts.



## Our Values



**CHILD-CENTERED**

The child's will and wellbeing are at the heart of everything we do.



**AMBITIOUS**

We are not afraid to set challenging goals.



**KIND**

We are compassionate, generous, and friendly.



**INSPIRATIONAL**

We seek to stimulate and influence others to improve outcomes for children, young people and adults, and their families



**COLLABORATIVE**

We work together to achieve the highest possible wellbeing for all.



## Our Team

Our people are our greatest asset, driving the high-quality services and impressive outcomes we achieve. This year, we have focussed on enhancing our team's capabilities and expanding our expertise to meet the evolving needs of the children and families we support. Our current headcount is 51, compared to 47 in 2023, and our full-time equivalent staffing has risen to 43.2 from 39.1. This growth aligns with our goal to meet the evolving demands of our expanding operations.

A significant organisational development has been the recruitment of Shona McMonagle as our new Head of Learning and the addition of a new Occupational Therapist, Speech and Language Therapist and Teacher.

In the year ahead, we will continue to invest in enhancing and nurturing our most valuable asset - our team. We are dedicated to increasing capacity, competence, and capability to meet the diverse needs of the children we support as we expand our activities and services.

We continue to invest in staff development through coaching and mentoring, training programmes and educational initiatives, empowering employees with the skills needed to excel in their roles and adapt to an ever changing environment.

# Incorporation of UNCRC into Scots Law

The incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into Scots law marks a significant milestone in the protection and promotion of children's rights in Scotland. We hugely welcome this new law as it ensures that no matter how rare, challenging, severe or complex a child's needs are, each and every child has equal rights.

We have long been advocates for a children's rights approach in our work. Our commitment to children's rights is embedded in our policies, practices, and daily interactions with the children we support. We believe that every child, regardless of their abilities or challenges, has the right to be heard, to participate in decisions affecting them, and be supported to reach their full potential.

We ensure that children's rights are at the heart of our planning and service delivery. We actively work to ensure all children have equal access to their rights, paying particular attention to the needs of children with complex disabilities and learning needs. Using appropriate communication methods and tools we enable children to understand their rights, to express their will and meaningfully participate in and influence decisions that affect them.

Our CEO, Bob Fraser has shared his thoughts on the incorporation of UNCRC into Scots law in a recent blog post [www.craighalbert.org.uk/post/uncrc](http://www.craighalbert.org.uk/post/uncrc). As a champion for the wellbeing and rights of all children in Scotland, particularly those with additional support needs, he welcomes this historic development while also acknowledging the potential challenges in its application in practice.

As we navigate this new legal landscape, the Craighalbert Centre is committed to continue to advocate for the rights of children with complex needs, ensuring their voices are heard in the implementation of the UNCRC Act. We will provide ongoing training to our staff and partners to ensure they understand the implications of the UNCRC Act and how to apply it in their daily work. We will review and update our policies and procedures to ensure they fully align with the UNCRC Act. We will work closely with other organisations, policymakers, and families to share best practices and address any challenges that arise in the implementation of the Act. We will closely monitor the impact of the UNCRC Act on our work and the children we support, sharing our findings to contribute to the broader understanding of its effects.

The incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law represents a significant opportunity to advance the rights of all children in Scotland. At the Craighalbert Centre, we are committed to embracing this opportunity, navigating the challenges, and working tirelessly to ensure that every child, regardless of their abilities or challenges, can fully realise their rights.

# Communication & Literacy

We recognise that communication and literacy are fundamental to a child's development, learning, socialisation, and overall quality of life. Our approach to these crucial areas is holistic, innovative, and tailored to each child's unique needs and abilities.

Central to our communication strategy is the use of PODD (Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display). PODD is a comprehensive communication system that we have implemented across the entire Centre, creating an immersive and supportive environment for all our children.

PODD uses symbols and words organised in a way that supports communication for individuals with complex communication needs. It's designed to provide access to a robust vocabulary that can be used for a wide range of communicative functions, from expressing basic needs to sharing complex thoughts and ideas.

For us, PODD is not just a tool—it's a way of life. Every staff member, from teachers and therapists to admin and management, is trained in and actively uses PODD. This centre-wide approach ensures that our children have consistent access to communication support throughout their day, regardless of which activity they're engaged in or which staff member they're interacting with.

We launched our innovative "Wear your Words" campaign, an initiative designed to further embed PODD into every aspect of our Centre's environment. This campaign encourages all staff members to literally wear their words, carrying PODD communication books with them at all times.

The "Wear your Words" campaign serves several crucial purposes:

- 1. Normalisation:** By seeing every adult in the Centre using PODD, we normalise the use of alternative communication methods for our pupils. This helps to reduce any stigma associated with using communication aids and reinforces the idea that all forms of communication are valid and valuable.
- 2. Consistency:** With PODD books always at hand, we ensure that communication support is consistently available, no matter where a child is or what they are doing.
- 3. Modelling:** Staff members actively model the use of PODD throughout the day, demonstrating to children how to effectively use the system for various communicative purposes.



4. **Accessibility:** The campaign ensures that children have immediate access to communication tools whenever they need them, supporting spontaneous communication.

5. **Empowerment:** By creating an environment where alternative communication is the norm, we empower our children to express themselves freely, saying what they want, whenever they want, to whomever they want, in the way they want to communicate.

The benefits of this for our children have been significant. We've observed increased attempts at communication, greater confidence in expressing needs and ideas, and improved social interaction among our pupils.



Our commitment to literacy extends beyond communication to encompass reading and writing skills. We made significant investments in enhancing our staff's literacy teaching capabilities, which has directly translated into improved classroom practices.

A key development was the participation of eight team members in a five-day literacy intensive course in West Sussex, hosted by renowned experts Jane Farrall and Helen Tainsh.

Staff learned about various assessment methods to accurately gauge each child's literacy level and track their progress over time. The course provided techniques for supporting children at the earliest stages of literacy development and covered the use of various assistive technologies to support literacy learning for children with physical or communication challenges.

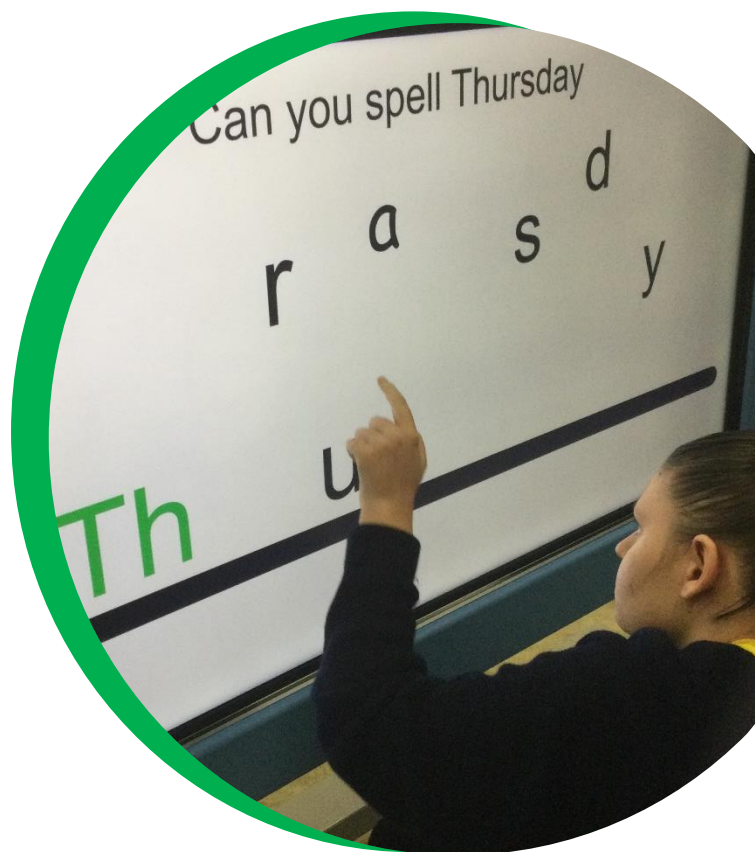
Following this intensive training, our staff have been actively implementing their new knowledge in the classroom. Each child now has individualised literacy goals based on comprehensive assessments of their current skills and potential.

We are more explicitly linking our PODD use with literacy instruction, helping children understand the connection between spoken/signed communication and written language and utilising a wider range of assistive technologies to support literacy learning.

This course focused on literacy teaching for both emergent and conventional readers and writers, with a particular emphasis on making literacy learning accessible for students with complex communication needs.

The course provided our staff with a toolkit of strategies, activities, and ideas to improve literacy outcomes for ALL students, regardless of their individual challenges.

Our commitment to communication and literacy remains at the heart of everything we do at the Centre. Through our comprehensive use of PODD, our innovative "Wear your Words" campaign, and our enhanced literacy practices, we're working tirelessly to ensure that every child has the tools they need to express themselves, engage with the world around them, and develop crucial literacy skills. As we move forward, we'll continue to seek out new ways to support and enhance our children's communication and literacy development, empowering them to achieve their full potential.



# Assistive Technology

Our Assistive Technology Programme leverages technology to empower children with complex learning and motor impairments. At its core is the smart classroom initiative, designed to enhance communication, independence, and interaction through personalised technology.

A feature of our smart classrooms is the use of eye gaze systems, enabling students with limited mobility to control computers and interact with educational content using only their eyes.

Communication devices support non-verbal students in self-expression and participation. Integration with smart home technology allows students to control their environment through voice commands, switches or eye gaze.



Our approach is highly personalised, with individual assessments determining the most appropriate technological solutions for each child. We customise devices to match each child's abilities and needs, continually adapting as they grow and develop.

The programme extends beyond the classroom, focusing on home-school connections and community integration. We also support older students in their transition to further education or employment.

Staff training is crucial to our success. We provide regular training sessions, collaborate with technology experts, and encourage peer learning among our staff. We're also committed to research and innovation, conducting action research and partnering with universities and technology companies to advance the field of assistive technology in learning.

Looking ahead, we're exploring the potential of artificial intelligence, virtual and augmented reality, and brain-computer interfaces to create more immersive and adaptive learning experiences.

Our Assistive Technology Programme is a comprehensive approach to using technology to break down barriers and open up new worlds of learning and interaction for our children, ensuring each child has the tools they need to reach their full potential.

# Our Activities

The past year has been marked by an array of activities designed to inspire creativity, build independence, and promote learning. We have continued to offer a diverse range of experiences that enrich the lives of our children and help them reach their full potential.

This year saw our senior pupils prepare for their first ever residential trip to Bendrigg Activity Centre. Four pupils, along with their parent/carer and staff spent an amazing 3 days in the north of England, with our pupils participating in a range of exciting and adventurous activities, including canoeing on Lake Windermere, abseiling, rock climbing and zip lining.



Bendrigg Activity Centre ensured that every activity was fully accessible, allowing our pupils to enjoy the experience to its fullest.

It was truly inspiring to see the children take on new challenges, pushing themselves out of their comfort zones and enjoying every moment. The families shared their excitement, expressing how the trip gave them hope and pride in seeing what their children could achieve. The residential experience was more than just an adventure—it fostered independence and helped develop essential life skills.

For the children, parents, and staff, this trip was a significant milestone, marking a key achievement in our goal to provide enriching, inclusive experiences that encourage growth and self-confidence. We look forward to offering more opportunities like this in the future.



A highlight of the year for our pupils was our visits to Splatter Art Studio in Glasgow. These interactive art sessions have provided an exciting, creative outlet for our pupils, allowing them to express themselves through different mediums. The studio's inclusive and supportive environment encouraged our children to explore various textures, colours, and techniques, helping to develop their fine motor skills and fostering a sense of achievement.

The joy on the children's faces as they created their masterpieces was a testament to the importance of art in their development. The visits to Splatter Art have been a key part of our broader effort to engage pupils in creative learning, allowing them to experience the freedom of self-expression while building their confidence in new settings.



This year saw exciting developments across our programmes, with a particular focus on enhancing motor skills, communication, and independence for our pupils. Our Motor Activity Training Programme is now in full swing, designed to boost physical abilities, body awareness, and an enjoyment of movement. These innovations have enabled pupils to demonstrate their motor abilities in new and exciting ways.



In June, our pupils enjoyed a memorable trip to Blair Drummond Safari Park. The children engaged with the natural environment, exploring animal textures and practicing communication using their PODD books. This was a fantastic opportunity to build confidence and apply their learning in a real world setting. A highlight of the trip was the monkeys playfully climbing aboard our coach, much to everyone's delight!



Our end-of-term Achievement Awards Ceremony celebrated each child's progress, with family and friends present. Two pupils marked major milestones—one transitioning from primary to secondary school, and another graduating from school to adult services. We are incredibly proud of both and excited for their future.



Our Marathon of Movement fundraising challenge, where pupils collectively aimed to walk, cycle, swim, or bounce the distance of a marathon (26.2 miles), was a fantastic success. The children smashed their target distance of a marathon in just 2 weeks so set themselves a new target of the distance of two marathons (52.4 miles), which they achieved. The challenge not only raised funds for specialist equipment but also encouraged the children to engage in physical activity in a fun and supportive environment.

We are proud to have received our second **LEAF Award**, a programme advocating outdoor learning and hands-on experiences. This year's theme was Forest and Water, integrating with our eco-topic of water. Activities included tree rubbings, weather projects, and creating musical instruments to imitate weather sounds, enhancing engagement with the natural environment.



We partnered with the Soundplay Project, who brought interactive sound and technology experiences to our children. Using switch controls or their hands, pupils had the chance to express themselves by independently controlling the speed, volume, shape, and tone of interactive sensory experiences. We also hosted a family session, offering a shared experience of fun and exploration for everyone.



Our therapeutic programmes, including music therapy in partnership with Nordoff & Robbins and art therapy sessions in partnership with Artlink Central, continue to provide invaluable support to our pupils. These sessions are not just therapeutic but are designed to enhance communication, creativity, and physical development.

The wide variety of activities we offer throughout the year, whether creative, physical, or educational, are integral to our mission of enabling children to achieve their full potential. By combining fun and learning, we continue to provide a holistic, supportive environment where every child is encouraged to explore their capabilities, build independence, and enjoy new experiences.

# Early Intervention Programme (EIP)

Our Early Intervention Programme is designed for children aged 0-4 years who have diagnosed or suspected neurological conditions. This year, we have been especially proud of the growth and impact of our Music Space Programme, a key element of our Early Intervention programme, delivered in partnership with Nordoff & Robbins Music Therapy.

Music Space offers families a unique way to engage in therapeutic play and bonding activities. Structured as a six-week block, the programme supports four families per block, with each session guided by a music therapist and an occupational therapist (OT). Through carefully curated music therapy, we provide children and their parents with an enriching, interactive environment that stimulates both communication and emotional connection.



Music, as a medium, allows children to express themselves beyond the constraints of language and physical abilities. The transformative power of music therapy has already had a profound impact on the children and families involved in the programme. Parents often speak about how the sessions create opportunities for deeper connection with their child, particularly in the way music allows for non-verbal communication. For children with complex needs, these sessions offer a safe, enjoyable space to explore sound, movement, and interaction, all while receiving expert therapeutic support.

Parents have reported that the sessions have helped them better understand their child's communication cues and have given them new tools to continue fostering their child's development at home.

One of our key objectives for 2024/25 is to further develop and expand our Early Intervention programme, ensuring that we continue to meet the growing needs of families across Scotland.

The success of the Music Space Programme and our broader Early Intervention programmes are a testament to the dedication of our staff, the expertise of our partners, and the trust of the families we support. As we look ahead, we remain committed to enhancing and expanding these services, ensuring that every family has access to the highest level of support during those crucial early years. We are excited to continue innovating and improving our services to make a lasting impact on the lives of children and their families.





## Events

This year, we hosted several key events that brought our families, children, and staff together in celebration and fun. Our Daffodil Tea in spring was a wonderful opportunity for families to participate in “share the learning” activities, such as planting daffodils, creating art, and joining a musical sing along. Parents also attended a presentation highlighting their children's progress, making it a joyful and meaningful day.

Our Summer Family Fun Day was a highlight, offering activities like face painting, splatter art, alpaca trekking, music and inflatables. The event was a true celebration of community, filled with laughter and connection.

The Christmas Light Switch On kicked off the holiday season with festive cheer. Families gathered to watch the Centre light up and enjoyed a tour of the Christmas story trail. We also hosted our Christmas show with children showcasing their talents through a musical performance.

These events reflect the heart of our Centre, bringing families together to celebrate and support the children we work with. We look forward to hosting more events that create lasting memories and strengthen our sense of community.

# Community Engagement & Partnerships

We continue to deepen our community engagement and partnerships, driving meaningful change for children with complex communication, learning, health and care needs. A key milestone this year was the launch of our **Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) report**, which we produced in partnership with **Indigo Childcare Group**. The report highlights the barriers children with profound and multiple learning disabilities face in accessing their full ELC entitlement. This report sparked attention and led to our participation in a round table discussion at the **Scottish Government**, hosted by Children and Young People's Minister, Natalie Don. These discussions are critical to advocating for systemic improvements and ensuring that the voices of the children we support are heard at the highest level of policymaking.



Another highlight was the visit from Nicola Killean, Children's Commissioner of the **Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland**, who spent time listening to what is important to our children and their families. Nicola, Elaine and Megan spent time in the classrooms with the children and joined in with activities, seeing how we champion communication and empower children's voices. This visit provided an invaluable opportunity to showcase the innovative work we are doing to champion communication and empower children's voices.

We partnered with **Sense Scotland** to provide a 4-week block of after-school activities for our nursery and lower primary pupils, their siblings, and parents. This initiative was designed to offer inclusive, fun, and engaging experiences for families. This partnership provided a rich, multisensory experience and brought families together in an engaging, supportive environment.



We also enhanced our support to families through training initiatives. **Tracey Campbell ACT (Achieving Communication Together)** delivered both in-person and online sessions for parents, focusing on communication strategies, person centred planning, children's rights, and essential information for navigating the care system. Additionally, we provided training for parents on the use of PODD (Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display), equipping them with the tools to effectively support their children's communication needs.

To promote our services and raise awareness about the work we do, we actively participated in multiple **conferences and exhibitions**. This included our presence at the CP Scotland Conference, Contact - By Your Side Parents Info Day, and the Rett UK Annual Conference. These platforms provided us with the opportunity to engage with a diverse audience, share our expertise, and learn from other professionals in the field.

Our partnership with **Nordoff & Robbins Music Therapy** has brought many benefits to our children through music therapy. During sessions our children are able to express themselves, enhance their emotional wellbeing and enjoy music.



Our partnership with **Watch Us Grow**, who provide us with essential gardening support, allows us to engage our children in horticultural activities, allowing them to connect with nature, learn valuable life skills, and experience the therapeutic benefits of gardening.



We have a unique collaboration with **Carrickstone Care Home**, resulting in the development of an outdoor quiet area, providing a serene and harmonious space for intergenerational activities. This initiative aims to bridge generations, allowing our children to connect with and learn from the elderly residents, fostering mutual respect and understanding.

Furthermore, we are delighted to be an official referrer to the **Family Fund Mobility Scheme**. This scheme supports families raising a disabled or seriously ill child under the age of three by offering a car leasing package tailored to their mobility needs. We are now able to signpost families who meet the criteria to this invaluable resource, further enhancing the support available to them.

# Funding & Fundraising

As a Grant Aided Special School, we receive block funding from Scottish Government and placement fees from local authorities, however we rely on donations and grants for many of our vital and innovative services, such as our Early Intervention Programme.

Securing funding in the current economic climate has been a challenge, but we remain ambitious for the children we support. We received generous support from various funders and donors, including the continuation of funding from The Children, Young People, Families and Early Intervention Fund, along with substantial donations from MOD Police charity fund, Bank of Scotland Foundation, and many more.

Events like the Glasgow Kiltwalk, which raised over £5,400, demonstrate the community's dedication to supporting our mission. Through grants, fundraising, and donations, we continue to provide vital supports for children with complex communication, learning, health and care needs.



## Special Thanks To

Scottish Government  
North Lanarkshire Council  
Corra Foundation – CYPFEIF & ALEC Fund  
Bank of Scotland Foundation  
Valley Field Charity Foundation  
St Josephs AFC  
The James Inglis Testamentary Trust  
Kildrum & St Mungo's Parish Church  
Noble Resolve Gospel & Temperance Mission Auxiliary  
ADW Architecture Doors & Windows  
MOD Police Charity Fund  
Devro  
Scottish Water Horizons  
Miller Homes  
Miss A M Pilkington Charitable Trust



# Stay Connected

The Craighalbert Centre uses its website and social media to promote what we do, share information and engage with others.

There are many ways that you can stay connected, engage with us online and promote what we do.

- **Follow** – Follow us on social media and visit our website for regular updates.
- **Like** – Like our social media pages, to increase visibility and engagement.
- **Share** – Share links to our website and posts, with your contacts, to raise awareness and reach a wider audience.
- **Feedback** – Provide feedback on our content, to help us improve.



[www.craighalbert.org.uk](http://www.craighalbert.org.uk)



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