



Sandy's
Community Centre
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Strategic and Business Plan

Introduction

Welcome to Sandy's Strategic and Business Plan. We describe our history, our ethos, our services, our objectives and ambitions, and the outcomes we wish to deliver for the people of Craigmillar in Edinburgh.

We set out the essential services we already provide, our ambitions for the future to expand and improve current services, and to provide new ways of supporting children, young people, families and individuals in Craigmillar.

Our Plan is intended to cover a three year timeframe. However, our Board of Trustees has decided that our focus for this year at least is to support the people of Craigmillar to recover from the effects of the Covid pandemic on the mental and physical wellbeing of all ages in our community, and on individual and family budgets. Craigmillar suffered very high infection rates throughout the pandemic, and the impacts on people of all ages and backgrounds have been, and continue to be, severe.

While the pandemic has had a major effect on our ability to open fully, to provide services and to generate income, we have tried hard to continue to provide essential supports for people of all ages. In particular, we would highlight the efforts we have made with our senior citizens and with children and young people.

Like so many small charities, Sandy's has had good times and many very challenging times, and it has often been a struggle to keep the Centre in operation and financially viable. Our funding is usually from small, short term grants and from other sporadic income eg hall rentals. Support from Edinburgh City Council has been invaluable in keeping us in operation.

Our Board is determined to put our services and finances on more sustainable and consistent bases, so that we can maintain our services and staff, expand current activities to address unmet need, and put new community-supported activities in place. Unfortunately, we cannot achieve our objectives to serve the people of Craigmillar with our current levels of staffing and short-term, uncertain funding arrangements.

We are already taking action to rebuild and reinforce our governance, to update our Constitution, and to refocus our priorities within our long-standing ethos to support the health, wellbeing and education of all people in Craigmillar. We are also working to strengthen our communications and engagement with our community, and to widen the range of services and supports we can provide, especially to the most vulnerable and at risk families and individuals.

Our Plan sets out our priorities and objectives, and what we believe we need by way of human and financial resources to deliver essential, high quality, community-led services for all people in Craigmillar.

We hope that our Plan will encourage more people in Craigmillar to join us, to contribute their time and skills, and to make more use of our services. We are very hopeful too that potential funders will feel able to support us in our ongoing essential work for our community and our ambitions for the future.

Sandy's History

The Craigmillar Boys' Club opened in 1935, with Alexander (Sandie) Somerville as the first leader. The Club moved to its current location in 1939 (when it was commandeered by the military) and Sandie resigned in 1947. Our Centre is named after him. The club's main activities in those days were boxing, football and basketball. Most of our funding came from Edinburgh Corporation (now Edinburgh City Council), who still provide maintenance of our building.

As time passed, we have greatly increased the range of activities and services we provide to reflect the changing needs, demographics, social, economic and cultural aspects of our community.

Craigmillar: Our Community

By way of setting the context for our Plan, it's worth describing our community. Historically, Craigmillar suffered from severe economic and social problems which had their roots in the closure of heavy industries, and consequent high levels of unemployment, poverty and deprivation. Craigmillar often featured towards the top of indices of Scotland's most deprived communities, with a reputation for severe social problems, including crime and anti-social behaviour, and high levels of drug and alcohol misuse.

Craigmillar has undoubtedly benefitted from significant investment eg in new and improved housing. Our community has moved forward and positively in many social and economic respects. These improvements are very welcome, but there is no doubt that some of our historical problems still exist. We have a very mixed economy, individuals of all ages and families who still suffer serious poverty and deprivation, a wide range of ethnicities who are often hard to reach, and elements of a transient population eg travellers.

Sandy's services have evolved to meet the needs of all people in our community, but we believe much more needs to be done. We are determined that no-one, regardless of age, ethnicity, disability, gender, or sexual orientation should be ignored or left out from the many benefits from using Sandy's Centre.

Our Ethos

Our ethos is to provide high quality essential services, particularly for the most vulnerable and at risk members of our community, but which meet the needs and circumstances of everyone across all generations - from babies to senior citizens - and from all cultures and ethnic backgrounds.

We also wish to provide a friendly and safe environment for people of all ages and backgrounds to meet each other, to share and learn from their interests and experiences, to expand their horizons, and to encourage them to contribute in their own way to improve education, wellbeing, skills and competences for themselves, their families and the wider community.



'We like the bairns coming to Sandy's. It makes me feel better walking past them in the street. I'm auld you know!'

The Outcomes we wish for our Community

We wish to ensure that all people in Craigmillar feel healthy, nourished, happy and safe. We want all people in Craigmillar to feel they are part of our community, valued, included, empowered, respected, their voices heard and listened to, confident and inspired. We want to expand opportunities for people so they enjoy new experiences and horizons, which stretch their education, their cultures and ambitions.

Sandy's Centre is already playing a key role in delivering these outcomes, but we can do more, including reinforcing our processes to seek and evaluate the views and experiences of all those with whom we engage.

The services we currently provide for our community and our ambitions

This section of our Plan sets out what we currently deliver for our community, our best estimates of current levels of use and forecasts for the future, including estimates of unmet need. We also set out our intentions to expand and develop current services and our ambitions for the future.

1. **Food sharing and toiletry distribution**

Working in partnership with other organisations, including the Cyrenians and Baillie Gifford, Sandy's Centre provides food, toiletry and sanitary supplies for the most vulnerable people in our community, but often our supply of these essential items does not meet demand. The impact of lockdowns on local employment (especially in the low paid "gig" economy) and

incomes have meant that more people in Craigmillar are requiring our help with the most basic of personal and family necessities.

We estimate that around 100 individuals and families use these essential services every week, and it is frankly heartbreaking when we have to turn people away if we have run out of essential items.

Our objectives: We wish to work more closely with large and small businesses, partner charities etc to discuss how we can provide more support on a more regular and reliable basis. We estimate that we could support around 40-50 more individuals and families per week.



2. *Kids' Club*

We are determined that no child or young person in Craigmillar should go hungry, and no parent should go without food to ensure that their children are fed. We are well aware of the impact which going hungry has on the physical and mental health of children and young people and on their ability and readiness to learn.

We are providing nutritious food, stimulating mental and physical activities (many outdoors) and programmed education and activities through our kids clubs, involving around 27 children 2 days per week. We have operated these services throughout lockdowns and through school holidays to ensure that children are properly nourished, engaged and stimulated.



We will have a waiting list of around 30 children once the school holidays are over, demonstrating unmet demand. Thanks to a donation, we will be able to run this service for the coming term only, since our main source of funding has ceased. We are urgently looking for alternative funding for this service.



Our objectives: We wish to secure new and additional funding as soon as possible to ensure that we can

continue and expand these vital services for children and young people, including being able to address clear unmet need.

3. **Parents and Toddlers Group**

Craigmillar has many young and single parents with very young children, who have felt lonely and isolated during lockdowns, and their children have missed out on social and play interactions with other children. By bringing them together for play, stimulation and social interaction, Sandy's Centre is helping to support and nurture the children and their parents and to help them with a wide range of issues which are affecting them.

At the present time, we regularly have 8 families on our register and we believe there is scope to expand this service, particularly as covid-related restrictions are relaxed.

Our objectives: We wish to expand the range of support and activities we can offer to parents and toddlers and ensure that there is no unmet need in our community. We are aware from parents that there is demand for a crèche facility at Sandy's, now that the economy is slowly reopening and we would like to explore this possibility.



'I like it that we decide what we are going to do at the club. Making lemonade is fun and it is good'.

We are also clear that many parents have struggled emotionally and financially throughout the pandemic, with consequent effects on their mental and physical wellbeing. We would like to create a Parent Support Group to provide more tailored and expert help to such parents and we believe our ambitions would be strongly supported in our community.

4. **Lunch Club for Senior Citizens**

We wish to ensure that our more vulnerable and fragile senior citizens are well nourished and safe. Sandy's provides a weekly lunch club for our senior citizens, including home deliveries where required. We provide this service to around 19 people per week, and there is certainly, scope to expand the service to around 25 people in total, who should receive good quality food, and the benefits of company in what have been very lonely and difficult times for many of them. Should any of our Senior Citizens be too ill or frail to attend lunch, we arrange for delivery of a lunch to their home, where they can see a friendly face as well as receiving a meal.

Our prize bingo subsidises this service, which is otherwise unfunded. This means that our senior citizens are effectively charged around £2 per person. While the bingo sessions are greatly enjoyed, we would prefer not to have to charge at all.

Following the lock-down in March 2020, we changed our services, to provide a home delivery of food to our regular Lunch Club members, who we knew to be isolated and unable to shop for themselves – many of them being in the 'shielding' category. During a home lunch delivery in April 2020, we discovered that one of our recipients was seriously ill, and in need of urgent medical care, which we arranged. This brings home the need for regular face to face contacts and relationships with those who are particularly vulnerable and lonely.



Our objectives: We wish to continue and expand this essential service for our elderly and vulnerable citizens to ensure that demand is met in our community and that no senior citizen is unable engage with us, or excluded due to financial/social barriers. To achieve this, we would very much like to secure sustainable funding, so that we can improve the service and cease charging.

5. *Sewing Club*

We are aware that many children, young people and adults lack the most basic skills to sew. We are keen to establish a new club for children to help them gain those skills – from stitching through to making their own clothes. There are also benefits from improving manual dexterity, participating in mindful, quiet activity and feeling a sense of achievement in creating clothing and other items that will last.

Our objectives: We are confident that we could attract around 12 primary age children to this Club as a starting point. Over time, we hope to attract adults to join us, so that creating new clothing and repairing existing clothing can be both an enjoyable and money-saving activity for them too.

6. *Cook Club*

Around 30 people per week attend this club. As resources permit, we try to provide some of the ingredients, but people bring their own too. The club teaches basic nutrition and cooking skills to local people, some of whom may be struggling financially



and who may frequently rely on expensive and unhealthy carry outs for themselves and their families. We are encouraging participation from people from all ethnicities to share their own recipes and cultures and to help build community relations.

We also include people who have mental and physical health issues and additional support needs, who receive support and advice from staff and other participants. Any surpluses from the club are deployed to our other food services for the community.

We have decided to merge our Food and Blether Group into our Cook Club. This is a success story in which local Food and Blether Group members have developed the skills and confidence (demonstrated at the last Craigmillar Festival) to share their skills with the wider community and to lead sessions of our Cook Club.

It is our intention to employ 2 or more of these members as sessional workers for our Cook Club, thus providing paid employment to local people. Our Cook Club is already multi-cultural and we anticipate more membership as Craigmillar stands by to welcome Afghan refugees.



Our objectives: We see this as a crucial component of Sandy's range of support to our community. We would like to ensure we can provide more of the ingredients ourselves to help those who are in dire financial straits and to attract more people from all backgrounds and age groups to participate, including bringing their own recipes and ideas.

One of our ambitions is to expand the Club's focus to include improved budgeting for food and demonstrating the many benefits from "batch cooking" ie several meals at one cooking session.

7. **Youth work.**

We work with our partners, St Teresa's Youth Group to provide a range of supports for 12-17 year olds (20 in total via 2 groups at moment), delivering a programme of activities and workshops based on the young people's views and issues they are facing – for example sexual wellbeing, emotional wellbeing, first aid, alcohol awareness.

These activities are stimulating and aimed at improving the mental and physical wellbeing of young people who have had their lives and education badly disrupted by the impact of the pandemic. This work also plays a role in diverting young people away from anti-social behaviour, alcohol and drugs. We have testimonies from several members of our community that attending Sandy's Centre meant that they avoided actions and behaviours that might have led to criminality.

Our objectives: We will continue to support St. Teresa's to reach the maximum number of young people, and support new activities, and funding revenues.

8. *Boxing and Fitness Clubs.*

Our Plan has focused so far on what we regard as our essential community services for the people of Craigmillar. However, one of our ongoing successes is our Boxing and Fitness Club, which improves the physical and mental health of young people, teaches them control and discipline, and helps them deal with issues around anger and aggression. Improving physical fitness also brings clear benefits in terms of tackling obesity and other health problems. Around 70 seniors and juniors participate in boxing club sessions in 2 sessions per week and we know that there are many more young people who are keen to join the club.

This Club provides vital rental income for the centre, but its operation has been suspended for the duration of the pandemic, which has been hard on us financially and difficult for the organisers and those young people who enjoy it so much. We are hopeful that the Club can reopen fully in the near future in line with government guidelines.

Similarly, we are very keen to get our fitness training up and running again to provide healthy and stimulating physical activities

Our objectives: We wish to support the Boxing Club to get the club back fully in operation, to help them expand to meet unmet demand, and to explore better utilisation of the space within the Centre.

9. *Football Club and New Kids' Football Academy/Club*

Since the days of the Craigmillar Boys Club, local football teams have always operated from our centre - currently Sandy's Amateur Football club, and most recently Niddrie Star.

In 2021, working with 'UThink Scotland', we operated a summer football academy for primary-age children, making use of our outdoor facilities, and this proved to be very successful, with children and parents saying that they would like us to run the academy on a more regular basis. We wish to do so, but this would require sustainable funding.

Our objectives: To continue to support our local Amateur Football Clubs, and to establish a regular football academy for primary school age children. We would need to purchase all training equipment, employ a suitable coach, and invest in a full refurbishment of the changing rooms and showers.

10. *Drama and Acting Group*

Our planning is at a relatively early stage, but this group will initially be aimed at teenagers who are struggling with mental health issues due to the impact of Covid on their wellbeing. We will encourage young people to express their feelings through drama and acting to

enable them to find some release for their pent up frustrations and anxieties, as well as for their artistic and creative talents. As matters stand, we have no funding to initiate this idea.

Our objectives: It is likely that the initial focus of the group on Covid recovery will widen to address other issues that these young people face on a daily basis. For example, some of them are supporting parents who have mental health issues, drug or alcohol dependency. Other young people live with parents who work irregular and excessive hours to cover the bills, and therefore the young people and their siblings must care for themselves, leading to loss of childhood, anger issues and other mental health problems. Estimated costs are set out in the Annex.

11. *Christmas at Sandy's*

One of our long-standing traditions is that we provide Christmas lunches for around 60 of our senior citizens (with the help of pupils from our local high school) at our Centre, and deliver lunches and gifts to those who may be too frail to attend. We also provide Christmas food and gifts to around 40 of the most vulnerable families and children, who simply cannot afford to provide them themselves.

Over a number of years, we have worked with the Cyrenians, CarrGomm and Connecting Craigmillar to provide a 4 course Christmas lunch in the Centre, with live entertainment, for around 60 – 70 senior citizens, with service provided by pupils from our local high school (Castlebrae), and Carol Singing by children of Castlevie Primary School.

Lockdown restrictions meant that we had to think again, but we were determined not to be defeated. Our Centre Manager put out a call for help to engage the local community, and they responded with many donations, which enabled us to make and deliver over 40 hampers of gifts, food and floral bouquets, as well as raising over £1,000 which enabled us to provide further support to vulnerable members of our community. To make best use of this generosity, our Centre Manager and her family cooked for around 65



'I really missed my sister when I couldn't get to her because of the snow. Sandy's dug all us pensioners out so we could visit each other. They always check we are ok. Lovely wee lassies'.



pensioners on Christmas Day and delivered the meals, along with the gift hampers, to peoples' homes.

Our efforts, including snow clearance, meant that people were able to enjoy Christmas, despite the pandemic, and pensioners received nourishing food and human contact. We were also able to ensure that local residents who were desperate to see their relatives were able to do so.

Each year, Sandy's applies to the 'Help a Child' appeal. So far, we have been successful, and have received, sorted and delivered approximately 300 gifts to 150 individuals in households where the parents are struggling to cope. In addition, a local kids football team fundraised to buy Christmas gifts to be distributed to vulnerable families.

Our objectives: We are hopeful that we will be able to return to our normal Christmas celebrations in 2021, but we hope that we have been able to illustrate the commitment and dedication of our Centre Manager, her family and our community to work together to support those most in need of care, support and company at what should always be a happy time. We believe that building and sustaining relationships across our community is one of Sandy's greatest strengths.



12. *Other ambitions*

We are always open to new ideas for services and activities which would benefit our community and which would make greater use of Sandy's Centre. As for all of our activities, our ability to turn these ideas into reality is constrained by the availability of human and, particularly, financial resources.

As part of helping our community recover and rebuild from the impacts of the pandemic, we believe that establishing new activities, including a book group, an art group and a music group would engage and encourage people to enjoy themselves and to explore new horizons. We are looking at the logistics and costs of setting up and operating these groups, including bringing in external support from organisations and individuals.

Over the years, Sandy's has also accumulated a range of sports equipment, which has been stored eg canoes and archery equipment. We will look at issues such as supervision, health and safety etc, and whether there is community demand for new activities as part of our objective to provide a wider range of activities and supports for all ages in our community.

Governance

We have already taken action to widen and strengthen our Board with people from our community, but we are keen to recruit others who can bring new skills and experience eg finance, employment, strategic planning etc, including from outside the community. As part of our communications activity (see below), we are improving our engagement with the community and we also hope to increase local interest in joining Sandy's as both Board members and members of the Centre.

Communications, Engagement, Consultation and Marketing

We are working on improving our IT provision and our presence on social media to raise awareness of what Sandy's offers, and to engage and consult all ages and groups in our community. We hope to increase our membership (Friends of Sandy's) and to galvanise more people to get involved with our wonderful facility.

We are aware that there are many people eg the elderly who may be hard to reach via information technology, so we are planning distribution of leaflets and flyers, newsletters, questionnaires, open days, coffee mornings etc to use more traditional means to engage and stimulate interest in our Centre.

We wish to use these mechanisms to improve evaluation and monitoring of what people think of Sandy's and to ensure that we are meeting our outcomes for our community.

We are hopeful of engaging external support with these activities but, inevitably, we will have to balance our ambitions against the very limited resources we have available to us.

Conclusion

We hope you have enjoyed reading about Sandy's, our activities and our plans for the future. We are a very small charity, with very limited and uncertain income, and we rely heavily on our Centre Manager to keep the Centre in operation.

We are proud of the partnerships which we have established within our community. Without partnerships with organisations like Craigmillar Community Grows, Craigmillar Castle Park and the City of Edinburgh Council, we may not be able to reach the most vulnerable and deserving people within our area. We are clear of the many benefits from forging strong partnerships, so we will build on our existing partnerships and relationships, and seek to establish new ones in the future.

Sandy's Strategic and Business Plan

We have attempted to cost in the Annex what we believe we need to put the Centre on a more viable and sustainable footing, but these are general estimates and we would be very happy to discuss finance in more detail with individual funders, who may be interested in supporting particular services or activities.

Sandy's Community Centre

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