

ANNUAL REPORT

2020 /2021



brag enterprises

Enterprising People, Sustaining Communities

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“Social entrepreneurship takes place when a social value proposition (a solution of some kind) provides wide-scale, lasting systems change for the benefit of society.”



I would like to begin by thanking Iain Gow for his service to the organisation as Chair since 2017 and to introduce David Piper as our new Chair.

COVID-19 has forced everyone to deeply consider the fundamental importance of community — of living in a place that all pull together when things get tough, and the last year has shown this more than ever to be true. The pandemic showed us that those that were charged with supporting us most, were in some cases the first to pull back. This left it for the communities themselves to step up providing much needed relief to those living in need, with many third sector organisations like ours being in the right place at the right time.

Since 1988, BRAG has helped families across central Fife deal with the effects of poverty whilst helping sign post a way out through employment and training and we have continued to be a place of solace and a source of strength for those we support. Our staff and volunteers all stepped up and acted as a springboard to stability and opportunity for those we supported, and we are pleased that we have helped create real social impact in the communities we serve. This report lays out much of the direct impact we have had, and I hope you agree that it's been very much needed, now more than ever. Sadly, we still have much to do and I think when I speak for us all that we are up for that challenge and will do what we can to continue making a difference in people's lives.

**Brian Robertson-Fern
MANAGING DIRECTOR**

in a position of commercial strength and optimism for the forthcoming year particularly in view of the successful development of our commercial units in Methil as well as the Together Levenmouth project which will eventually help regenerate the area. The newly launched Bright Futures Youth Employability project will bring about positive change to the lives of young people around Fife and our key workers are working hard to bring about these improvements. The BRAG pantry serves a growing need within Fife society and the volunteer workers deserve an award for the fantastic work they carry out in providing meals and food for so many people, hopefully we can complete the renovations very quickly and the new Tea/Coffee bar can be opened. I look forward to 2021/22 as a great challenge for BRAG enterprises and working as a team we can achieve many things for the Fife area.

**David Piper
CHAIR**

Firstly, I would like to express my thanks to BRAG for inviting me to take on the role as Chairman of the Board, it is a role that I take very seriously and I am honoured to be involved with a fantastic team that is making such a difference to the lives of people in the Fife area. The problems that the area is now experiencing as we slowly emerge from the Covid pandemic present a wide range of social issues and challenges that Brian Robertson-Fern and his team will have to deal with over the coming months. I was very impressed with the dedication and enthusiasm of the staff members that I met on a recent visit and I am confident that they will continue to apply their skills to helping those in need all over the Fife area. As we know only too well, the past year has been a very different and difficult year for us all. The usual BRAG activities were abruptly halted by Coronavirus as the country went into lockdown modes but, unsurprisingly, our teams soon found ways of maintaining contact with clients as well as each other. The use of zoom, skype and other online platforms quickly transformed our lives with staff and board meetings and the new remote work practices seem to be working extremely well. The achievements that the organisation has gained in such projects such as Adult & Community Delivery and Square Start Fife during these trying times bodes well for the future and the entire team are to be commended for their resilience and endeavour in maintaining the track record of delivery. We go forward

The New Enterprise Allowance team moved to 'virtual' delivery of the programme from 22 March 2020 and initially saw a big impact in referrals due to Job Centres experiencing an influx of new Universal Credit claims due to Covid-19 and high volumes of job losses/business closing. There was also a big impact on Trading for many current clients as they were unable to trade due to Government restrictions. However, as Government restrictions started to ease the NEA Team have seen a large increase in referrals from September/October 2020 onwards, which resulted in the team surpassing all of their KPI's set for us during the pandemic with regards to Initial Assessments, Business Plans and commencement of Trading for their clients. It is evident that even with the impact of Covid, Government restrictions and lockdowns that people more than ever before were finding themselves in a situation where starting their own business has become a viable option and they are starting to trade through an online platform where many businesses have flourished.

Impact - Over the year the team have worked with a total of 770 clients which far exceeds the year before when there was no pandemic! Of the 770 clients that started the NEA Programme, 57% had their business plan approved, with 36% starting to trade and 28% reaching the key 6 month sustained trading date. Although trading and sustained trading were lower than normal for Brag due to the impact of lockdowns and Government restrictions, this was still significantly higher than any expectations placed upon us. Brag has continued to be a large contributor to the overall figures that make up the Scottish Contract - CPA11.

There have been many good news stories over the past year, individuals have overcome adversity during such unprecedented times and below is just one example highlighting how determination and commitment can make dreams come true!

Case study -Penthouse Practice Suite



Scott Gilbert and Paige Nicholls are a couple and were both made redundant as a result of the pandemic. Both worked in Retail, however, Scott had studied sound engineering previously and had always wanted to pursue this. Scott and Paige have a passion for music and enjoy going to festivals and following and supporting local bands. They decided that because of their situation, they would begin a recording studio/rehearsal space as well as selling second-hand instruments and music supplies. They began the NEA in December 2020. As they have never been self-employed, we went through marketing, requirements for premises, bookkeeping and HMRC, insurance, as well as any other queries/concerns they had regarding starting up. We developed their business plan and they commenced trading in February 2021. Scott and Paige used the NEA payments towards securing premises in Dunfermline and equipment for the studio. It was an extremely challenging time to set up as restrictions meant that they could not open to allow bands to rehearse etc. We provided ongoing support and they took this time as an opportunity to get the studio ready for when they could open. Meanwhile they began to sell music supplies online and hosted online gigs/networking opportunities for musicians. They were extremely successful and managed to build a good presence and following through social media and within the local community. Scott and Paige completed their 26-week trading in August 2021 and the studio and rehearsal space is going from strength to strength. With restrictions now easing and concerts and events opening up again, they are receiving a lot of bookings, sales and enquiries.

Scott and Paige have been extremely thankful and appreciative of the support received throughout the programme and have given excellent feedback to us.

The Pantry@Brag

One of our biggest achievements during the Pandemic has been the Pantry@Brag. In response to the Covid-19 outbreak in March 2020 Brag set up an Emergency People's Pantry and Food Delivery service all free of charge from our premises in Crosshill. The doors of the Pantry opened on 13 April 2020. The Pantry's main aim at that point was to support the most vulnerable people and families within the Benarty area who had been impacted by Covid-19. Initially we were supporting over 116 people per week with an average of over 750 meals going out into the community. The support from local businesses and the community was overwhelming with offers of Fridges and bakery items from Baynes the bakers, food drives to provide extra food, farmers offering potatoes and veg as well as local convenience stores providing stock in bulk such as pasta and rice as well as members of the local community coming forward to offer their support and volunteer with the Pantry. Along with all the local support we received a weekly delivery from Fareshare and Fife Council who were providing food with support from Scottish Government.

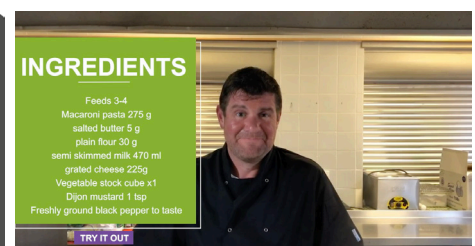
“For some of us going to the pantry is the only time that we are out the house and seeing/meeting people, social distancing of course.....you always get a wee blether and a friendly face at the pantry”- Pantry member

Throughout the year the Pantry continued to support those still affected by Covid-19 in the local community due to the economic impact, those struggling to buy food, low-income families and those who were 'in work' poverty. The Pantry offered local, affordable and nutritious food, whilst also providing a delivery service offering a lifeline to those who were still shielding/those socially isolated due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. Whilst the Pantry was a huge challenge and nothing that Brag had been involved in before it has by its nature brought the community together, there is real community spirit and there has been great support for the Pantry, not only through donations from residents and local businesses but people's time through volunteering in the Pantry or delivery drivers. The pantry reduces the stigma attached to those who may have previously been accessing a Food Bank and makes community residents feel equal when they know there are others using the Pantry. The hope was always that the Pantry would remain a lasting legacy long after the crisis had passed and as we move forward led by the Pantry members and volunteers' feedback and input, we aim to secure 3 year funding to develop the Pantry by offering Food Education programme and access to a social area where the community can meet after visiting the Pantry reducing social isolation and supporting individuals increase their mental health and wellbeing.

In the last year we have;



-  diverted 12,450KG of Food waste from landfill
-  received 4,992 Volunteer hours
-  registered 32 Volunteers
-  provided Food to 8,867 Individuals
-  provided 42,466 meals to the community



From the pantry cookery demonstration

***“it's been a god send and encourages me to cook more meals”
- Pantry Member***

Together Levenmouth

At the outset of the Covid-19 pandemic Brag's Levenmouth teams led by Together Levenmouth joined Fife Council's emergency food provision service based at The People's Pantry Leven. Local organisations and businesses joined forces to deliver food and essentials to the most vulnerable members of the Levenmouth Community during the first lockdown.



The emergency food effort

As we emerged from the first lockdown the team set about the challenge of creating a socially distant market which drew crowds of 1200 to Brag's Levenmouth Community Enterprise Centre and was the largest post lockdown market in Fife. We also ran a monthly car boot sale also at our Methil site which was well attended. The Together project is aimed at drawing footfall to Levenmouth with an emphasis on the town centre so the market was moved to the South Street/ Viewforth car park in Leven in November 2020. The new site could be safely managed to allow social distancing and one way system throughout ensuring the continued safety of all. They were extremely well attended as people had been desperate to get out and we had great feedback. Since then, the numbers have declined but this is in line with other markets in Fife. To stay as a market leader in this area, we have devised a marketing strategy which will be carried out which includes targets to get the footfall to a consistent 1500 people per market and to have 32 stalls with a waiting list. Our nearest competitor has between 15 and 20 stalls with a footfall of around 1000. In 2021, to help the profitability of the markets, we have applied for funding to buy our own gazebos and tables which will save us around £900 per month.



Socially distant market



Car boot sale

“First market I have managed to and it was great. Managed to get a few pressies and some lovely treats. Well done!”- Facebook user

Square Start Levenmouth began its 15-month project on 5th August 2019. We agreed to support no less than 40 families made up of at least 125 individuals over the full 15 months. By the conclusion of our 15-month project, we successfully supported: 43 Families - 49 Adults and 86 Children.

We delivered a full calendar of virtual activities to achieve all Key Milestones agreed with our funders. To support this, we provided our families with activity boxes to supply them with the tools and items needed to take part in all guided activities, including but not limited to— cooking on a budget, growing workshops, financial inclusion, fuel Budgeting, arts and crafts, decorating/Upskilling, and home maintenance. We organised Online Quizzes once a month in the evenings, Virtual Lockdown Break Out Party, Virtual Halloween Party as well as introducing Brag Santa Van 2020, which was open to all families within the local community supported by some of our parents within our Square Start Delivery.



Santa, Mrs Claus and the Grinch delivering gifts to the community via the Brag Santa Van

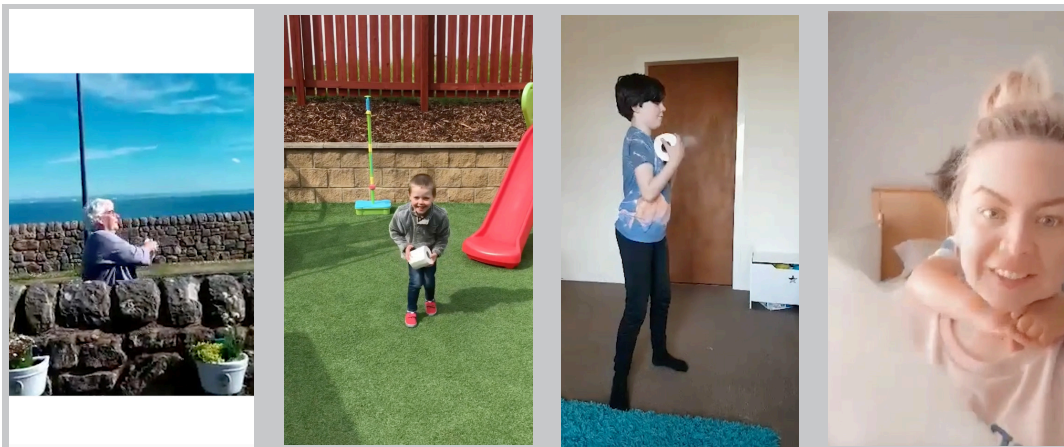
After changing our delivery onto an online platform only, we linked with the Peoples Pantry to support families with weekly food parcels as well as activity packs, which we put together, so we could deliver interactive sessions and directive lessons. We supported families with fuel poverty by having Cosy Kingdom regularly on our Zoom Coffee Afternoons. Support was provided regarding sanitary products, nappies as well as securing new electrical appliances through another partner Castle Furniture.

The team are constantly looking at new ways to engage with the families and share wellbeing and relaxation techniques with parents. They also help to guide them with coping strategies for the children. The families that the team work with come in various forms and each have their own individual support needs, some families have members on the autistic spectrum while others have individual health issues, but the team strive to offer inclusive support packages that ensure that every family member feels valued. Square start Levenmouth have also supported their parents to gain their elementary food hygiene certificate pre lockdown and are currently exploring other ways for the parents to gain new skills and qualifications in their new remote setting including an online first aid class to support families to have the confidence to be able to deal with minor ailments.

Square Start successfully delivered all milestones and again we added to our delivery with online tours at museums, safari parks and virtual walks. However, one of our biggest successes has been our monthly Quiz which we did in the evening so the younger children would be in their beds and the older children could potentially take part



We secured additional funding from Corra Foundation to support our families who were struggling with digital inclusion, and we supplied families who did not have internet connection with MiFi boxes so they could join all our online activity. With these additional funds we also filled and delivered additional packs with wooden flatpack window boxes they had to build and decorate, then plant the veg and herb seeds also in the pack. We gave additional art and crafts supplies for directed play.



As we were looking positively to the future and getting out of lockdown, we wanted to help the families to plan to become resilient and not to depend on the additional support given to them through the lockdown. We asked CARF to create a budgeting workshop to support

them moving out of the Lockdown, this was all financed through the Corra Foundation funds. We asked our families to start delivering milestones by delivering cooking on a budget and asking them to complete their health and Hygiene Certificates online. We also took part in our own Loo Roll Challenge.



We wanted to arrange an out of lockdown celebration event to help the families to look more positively to the future and we created a committee of 5 parents to oversee and plan this. However, our celebration event was delayed as we had hoped that the restrictions would allow us to have an event all together, this was not the case and for safety reasons the committee moved

our Lockdown Breakout to on online delivery via Zoom. In which we had a DJ, TikTok competitions, design competitions, a family quiz and bingo. Our committee arranged pick up points for all the families to collect their party box so we could make the celebration an interactive experience for everyone. The celebration was fantastic, and we had over 60 people attend.

Fife-ETC

Brag are the lead partner in Fife Employability and Training Consortium. Similar to the rest of the world we were pushed into a new way of working immediately into our funding for April 2020- March 2021. Taking into consideration our differing partners and their own organisational priorities this meant that the offer we had for the client group was as diverse as ever. Whilst its fair to say it took a few weeks to get going once we did there was no stopping us. Partners Clued Up and Frontline Fife were still very much at the forefront of dealing with housing crisis and addictions as the lockdown only exacerbated these issues and meant face to face was still required all be it within government guidelines for key workers.

We applied for and secured funding to supply laptops and MI-FI for some clients as the necessary move to embrace online delivery otherwise would have excluded some extremely vulnerable people from being able to get support. With staff working within free and/or low cost food delivery outlets this allowed us to be able to see people and also check they were ok. All the partners embraced utilising media online and we saw a lot of work going into campaigns to introduce services, staff and make the initial contacts feel as normal as possible. Clients were offered contact via TEAMS, Facebook messenger, WhatsApp, calls and zoom depending on what suited. A lot of work went into making sure we were supporting the right people. It's important to acknowledge that a lot of the clients we worked with were very much in crisis both around existing barriers with a worldwide pandemic adding pressure. That said there were highs as well as lows; staff felt that during the lockdowns they were really able to dig deep and be the lifeline for some of the clients and organise support that made immediate differences. There was also sadly an increase in domestic abuse and this was problematic to ensure we could keep engaging in any way possible.

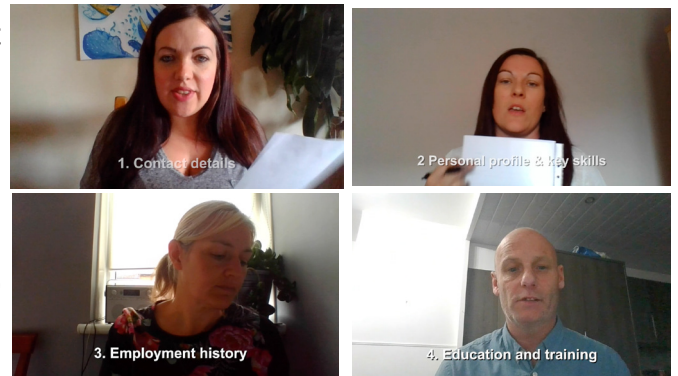
Fife-ETC PERFORMANCE	Target	Actual
1st Apr 2020 - 31st Mar 2021		
REGISTRATIONS	1100	996
EMPLOYMENT OUTCOME TOTAL	475	459
IN WORK SUPPORT		225

Because of all these changes we managed to achieve good performance given the circumstances and we think this year has been the most significant ever in highlighting the strength and quality of the staff across all our partners and is clearly a year for us to celebrate.

Brag Employability

As the world came to a standstill and we were all told to stay home, our traditional ALBA employability courses and face to face meetings with our clients had to stop. That didn't put the team off looking at ways to continue delivering a service at a time when people needed us the most. The employability team rose to the challenge of finding new and innovative ways of continuing to support people through one of the hardest years we have faced in regards to employability. As soon as lockdown hit we were sent home to work and the team started thrashing out ideas and plans to keep the project going and to ensure our presence was known at a time when people felt isolated. Our shift to online presence and social media was a game changer for us, the team promptly set up facebook pages which we used to reach out to our clients. We all joined various community and help pages throughout Fife, posting information on what we could do to help and letting people know we were there and how to reach out to us. We shared various coronavirus support links, kept clients up to date with what services were still available and where they could turn to it they needed more than just employability support. We posted motivational quotes and did a Meet The Team segment where we introduced ourselves and showed people how we were coping through the pandemic.

As our online presence grew through doing fun video challenges and informative posts we realised that there was still a lot of people out there that wanted to be out working so we set about doing one to one coaching through various methods including video calls, telephone, email and social media messaging. We continued to conduct our employability skills training through these methods and also offered online group training sessions for those clients that wanted to engage with others. The staff were available at all hours of the day, replying to messages, checking in with clients and ensuring that no one felt abandoned at a time when everything was closed.



The CV Challenge

Not only did we support with all things employability we also ensured clients knew where to turn to for various other type of support including wellbeing, food security and money advice using partners and external agencies. The adaptability and ideas from the team is what made this year a success despite all the obstacles put in our way, here is what the team achieved:

We registered 386 clients onto the project. We also supported a further 110 people and we completed and reviewed 233 CV's. Above all else we amazingly managed to secure employment for 144 of those clients which is something we are all very proud of considering how tough the year was.

Case Study- Adult Employability

Barry was referred to Brag looking for some work experience as he had been out of work for some time. A meeting was set up with Craiglea Timber Frames Ltd and they agreed to start Barry on a work placement and see how things progressed. Barry attended every day of his placement and showed super commitment and motivation, including taking two buses to get to his placement. He had the opportunity to use his existing woodwork skills and got involved with various tasks and learning new skills. We worked on his CV via phone call/video chat on his days off from placement and kept in touch weekly with both Barry and the employer to make sure all was going well.



Photo shows Jason, Barry and Scott

This was made a little bit more difficult due to the fact this all happened during Covid 19 restrictions. It was clear when we got to the halfway review of the placement that Barry was doing extremely well and had settled in with no problems at all. Barry completed his placement with glowing reports and was offered a part time contract of employment which he snapped up. Barry's life has seen lots of ups and downs, drugs being a big part of this. "I asked for support as I was determined to change things. I turned to my family, saying I wanted to change and thankfully they got behind me. Having my family behind me, really good support from social work and various organisations, really helped me to move forward and make the changes I needed to. "This opportunity has been life changing. It's put me back into normal civilization and I don't feel like an outcast. I am happy to say I am drug free, feel much fitter physically and my confidence has grown so much. Being in work is keeping me busy and focused. I now have a routine, structure, I am part of a team, I feel valued and I don't feel like an outsider now. I really enjoy the work and am really thankful to have been given a chance and the opportunity to get back into work. I feel proud of what I have achieved so far and now look forward to the future." Barry is now a full time member of the team.

Fife Council Service Level Agreement – Employability Support in response to Covid-19

Brag was asked to provide an employability support service within the Cowdenbeath area to those currently unemployed, specifically targeting those most affected by the Covid-19 crisis. The aim was to support people to gain the accreditation they required in order to up-skill or secure temporary work where, due to Covid-19 they had lost their job. We engaged with our target beneficiary group initially through The Pantry@brag which was at that time providing Emergency Food within the Benarty area as well as engaging with or taking referrals from Food Provision services in Lochgelly, Cowdenbeath and Kelty and through our social media platforms. Specific tailored employability support was offered to over 30 clients through face-to-face meetings (ensuring social distancing measures and appropriate PPE) or through digital platforms such as Zoom, Teams, Messenger or Facetime ensuring that clients could access the service in whatever way suited them and their situation.

We worked in partnership with Morrisons Supermarket to deliver Employability Masterclasses in interview techniques and writing applications, giving clients the opportunity to engage with an employer who was experiencing very high volumes of applications for jobs they were advertising during the pandemic. Morrisons felt that there was an opportunity to offer feedback and insight into what they were expecting from a job application and at interview as their experiences had not been positive during the pandemic. We ran 4 Masterclass sessions which were fully subscribed and enjoyed by all. Morrisons also offered work placement opportunities early 2021, however this had to be put on hold as we entered another lockdown period. We also offered support to over 30 businesses during the Covid-19 outbreak. Most businesses were our tenants based within Crosshill and our Methil offices and without this support they may have been at risk of closing due to the impact of Covid-19. The support included assistance during lockdown to identify and then access relevant national and local government support including access to business support grants and bounce back loans as well as support them with any rent/rates relief and with any concerns they had around bringing staff back to work during Covid-19 such as appropriate PPE, Social distancing measures or any immediate job vacancies they needed filled.



Start your Employability journey towards a positive future with Brag support today.

WE ARE NOW TAKING REGISTRATIONS.
Have you recently left school and are looking for direction?
Perhaps you have never held a job and are looking for help?
Do you live in the Cowdenbeath area
and need help with CV writing, interview techniques?
OR
Do you have a specific barrier to employment?
If so, send an email to AllMoodie@brag.co.uk

If you need employability help or advice regardless of age, get in touch. We have many contacts who offer employability services so if we can't help you, we will know who can.
You are not alone.

“The Future depends on what you do today”
Mahatma Gandhi



Case Study – Employability Support

‘Client A’ had unfortunately lost their job not long after the Pandemic and lockdown started. The impact of losing their job, Covid-19 and the lockdown had caused severe anxiety, resulting in the client really struggling to leave the house and looking for work was even more of a daunting thought but after seeing a post on social media advertising our provision they sent a message. This was a turning point for the client, after several conversations with our Employability Support Worker, support was put in place to help with their wellbeing, particularly focusing on the social anxiety, they needed to build their confidence and they were keen to get involved in volunteering to further build confidence and work on their social anxiety, the Pantry@brag was offered as an option and after some thought they accepted, whilst continuing to be supported and work on their CV and future employment goals and taking part in the Morrisons Masterclass sessions which definitely helped them, the positive feedback from the Morrisons Store Manager really highlighted to the client that they were capable and could move back into employment. ‘Client A’ continued to build their confidence, becoming a valued member of the volunteer team at the Pantry, although there were a few ups and down they were keen to now get a job, the pantry had allowed them to work on their fears of being out in public and with other people as well as gave them a purpose. Supporting the local community and giving back was also important to them. In January 2021 ‘Client A’ secured part-time employment and has continued to sustain that employment.



Our newly refurbished events space



Our new reception area in Methil

As well as committing to the purchase and then refurbishment of the new site in Methil we have also been investing in our Crosshill asset too with capital and revenue expenditure at both sites making them more efficient and effective. Rental yields have improved, and bad debt has reduced whilst rental costs have remained affordable and flexible to our tenants needs. The new spaces at Crosshill and Methil will assist us in providing much needed affordable space to micro businesses. In line with good practice we carried out a revaluation exercise at Crosshill and were pleased to see that our investments are paying off with nearly full occupancy and an increase of £325,000 in its valuation.

COVID had an impact on many of our partner tenants so we made sure we supported them all during lockdown with advice and assistance. We are pleased to report that all our businesses survived the pandemic

Case study Amanda Gillespie photography

The Photography business is based at our Crosshill Community Enterprise Centre and covers all of Scotland for Weddings, Event and Corporate Photography and covers the local and surrounding areas for family shoots, Boudoir and Model Experiences. Amanda has been doing this professionally since 2018 but has always been a lover of taking photos for personal use before this. Before being a Brag tenant Amanda rented a studio in Glenrothes but it wasn't a suitable space so she decided to hire a studio for a while on an ad hoc basis but this proved to be quite expensive. Amanda found out about business space at Brag as she works for Dublcheck Cleaning who are also based in Crosshill Community Enterprise Centre so she decided to enquire about a studio space for her own business.



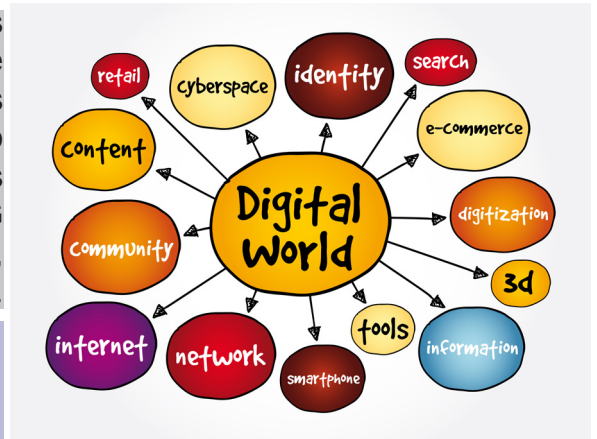
“The help from Brag to apply for grants made a big difference as I’m self-employed and was not working for 14 weeks” - BRAG tenant

In this year of digital change, BRAG created over 30 videos ranging from tutorials on zoom to allow clients to access the software from a smart phone to cookery demonstrations with the muffin man for the pantry@brag. In addition to client only “how to” employability and wellbeing videos we also produced promotional videos for various BRAG projects. Over the year we published 33 good news stories, sharing our impact within the communities we serve.

We received 14,000 unique website visits

We reached 215,348 facebook accounts

We reached 49,016 twitter accounts



FINANCIALS

2019-20

Income	£ 1,260,986
Expenditure	£ 1,202,691
Surplus	£ 33,295*

*Includes a £25,000 net loss on the sale of an investment property

Balance sheet value **£1,196,838**

2020-21

Income	£ 1,190,170
Expenditure	£ 1,148,749
Surplus	£ 41,421

Balance sheet value **£ 1,610,195**



Brag Enterprises is a Fife based charity supporting people, who in the main, are residing in disadvantaged areas of Fife to gain the training and employability skills to enable them to move into sustainable employment.

We also work closely with communities to improve their economic resilience.

Brag Enterprises Ltd is a company limited by guarantee registered in Scotland (SC068995) and registered as a Scottish Charity (SC003517)

www.brag.co.uk