

GRIT

HOT
CHOCOLATE
TRUST

HOT CHOCOLATE TRUST
ANNUAL REPORT 2021

GRIT was a good theme for 2021. Thinking about the hardships and the gritty bits of life. It helps. Like grit on the road helps the snow melt. I'm getting philosophical now, but you need hard stuff to be able to build and grow and reflect. You learn valuable lessons over the years, and it's important to be as real as possible and share that with people. Coz it could maybe help.

Rachael, 21

What follows are the unfiltered voices of the young people (YP), team and partners from the Hot Chocolate (HC) community, sharing some of the highs, lows and reflections from our year.



MARCOS STORY

(NAME & SOME DETAILS HAVE BEEN ANONYMISED)

I stayed on at school, technically til the end. But I didn't go as much in sixth year. By then I had my own flat and there was a lot of stress. Doing that and two advanced highers, I sort of imploded in on myself.

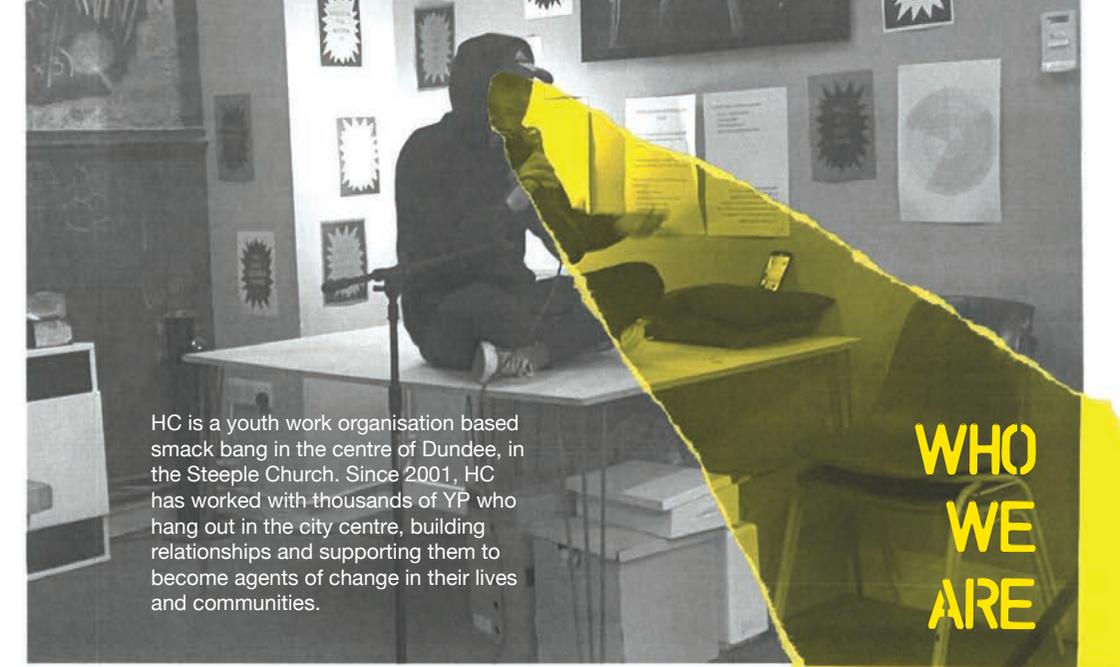
Things at home had been really hard – an abusive stepdad, my mum not having the courage to leave him at that point. I became homeless at 16. My actual dad turned me away, so I ended up in a kind of hosted accommodation, and then got a house with Action for Children.

Living on my own was a constant struggle. I was on benefits. I got a job here and there, but my mental health f*cked me over so I'd call in sick a lot and so I'd lose the job. I got a contract phone which I wasn't able to pay for, and I'm still paying off debt coz of that. It was so lonely. Especially during Covid.

I've done a lot at HC over the years. Music, residentials, Exoduses, Youth Team, open nights. I've grown in confidence so much coz of it. Team take time to get to know us. You understand our problems, and the root of our problems. You give amazing advice, it's heartfelt. HC's helped me develop emotionally, communicate better, get better coping mechanisms. Before I didn't have any coping mechanisms – I'd just bottle stuff up and it'd burst out at the worst moments.

I've moved away from Dundee now. There's a lot of bad memories from that part of my life. Here has been a fresh start. I'm living with my partner, studying, working. I'm sleeping well, am motivated. I'm so happy. I've got plants!





HC is a youth work organisation based smack bang in the centre of Dundee, in the Steeple Church. Since 2001, HC has worked with thousands of YP who hang out in the city centre, building relationships and supporting them to become agents of change in their lives and communities.

WHO
WE
ARE

We're a community of around 400(ish) young people and 25(ish) team of staff and volunteers. We're a quirky, colourful, noisy bunch, with big hearts and often with big challenges in life. Here's a wee flavour of what the community looks like and experiences:

The way we work is simple (but not easy). We throw open our doors and welcome all YP who come in*, and grow a community together based around the needs, interests and ambitions of the YP. (Our website gives more info on what happens from week to week: www.hotchocolate.org.uk)

*HC is open to all YP without prejudice or distinction of religion, race, culture, disability, gender identity, sexuality or politics. The only restrictions are of age: YP must be in 1st year of high school up to 21 years of age (although we do sometimes continue to work with folks on an individual basis after that).

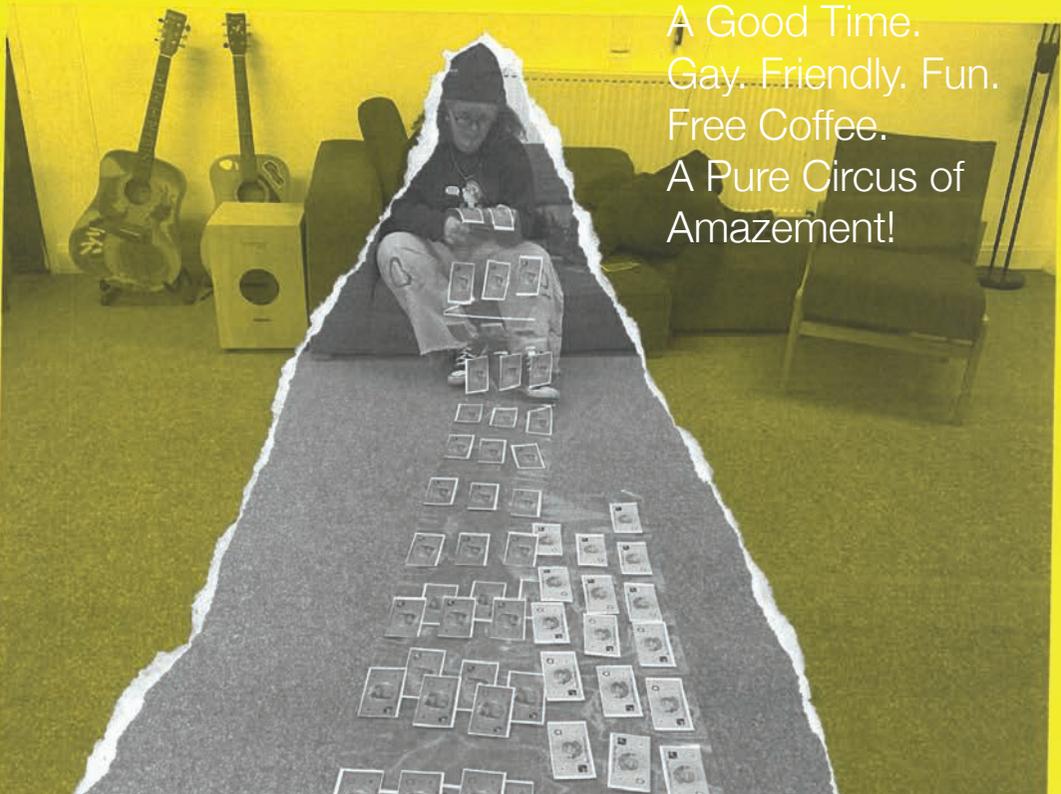
61% 14-18 years old
71% LGB
24% trans/non binary
26% have caring responsibilities
28% are care experienced
62% have additional support needs
48% worry about money a lot
92% have struggled with mental health in the past year
60% think about belief/faith/spirituality sometimes or a lot



In HC, a lot of people are marginalised and experiencing hardship. There's a massive LGBT community, which is so funny coz we're in a church. It's so cool – 30 years ago that would never have happened. And there's a lot of YP who are neurodivergent. That makes for such an interesting space. We don't do things the way you'd expect. YP just come in with our ideas, and off we go. Tom, 20

HC's an escape when I'm having a bad day. The team are always so lovely and listen to me when I need to talk about important, and not so important, things. They feel like friends. HC helps me with being myself and being individual. It's a really important thing to feel included. Alex B, 20

Caring. Kind. Fun
Colourful.
Cross-cultural.
Surprising.
Community. Loving.
Safe.
Cosy. Inventive.
Creative.
Quirky. Messy.
Courageous.
Fun. Happy. Caring.
Chaotic. Fun. Family.
Community.
Welcome. Love.
Passionate. Exciting.
Creative.
A Good Time.
Gay. Friendly. Fun.
Free Coffee.
A Pure Circus of
Amazement!







There are a few key principles that really matter to our community. These are:

Viewing YP as whole people: supporting their holistic development which realises physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual potential.

Whether it's emotional or physical or mental, we always learn something. I've said it so many times, but I don't know how team do it. It's like they sneak learning in the back door. I've learnt how to make badges, and I've learnt how to be more emotionally aware!

Building relationships based on respect and trust, relationships which are voluntary and two-way.

Team have the emotional knowledge to pick up on when something's not right. They can tell, coz they've got close relationships with us. When YP first come in, they have a wall up. But team don't have a wall up with us, they'll be honest with us. And that makes us feel more comfortable to open up too.

Growing a community with YP which is safe, welcoming and affirming to all.

You can feel the love reverberating off the walls at HC. For LGBT YP, we often go through hardships with family, so knowing that there's somewhere where we feel loved, no matter the circumstance, no matter what's going on: that's so important.

Ensuring that plans and activities are owned by YP, adapt with the culture, and bring positive change for all involved.

HC works coz it feels like a teenager's bedroom. It's like a bunch of teenagers have been let loose to make it our own. It's by YP, for YP. Every new generation that comes through changes it a little more. So for me, when I come back, it doesn't feel like my bedroom anymore, but I can see that it's the next generation's bedroom now. And it'll keep evolving. It's a long term home for so many people.

Embracing a culture of reflective learning where we learn from our own experiences (even our mistakes).

It's an environment where we can evolve and grow and become better people, more rounded. We can ask why, we can try new things, and if they don't work it's never a problem. We can learn from our mistakes here.

Knowing what we're good at, and not so good at: working with other people and organisations who can provide specialist opportunities for YP that we couldn't make happen on our own.

So many intelligent, interesting and hilarious personalities... It reminded me that you should never dismiss a person's outlook just because of their age, as every person can bring unique insight or inspiration or even just their own "flavour" to any situation. Liam Johnstone, Film-maker.

Helping build a more just and fair world.

I first came here to discuss politics. I wanted to chat about the LGBTQ+ issue within my Catholic school and ever since, I have been visiting often due to the resources available to me here to assist with this issue. If HC wasn't here, I would be fighting LGBT issues essentially alone. I hope that HC becomes a hub or launch pad for youth campaigns such as working with the Youth Parliament.

WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO US

Despite the pandemic, 2021 was a pretty busy year and included:

157
open
sessions

156
groups
/projects
/trips

445
one to ones

24
detached
sessions

9
community
meals

2
(non)
residential

all under appropriate
Covid guidance,
of course!

Open sessions.

There's a reason all these people keep showing up for sessions – we're doing something right. It's a place with welcoming open arms where you can sit down, have time to yourself, hang out, play music, meet new people, have fun, get away from the stress of whatever's going on. You leave the stress at the door when you come in. Liam, 20

1-1s.

They help. It's a place to vent and speak to someone who understands. I appreciated being listened to. Holly, 18

HC has been very helpful to me with my anxiety and the 1-1s have helped me out a lot too. Johnny, 22

Community meals.

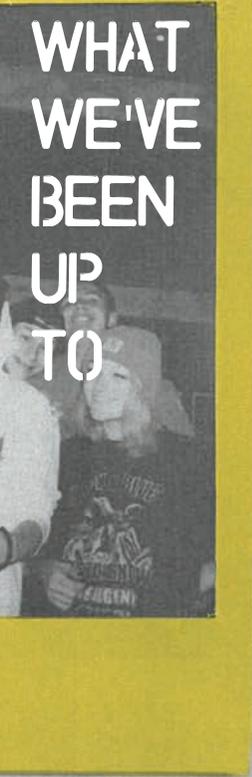
I first came for a community meal. I was so scared to ring the doorbell, but I did it! We had fajitas. I only knew one other person, but we ended up enjoying it, and I'm still here today! Hannah, 16

(Non) residential.

It would have been more fun if we could have done a sleepover, but having that full two days to just sit and do stuff was so good. It makes more of a connection coz you have to sit and spend time with each other – you can't leave once you've started a residential! YP, 20

Trips.

We went to Jupiter Artland. The thing I remember the most was that bit in the ground that was full of the geodes – the amethysts crystals. That place was awesome. We do stuff like that coz it's fun. That's the whole point of HC – for team to take us places, to blow our minds. Jordan, 20



WHAT
WE'VE
BEEN
UP
TO

There are also a few specific issues and opportunities that we work with YP on...

Activism.

I really enjoyed the sign-making for Reclaim The Night - I like using creative outlets to get important information across. YP, 21

I left feeling very positive about the future with regards to both the climate and the arts. I felt very motivated to keep on trying to create more opportunities to work creatively with YP who don't have as much access to theatre, etc. Jade Anderson, Cultivate Creative Practitioner, Wee Wardrobe.

EET (Employment, education & training).

I was a YP for 7/8 years, and I realised I wanted to do what HC do. So when a trainee opportunity came up I was able to join team to do arty youth work. Moving from YP to team was quite a shift, but everyone's been really supportive and respectful of my new boundaries. I've learnt loads. I see things differently now, I think about things more. It's seeping its way into all corners of my life. Chantelle, RAP Youth Work Trainee

YLVT (Youth Led Volunteering Team).

I had been struggling to get a job, but once I put my volunteering on my CV, I was getting interviews left, right and centre. It definitely boosts your CV and your confidence. I came out of it thinking I could rule the world! Harry, 19

Housing.

My main focus is to work with YP to take steps towards, and sustain, housing. The YP know better than I do what the realities are, so we've developed peer support too. Ryan, Youth Worker (Housing)

Me and Glen have worked together on making a booklet for YP who want to move out, and we are currently doing sessions for those people with different activities. Alex B, 20

Mental health

HC's supportive, necessary and quirky. Necessary coz it helps people with their self-esteem, depression, anxiety, trauma, PTSD, sexuality confusion – I could go on. YP, 16

Words can't really express my gratefulness that I can be a part of this whole thing, coz it's amazing. It's helping YP who might not have the opportunity to do things because of their circumstances. HC essentially says: "f*ck your circumstances, you can still be yourself, you can still have your own space and do what you want to do." I've had more help for my mental health from HC than I have from the health service, as bad as that sounds. Liam, 20

HC meet you at eye level. YP, 20

I was once close to suicide, but thanks to team I'm still here. YP, anon

HC is well-organised and ably-led by a rotation of motivated workers, relatable for YP, warm and inviting, accepting and non-judgmental, open and accessible, fun, stimulating, soothing and comforting, prepared and ready for whatever the lives of YP brought through their doors in a spirit of togetherness, curiosity and care. Long Live HC! Dominic Venditozzi, Dundee Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Coordinator for Children and YP.

I've been to the theatre, done t-shirt decorating, badge making – all of it was fun. Here it feels like there isn't really any limits – not like doing art at school (it's a lot better!) YP, 14

HC is a place I can go see my mates, chill out and play drums. I really enjoyed the music sessions and I expanded my skill set as a drummer. Aston, 18

Working in smaller groups and having 1-1 time with YP [at the music weekend] was great and felt really productive. Paul Byrne, Freelance Musician.

I'm creative. I like having a creative outlet, and my creative outlet is at Steeple. It distracts my mind from big issues. Xe, 16

I like the music room. We have good equipment and it's fun to have a good old jam. Bee, 18

I've been so impressed by the talent and creativity of the YP. Most of all, it's been a treat to work with an organisation that embraces messiness and chaos, where quiet contemplative moments (and people) sit around the same table as the louder messy ones.

Steph Liddle, Ceramics Designer/Maker

Being involved improves my creativity. It makes your brain flow quicker, you feel like you'll be Einstein in a few months! My highlight has been bracelet making – even though it makes you lose faith in humanity because it takes so long! It looks cool, and it keeps my hands busy. YP, 16

CREATIVE



ASHLEIGH'S STORY

(NAME & SOME DETAILS HAVE BEEN ANONYMISED)

When I first came to HC I was going through a lot. I was neglected, emotionally abused at home, and living in a really messy house. I was sexually abused at the age of 15. It was really hard giving evidence, and I wasn't believed when it went to court. Everything got worse after that.

I've struggled with self harm and thoughts of suicide. Through lock down I struggled a lot more. I ended up detained under the Mental Health Act and was admitted to Carseview. It was a horrible experience at first – no friends, no family, having stuff removed from my room. At my lowest point, my key worker had to hold me to stop me from hurting myself. Sometimes you just need someone to hold you and tell you it's going to be ok. But after two months, I got closer to the nurses and they helped me see that life was worth living.

HC didn't leave me there. They visited every week, played games, texted, made sure I had someone to talk to. Normally workers leave you til you're out. But HC stayed.

What makes a difference is having people who really care, who check up, who help you feel heard and noticed.

When I eventually got home, I felt better, more stable. But that didn't last. It's really hard living with mental health stuff. It's an ongoing battle. When I started writing this, I was in a dark place. But writing it has helped. Sharing what's happened to me feels important. I hope other people have the courage to open up too, to know they're not alone.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO US.

HC turned TWENTY this year! Covid might have scuppered our party plans (for now), but the YP did have the following birthday messages...

I'd say, happy birthday babe... what's your zodiac sign?

-

Hope Covid doesn't ruin your birthday. And have a good time!

-

Haha, I'm older than you!

-

Don't ever change the things you stand for now. Coz they're great the way they are. They work well.

-

Open up.

Open up, please!

They also had some hopes for where HC might be in another twenty years...

The same.

-

Still kicking it and having more space to work in.

-

I wanna believe it'd still be as lively and open and welcoming as it was when I went.

-

Just bigger and better I guess.

I'll be 40 by then.

Urgh, that makes me sick!

-

With gratitude not only from us, but from the whole community. There needs to be more HCs.



EXODUS

Exodus is our summer programme where we take a theme (GRIT) and make loads of amazing stuff happen.

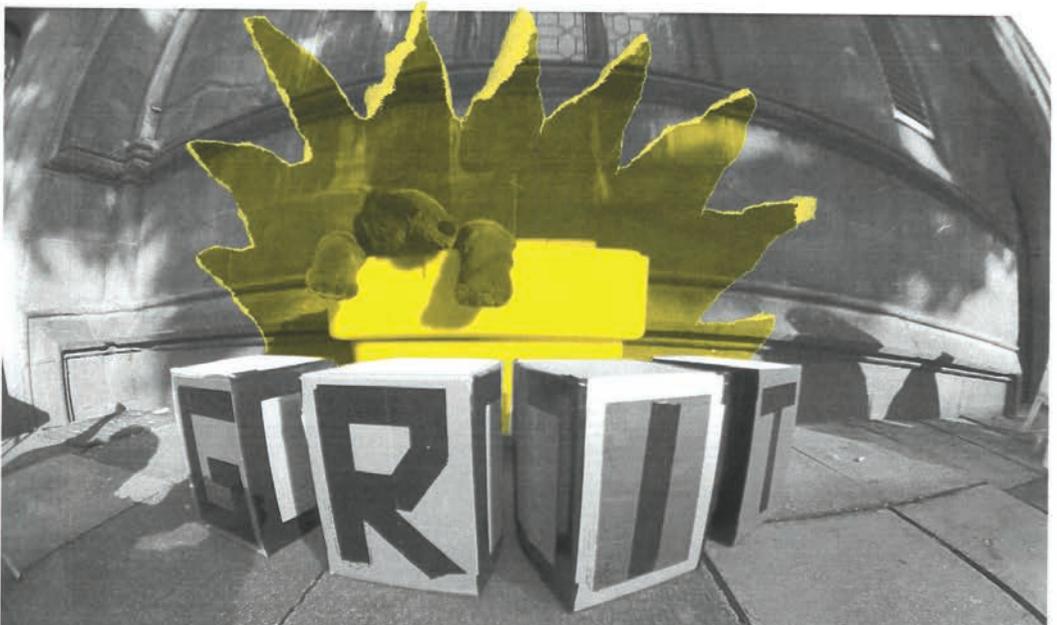
Exodus is like a celebration over the summer holidays, and a chance to reflect on what's been going on through the year. You just end up hanging out all day, chatting to loads of folk. I helped pick the theme. A theme's good coz it ties in different ways of thinking about things, with different focuses. The more you dig deeper, the more you can find about it. Being a YP can be a bit sh*tte. It's a genuinely stressful time for everyone. Plus Covid meant it wasn't exactly the best time of our lives. So GRIT was a good theme.

I planned a YP takeover – like an open session where we pick the focus. I did music and mental health. We had a chilled space at the back door, and a noise making bit at the front, with fruit DJ stuff. And I asked people questions about how music makes them feel. I liked having a job to do, it made me feel important.

I loved the day where we made the music for the art project film. I came in at 10 in the morning and ended up staying til 9 at night. I did a full shift, sitting in the office on Nicole's computer and messing about on Garage Band. It's not something I'd normally do, but it felt good. It was chilled but there was a buzz of excitement, and a bit of good stress.

Rachael, 21

You handed Exodus over to us, like you do with everything. We lead and you follow behind.





We built community together.

We get to run round and explore – even more so than normal. It's all new, it's all stimulating. There's a goal. HC isn't usually like that, but for the few weeks of Exodus, there's a focus, something we're all working towards, there's a sense of achievement. It brings us all together and reminds us that this is a community, a proper actual community. YP, 20

We created together.

Working with the YP was such a brilliant experience. I wasn't sure if a sound design project would be interesting to everyone but they waded right in, recording the sounds of bins being launched across the room, bean bags being dragged around and even some really wonderful voice acting. I was really proud of our project and it was well received too. I also learned a lot personally - seeing the YP's enthusiasm for making sound has made me more confident in collaborating and giving workshops.
Rachel Simpson, Composer and Sound Designer

We made trips happen.

The skate trip - it worked well with the theme. Even just falling off the board and slamming... you've got to pick yourself up and go 'sh*t happens!' It was very good though, very fun. Aston, 18

We partnered up.

(This time with Alexander Community Development to trial a 6 week accredited course for the trades). The ACD project was a great opportunity for YP to gain experience and qualifications. It was well planned, fun and engaging. Verena, 22

We made it work, despite Covid.

Through the whole Covid stuff team weirdly kept it strongly together and it didn't feel like it was gonna fade away. It just felt like Steeple but we were outside. It stayed true. Steeple is mostly the people, not the actual building. YP, 20



THE DIFFERENCE WE MAKE

In the past year HC has supported YP to develop in the following ways:

191 grew in self-knowledge

181 increased in self-worth

215 improved in social skills

172 increased in understanding of how to positively impact their lives and communities

164 acted to positively impact their lives and communities

136 improved their ability to look ahead, plan and stick to goals

34 deepened their understanding of their spirituality and/or God

Through their involvement with HC, YP reflect on their experiences and learning - and recognise how they're changing as a result.

These reflections, along with the team's observations (and GDPR consents!), are recorded on our 'outcomes database', which helps us better understand the difference we make.

I've grown as a person in height, but I'm also more mature.

Xe, 16

Through 2021, 139 different YP were supported around education, employment and training. Specifically:

55 gained new confidence, skills, and experience through volunteering

29 started new jobs

16 began new education placements

7 undertook training placements

33 sustained their jobs or education when, without support, they would have dropped out.



WIDER IMPACT

Speaking of our 'outcomes database', this year we've developed and launched a new online version for monitoring & evaluation – and it's legit amazing! It puts YP and values at the heart.

It's called **TECKLE DATA** and it's now available for other youth & community organisations to buy :)

Find out more at www.teckledata.org.uk

I absolutely love the database! It's so cool that you can go back and see what's there. You guys listen to everything and have immense detail on it. It's like a nostalgia thing for us. All the stuff I used to do when I was 16 written down in hard detail. It's got a proper purpose, but it's also f*cking cool. Jordan, 20

The Teckle Database is life made easy! The web page is easy to sign in, to enter details and to add sessions in. Our last system had become very outdated and lacked certain features that we needed to generate various reports and stats needed to report back to funders and trustees. Teckle has made my life so much easier. Gillian Lindsay, Youth Worker, KYTHE

HC really cares about making a difference in the world beyond just our own walls, and we work with loads of other folks to help do that. We love hosting visits, being part of purposeful networks, and supporting other organisations to grow...

I've had the privilege to visit HC and to see the impact for myself. It's truly amazing. The Council also work alongside the fantastic team through the Dundee Youth Work Network. Dundee is blessed to have such a dynamic and forward-thinking organisation working with our YP. The city faces a great array of challenges, but by working together, we can have a real positive impact, particularly for our YP and I know that HC are already doing just that. John Alexander, Leader of Dundee City Council

Charis brought CLD to life with relevant and engaging examples, challenging us (the board) to reflect, helping us gain an understanding of the skills and knowledge needed for youth work and how best we can engage in CLD practice to better support the charity. Everyone found it really interesting, engaging and challenging (in a good way). Lewis Shand Smith, Convener, LGBT Youth Scotland

TEAM

The HC team are a dedicated and diverse bunch. And frankly, they have grafted hard over the past year to make sure YP have had consistent support, a safe space, and plenty opportunities to make the world a more beautiful, and less Covidy place.

Team ask you if you're ok, ask how your day is, and stop drama. If that's even possible, because there's a lot... Xe, 16

You guys don't stop anyone doing anything. You encourage pretty much what everyone wants to do if it's in a positive state. YP, 20

HC is literally my happy place. I've learnt a lot about myself from YP. And I've learnt about what's really going on for the YP who are seen at the 'troubled kids', and what they're having to tackle. HC is making such a difference to their lives. Meghan, Volunteer.

I'm better able to connect and understand YP's situations and have become more empathetic. And my pool skills have definitely improved! Skye, Volunteer

I had extreme social anxiety and phobia when I was younger and left school without qualifications. I got support from Penumbra and Fairbridge and they eventually brought me to HC to volunteer. It was total sensory overload, but surprisingly I loved it. That was ten years ago. Over time, I realised that I was good at it, and that I could help people. So I went back to college to get higher, then a PDA in additional support needs, and am just about to graduate from my Community Education degree. I've been involved in pretty much everything over these ten years: volunteer, janitor, intern, sessional worker. My confidence has grown loads. My youth work skills have improved loads. I'm about to move away, but I'll be back. I always feel welcome here, and when I come back I hope to see that HC is still thriving. Colin, Sessional Youth Worker

Team are different here.
They listen to you.
Eilaine is stubborn.
Megan, 17







My
favourite bit
about HC is
meeting new friends.
Having a giggle.
Annoying my pals.
Megan, 17

I
thought I
wasn't going to
fit in at first, but it's like
a family to me now. They've
helped me out for nearly five
years. It's a homely and exciting
experience for everyone to make friends,
go on trips. There's so much going on.
It's educational and purposeful for life.
Nathen, 18

I didn't expect HC to be Christian. I feel
no agenda present. It is a safe space to
talk about Christianity. The main priority
isn't Christianity, but instead is support for
YP. Due to that agenda not being a thing,
the accessibility and availability to
question a faith is inherently less stressful.
Owen, 15

If Steeple wasn't here I'd probably just be
sitting in my house and going to work
and not really going out and seeing
people as often. Benji, 19

When you're an adolescent, you're trying
to figure yourself out, trying to find out
where you fit. You don't necessarily sit
down to reflect on these things, you do it
subconsciously. But adolescents also
have big conversations about life. You
need to feed that though. You know what
would be cool? If there was a free
thinking class at school that you could go
to but only if you wanted to. And YP can
go in with a thought they've had. Like
'what if the government are lizard
people?' And then you just speak about
the possibilities around it. Or if someone's
read a good book. Where people can just
have the space to explore stuff. Hot
Chocolate is that free thinking class.
Tom, 20

FINANCES

Analysis of Income 2021

Total income	£677K
Restricted grants	£469K
Unrestricted grants	£72K
Gift aid donations and tax	£29K
Other donations	£19K
Donated services	£75K
Wider impact income	£13K

Analysis of Expenses 2021

Total expenses	£559K
Fundraising	£30K
Charitable activities	£529K

Funds at 31st December, 2021

Total funds	£407K
Unrestricted funds	£187K
Restricted funds	£220K

At HC, we couldn't do what we do without the generous grants and donations from our funders and donors. Most of our money is spent on salaries, as, in order to build and deepen relationships with young people, we need to spend time with them. As with most charities, we need to do a lot of fundraising so we can continue to work with the young people and respond to their needs.

At HC, we have been grateful to receive funding, donations or donations in kind during the challenges of 2021 from the following funders, fundraisers and donors:

Adapt and Thrive
AllChurches Trust
Arnold Clark Foundation
Balgay Children's Society
CashBack for Communities Youth Work Fund
City Centre & Harbour Community Fund
Comic Relief
Common Good Fund
Communities Recovery Fund
Community Innovation Fund
Creative Scotland: Youth Arts Access Fund
DCC Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework
DCC Summer of Play 2021
Gannochy Trust
Inspiring Scotland
Investing in Communities Fund
Leng Charitable Trust
Life Changes Trust
Lord Armitstead's Dundee Trust
MAKE Trust
Miss AM Pilkington Charitable Trust
Northwood Charitable Trust
Paul Hamlyn Foundation
Peter Vardy Foundation
Rank Foundation
Robertson Trust
Saints and Sinners Club of Scotland
Souter Charitable Trust
Spinner's Trust
STV Appeal
Tay Charitable Trust
Tesco Bags for Help
The Listening Fund
The Ragdoll Foundation
The Ryvoan Trust
The Steeple Church: Dundee (Church of Scotland)
The William Syson Foundation
Tillyloss Trust
Tudor Trust
Walter Craig Charitable Trust
William S Phillips Fund
WM Sword Charitable Trust
Young Start
Your Voice Your Choice Dundee
Youth Work Education Recovery Fund
YouthLink Scotland Social Isolation & Loneliness Fund

and all our individual donors and fundraisers

BOARD

I find myself reflecting on the past 2.5 years, not just the past 12 months! The Board met in person in November for the first time since 2019. It was great to share together face to face. We welcome two new board members, Sheena Gibson and David Osfield, both bringing huge skills and experience. Sadly we also said goodbye to Amy McDonald, and I want to thank her for her contribution. Our biggest challenge this year has been securing funding, which has been more scarce and targeted. The Exec Team have done an amazing job, and I am pleased to say currently funding is in a healthy place.

The Team have committed to meeting the Covid challenges of the last 2.5yrs, constantly changing direction and being creative and flexible in meeting the needs of the YP. The Board are very thankful for all they continue to do. I am pleased to report that YP are now fully back in the building, numbers are high and we're currently looking for new volunteers.

A major focus going forward is progressing the 'Home Fae Home' project after Covid delays which will provide an environment fit for the work of HC into the future. The Board are thankful to The Steeple Church for their support and encouragement in this project.

Dave Close recently wrote a reflection of a story where Jesus encouraged his companions to go over to the other side of the lake, into the unknown. There they encountered a mentally distressed man who no one could help. But Jesus met him without fear and with love, and the man's life was changed. Jesus didn't preach the gospel, he set the man free through genuine relationship. This story sums up the work of HC:

Hot Chocolate Trust build community with young adults from across Dundee. They are truly remarkable people: creative, energetic, kind, activist, full of ideas and potential. Many have also faced heart-breaking challenges and carry great pain. When recently invited to say what they would ask God they said:

*'Why so cruel? // Why did you let all the bad stuff happen? // What are my purposes? // Why is there war and poverty, and why did you take away my loved ones? // Why did you let the world be such a sh*tty place? // Does it get better? // Why let this happen if you're real?'*

We wish we had the power to bring transformation in minutes as Jesus does. Nonetheless, we have learnt through 20 years that, with the same fearless love to meet and be with them, we can help them to find mercy and freedom. So that is what we do, each day, month and year. This is what we know as our calling.

Who knows what joys and challenges are ahead of us this coming year? Whatever they are, let's meet them at the other side of the lake.

Warmest Regards, Chris Lafferty (Chair)

Charity Trustees / Directors of the Board

Mr Piers Bowser

Dr Shona Dobbie / Vice-Chairperson

Mr Stephen Elwell-Sutton

Mrs Debbie Fellows

Mrs Sheena Gibson / Appointed March 2022

Mr Alan Harper / Treasurer

Mr David Johnstone

Mrs Chris Lafferty / Chairperson

Mrs Amy McDonald / Vice-Chairperson until January 2021, stepped down April 2021

Ms Pamela Wellstrom / Vice-Chairperson from March 2021

Dr Ruth Murdoch

Mr David Osfield / Appointed March 2022



TS STORY

(NAME & SOME DETAILS HAVE BEEN ANONYMISED)

I first came to HC nearly ten years ago. I had just started high school and I was getting bullied. I got my glasses broke, scalding hot drinks poured on me, name calling. It was mentally and emotionally draining. People tell me that I'm always so happy and smiley and bubbly. But I think humour can be a form of grief and pain, and I used humour a lot. People might have thought I was ok, but I really wasn't. You guys clicked on to that pretty quickly.

I've grown up through this place. So many life milestones. There's a lot of things that's happened to me over the years that I can't speak to my family about - they're dealing with their own stuff. I come here to distract me from what's going on, or to speak to team about it - I'm 50/50 on those, depending on how I'm feeling on the day.

I've lost a lot of people in my life. My best friend, my gran, my uncle, more recently my dog. My dog's death hit me really hard. I was holding her when she got put down. She was like my shadow, joined at the hip. She was my emotional support. You guys helped me a lot with this. We did a loss reflection, and I wrote a letter to her. It felt like a release.

A lot of the good memories from growing up were Exodus trips. You get to do things that you wouldn't ever get to do. Like I went fishing and absolutely loved it.

Money has always been tight in my house. I went to a few other youth groups, but they all charged money. It was maybe only a couple of pounds a month, but my mum couldn't afford that so I had to stop going. I told her I didn't like them, even though I really did, to try and make her feel better. So the fact that everything here is free is massive.

I've changed a lot coz of this place. You's have grown me into a person. I'm more resilient now - I learn from my mistakes. And I've met so many different people, with different personalities, different interests, what they look like, what they wear, who they are as people. It helps give us all a perspective of equality and respect.



GRIT is about courage and power and stuff. Confidence is everything, pretty much, and if you've got no courage in yourself and you've got no power to move forward then you're f*cked.

Jordan, 20

Jordan speaks truth.

But if we're honest with ourselves, we don't always feel courageous and powerful.

That's why community matters. We're not alone.

When you know that others have got your back, no matter what, life feels very different.

It's easier to move forward, to take on the world.

We're going to draw on that collective courage and power for the year ahead.

We'll need to. #ODYSSEY2022

GRIT



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