



The Nineveh Charitable Trust

The Yard – funding report

The Yard was fortunate to receive £2500 in January 2020 from The Nineveh Charitable Trust. This was funding towards improving and adapting The Yard's outdoor space. The Yard is an award-winning charity running adventure play and support services for disabled children, young people and their families. Our Edinburgh centre hosts an extensive outdoor playground with a range of equipment and areas (e.g. sensory garden, board walk, sandpits etc.), providing the space for varied outdoor play through which our members can gain personal, social and practical skills. We encourage children and families to play outside, explore our incredible garden and interact with nature. The funding period was extended due to the Covid-19 pandemic as the work could not be carried out due to restrictions.

We are delighted that we have now been able to start the works in our outdoor play space using the funding from The Nineveh Charitable Trust. During our April maintenance days, we were able to develop the planting around the perimeter of our outdoor space (pictured left), as intended in our original application. This planting went very well and is the first step in our improvements of the outdoor space at The Yard. Once we return to providing full in-person services later in the year, these plants will aid our young people to engage with, and learn about, their environment through activities, for example maintaining the plants at our youth clubs for disabled teenagers. This planting also makes The Yard



and the public park (that The Yard backs onto) look more attractive for the whole community, as well as being part of our efforts to deter intruders from entering The Yard's space as advised by our Community Police Officer. We are delighted that we have been able to carry this out despite the ongoing impact of Covid-19 and look forward to our families increasingly using our outdoor space over the summer.

In addition, during the April maintenance days, we were able to carry out a tree survey using funding from The Nineveh Charitable Trust. This will form the basis of our project to reshape the area around the board walk, which is a very popular area in The Yard's outdoor space as it is shaded by trees and gives our users access to high, hidden away places amongst the foliage. The improvement of the board walk area was stated in our original application and we look forward to completing this in August using the remaining funding from The Nineveh Charitable Trust.

The Yard's response to Covid-19

As is the case with the vast majority of organisations, The Yard has been hugely affected by the COVID19 pandemic, both in terms of services and funding. In March 2020, The Yard closed all regular services under government guidelines. This was an incredibly difficult decision as we knew that our community of families would be hugely affected by the pandemic, but we were working in the interest of everyone's safety and health. Despite our services being closed, The Yard is dedicated to supporting disabled children, young people and their families throughout the pandemic. Our community of families are facing increased challenges for a variety of reasons; their networks of support (special schools, third sector services, advocates, support workers) continue to be affected; children are suffering due to decreased outdoor time and the lack of routine and structure and; some of our members would be in the high-risk category in the event they caught Covid-19. The lack of respite is



incredibly difficult for our families, exacerbated by uncertainty, huge impacts on mental health (e.g. increased anxiety) and financial strain.

Throughout the pandemic, we have been running adapted services to ensure that our families have consistent support. During the full lockdowns over the past year, The Yard Edinburgh partnered with the City of Edinburgh Council and Edinburgh special schools to provide a targeted service for vulnerable disabled children in the city. This service formed part of the Council's emergency pandemic support. The service consisted of small play sessions for disabled children, each with a supporting adult, where they could access

inclusive outdoor and indoor play in addition to support and advice, with the family getting some respite as well. This service reduced the need for crisis respite and provided families with some structure and time away from the house, aiding their overall wellbeing.

Since the start of May 2021, we have been able to open up our services to provide in-person support to our member families. All three of our sites (Edinburgh, Dundee and Fife) are running adapted family sessions, which consist of bookable, two-hour play sessions for up to 9 disabled children (with supporting adult) per session. This is available to our member families and adheres to Covid-19 guidelines. We also ran these sessions in autumn/winter 2020, when restrictions were eased. The service provides inclusive play in a safe and non-judgemental space, as well as offering families vital respite and signposting, advice and support. Many families have told us that this service has been hugely beneficial, giving the family some respite and their children a play outlet and a sense of routine. Alongside these adapted family sessions, we are providing a schools service in Edinburgh, as we have previously always run, that aided special schools with social distancing.

To plug the gap we have had by cancelling many of our in-person services, in April 2020, we moved our presence online and started facilitating digital services. This has included online youth clubs, an online early years service, mindfulness and wellbeing sessions, play idea videos, signposting and advice, at-home activities and much more. Through our digital services, we hope to reduce the impact of isolation by offering online touch points where our families can hear from our familiar staff team and access ideas, support and interaction. This online support has been incredibly popular, with families explaining that it has helped ease anxiety, given them resources to keep their children occupied and brought a bit of The Yard's familiarity, openness and understanding to their homes. We continue to provide digital services to ensure our community of families have a consistent source of support as Covid-19 restrictions and impacts still affect our lives.

As an organisation, we have worked during this period to re-structure both our funding and service models to ensure that The Yard is sustainable in the long term. We will be returning to increased in-person services in September, with these services responding to the specific challenges that have arisen from Covid-19 for our families. We are also working to diversify our income streams to reduce the reliance on fundraising. These changes will ensure that The Yard is there to support disabled children, young people and their families into the future.



Thank you

On behalf of everyone here at The Yard, I would like to thank The Nineveh Charitable Trust for your support, it has been incredibly useful in improving our outdoor space which in turn improves the experience of our community of families.

