

bigtimes



How your Lottery money is transforming people's lives



Inside:

A family saved by sport

Prisoner in his own home

A man with breast cancer

Bigtimes Scotland

Stock code BIG-BTSCOT04

Print Belmont Press

Photography Gail Blackwood and Peter Devlin

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In this issue...

Welcome to the Winter 2006/2007 edition of Big Times, where you can find how your Lottery money is transforming people's lives in Scotland, through the Big Lottery Fund.

Press coverage of Lottery funding often dwells on buildings, equipment and staff costs that are paid for. While these are all important, it is the impact these things have on individual people that really matters. We do not think of Big Lottery money just buying bricks or mini-buses. We think of it buying changes in people's lives – transforming them for the better.

This edition of Big Times gives a snapshot of six lives transformed.

Sarah Thomson tells how the activity club her

disabled daughter attends opens up breathing space for the whole family. Peter Quinn talks about beating the bottle with the help of a support group in Glasgow. Bill Steele gives an unusual perspective on breast cancer – from that of a male sufferer. Angela Paterson talks about making the move from homeless hostel to her own flat with the help of a Lottery funded group. Stacey Roberts tells about the help she receives to support her parenting through tough times. And Naheed Akhtar reveals how she got help to win the job of her dreams, overcoming language problems and partial sight.

For every Big Lottery funded project you hear about, there will be people like these feeling the benefit.



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Out of the rough

A simple game of golf is the safety valve helping Sarah and her family face the future.

Sarah Thomson looks like any other golfer on the course, but as she tees up her next drive there is much more at stake than simply winning or losing the game.

Sarah's daughter Maisie suffered severe jaundice as a baby, leaving her with cerebral palsy. She is confined to a wheelchair and is profoundly deaf.

"She's 12 now and I'm still changing nappies," said Sarah. "It has been like having a toddler all this time, and looking years

"His schoolwork suffered. I would try to help him with his homework but Maisie would be banging the table, screaming"

ahead with no change in sight. It is exhausting to say the least. She has to be lifted everywhere – in and out of the car. Nipping out for a pint of milk turns into a major expedition.

"You prepare yourself for having children, and that's a lot to take in by itself. Nothing prepares you to cope with a disabled child."

Sarah feels the resulting strain contributed to the break-up of

her marriage, leaving her a single parent to Maisie and her brother Hamish.

"Hamish has missed out on a lot," she said. "His schoolwork suffered. I would try to help him with his homework but Maisie would be banging the table, screaming."

For Sarah, the worst aspect of giving constant care to a child with cerebral palsy is that all

The Sporting Thomsons – Hamish, Sarah and Maisie.





Golf is Sarah's safety valve.

spontaneity has been taken out of her life. She is a very sporty person who played hockey and badminton at county level, and is keen on hillwalking and the outdoors. That side of her life seemed to be over for good.

As time went by Sarah felt ground down by the constant demands of looking after Maisie, and feeling guilty that Hamish was missing out on a normal childhood. Unable to cope, depressed and at her wits end, she was referred by the social work department to Jigsaw in Helensburgh.

Maisie goes to the Jigsaw project for three hours, three times a week, and Sarah reckons those nine hours keep her sane, and the family rolling on. It frees up time for her to spend with Hamish (13) – to help with schoolwork or just to go and watch him play football or rugby. And for Sarah herself, her big indulgence is that game of golf.

"I can't describe what it means to me, to devote my thoughts for a little while to something different. Just think about my next shot and forget the rest.

"If Jigsaw didn't free up the time for me to play golf, I don't know how I would cope."

But for the last two years Jigsaw

"If Jigsaw didn't free up the time for me to play golf, I don't know how I would cope"

has been there for the Thomsons. It may only be Maisie they work with directly, but Hamish and Sarah benefit too, packing in all the things many people take for granted into those three precious times in the week.

Life is far from perfect but Sarah faces the future with hope where

before she despaired. A year ago she remarried, and her new husband Nick is also a great help.

The sporting family goes from strength to strength. Hamish is captain of his school rugby team. Sarah is captain of her golf team. And Maisie loves being with the other children at Jigsaw, where she can swim, and enjoy the specialised play equipment.

Time for play has transformed the lives of every member of the family, and that time is thanks to Lottery funding.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Jigsaw in Helensburgh received £248,180 from The Big Lottery Fund to provide activities on weekday evenings, Saturday mornings and during summer holiday for 50 children and young people with disabilities.

Peter's last carry-out

Alcohol ruined Peter's health and imprisoned him in his flat for four years. Now he is out and about – sober – and helping others.

Fifty year old Peter Quinn took a long time to hit rock bottom.

He started drinking at 16 but the dependency crept up on him. For 23 years he worked in slaughterhouses and although his drinking was a problem, he managed it.

"You always have your eye on fitting in your next drink. By 5pm, you are in the pub," he said.

Then Peter was made redundant.

"That was a big blow," he said. "Things got really bad between the wife and I. We split and I moved into a flat on my own."

The drinking got worse. Peter lost his driving licence. His health deteriorated fast. He was in and out of hospital for conditions caused directly by alcohol, or for injuries sustained when he was drunk: a broken leg, broken ribs. To this day he has problems speaking, and can only walk with the

aid of crutches.

His physical health ruined and all his friends and family alienated Peter holed himself up in his flat and did not leave it for four years – never crossing the front door.

"The phone is a powerful thing, for good or ill," he said. "You can get your messages delivered, and you can get a carry-out delivered."

Peter was drinking at least a bottle of vodka a day. His life was drinking, sleeping and watching television.

"You always have your eye on fitting in your next drink"

But as he sat at home drinking himself closer and closer to an early grave, he thought back to his younger days when he used

to swim and work out in the gym. Brooding on how he had ended up, and mourning the man he used to be, he stayed in the same routine for a while, until one day he locked eyes on his latest carry-out – eight cans of lager. Thoughts of a fuller life had been preying on his mind, but this was a moment of particular clarity. He recognised the drink as the main barrier to him living a better life. He eyed the carry-out – and decided to make it his last.

And it was.

"You go through hell the first couple of weeks. The shaking is unreal," said Peter.

His GP gave him Librium to help with the withdrawal, and put him in touch with the Community Addiction Team. They in turn put Peter in touch with Greater Easterhouse Alcohol Awareness Project (GEAAP). He had kicked alcohol on his own, but it was Bill,



Peter enjoys a session in the gym.

the befriender from GEAAP who helped keep him off it.

"I took to this guy right away. He'd been through it too. He knew what he was talking about. He knew what I was talking about," said Peter.

The second time Bill visited it was to take Peter outside for the first time in four years. They went to the supermarket for messages, with no carry-out this time.

"I felt great. I wasn't nervous. Bill was with me," said Peter.

From there his life has been transformed. Further trips out saw Peter swimming and going to the gym just as he had longed to. He enjoys the various therapies GEAAP offer such as reiki, reflexology and acupuncture. He is now a befriender himself, and sits on the GEAAP board of directors as treasurer.

His health has been permanently impaired by alcohol, but with the help of the Lottery-funded group Peter is making the most of things. He regrets the harm he has done himself, but he is determined that he is not going to do any more. And he feels he can now give something back. Being a befriender for another man now gives him a sense of worth and

"I took to this guy right away. He'd been through it too. He knew what he was talking about. He knew what I was talking about"

just like with the volunteer who helped him – the two understand each other.

"GEAAP has given me a new beginning," said Peter.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Greater Easterhouse Alcohol Awareness Project received £149,643 from the Big Lottery Fund to provide information, advice and counselling on alcohol. It recruits and trains people who have overcome their own alcohol problems to become befrienders helping others.



Stacey (right) helps with the cooking.

Lost and found

There is no greater loss than the loss of a child. “It’s like losing the most important piece of your life”, says Stacey Roberts, whose two-month old son William died suddenly from a congenital heart condition.

Stacey Roberts is 31 and lives in Drumchapel, just outside of Glasgow. She is a bright young mum with a husband, Alan, and four children – Stacey Graham, Alan, Jared and Kady. However, Stacey has spent the last 10 years coming to terms with the death of her second baby.

Stacey said: “Although I had Stacey and Graham to keep me going, I just felt totally numb and didn’t know how to cope with the loss of losing my baby so suddenly. I had always liked a drink to be sociable but then it soon became that drink was the only way I could get through the day.”

She began to drink heavily. “At times it seemed like breakfast, lunch and dinner were liquid. I was trying to escape the reality of my situation and to block out what had happened to me. The harder I tried to escape the worse I felt – it was a horrible vicious circle that went on for a couple of years.”

Just over four years ago, a friend

told her about 3D Drumchapel. Stacey said, “It took me a while to summon up the courage to go along but one day something inside just clicked and I decided to go. This was the first time that I met Marion, who is the project co-ordinator there.”

3D Drumchapel is a drop in centre for young mothers supporting them through difficult times and helping them to become better parents.

Stacey said: “Straight away I felt at home: it was a safe haven and somewhere for me to escape

“I knew that I could go there and people would listen to my problems. I learnt how to face up to what had happened to our family”

from everything else. I started going on a regular basis but, to be honest, I was still drinking heavily for the first year. During that time I developed a close bond with Marion and, all that time, she was gently hinting about me not facing up to what was really bothering me. Then early one morning, and I remember it so clearly, I was sitting chatting to her and she asked me if I enjoyed drinking and I honestly couldn’t reply that I did.”

Marion put Stacy in touch with Alcoholics Anonymous and she has remained sober since her first visit there four years ago. However, the constant support from Marion and the other friends she has made at the project kept her going. Stacey said: “I knew that I could go there and people would listen to my problems. I learnt how to face up to what had happened to our family.”

Marion said: “The death of a child is a particularly difficult and painful type of grief – no one really



Story time at 3D Drumchapel.

expects their child to die before them. Parents cope with their grief in all sorts of ways, however it is only by acknowledging the loss and finding ways of accepting the reality of the situation that can help them to express their feelings and to grieve for their child. After William died Stacey turned to drink to enable her to cope with the enormity of her loss.”

Both Stacey and the other members of her family can be found at the project up to four times every week and says it has turned her life around. “The friends that I have made here, both with the staff and other mothers, are amazing. We are like a family and all help each other.

“I have learned so much as well that has really helped our family life – we learn the basics of first

aid and good parenting classes which Alan and I have found really useful – especially the bit about discipline – which is good to know when you have four kids running about at home.

“Marion and 3D Drumchapel have turned my life around and changed our family life forever – I think that they were put in my

“Marion and 3D Drumchapel have turned my life around and changed our family life forever”

path for a reason. I have now come to terms with what has happened

in my life so far and have learned that the only person who can face up to my problems and change them is me. To think what not only my life but our whole family would have been like if I had not come here is just too horrible to imagine.”

FURTHER INFORMATION

3D Drumchapel Centre puts parents in touch with support agencies to help them combat a variety of problems such as alcohol and drug abuse and to get access to training and learning opportunities and benefits advice. They also hold parenting classes and run a crèche. In 2004, the group received £60,000 from our Developing Communities programme to part-fund a full-time and part-time project worker.

Coping with breast cancer – as a man

Bill is the only man at the breast cancer support group that helps its members cope with the condition.

Bill Steele (51) is just back from a beach holiday, and he is delighted with his new nipples.

“You want to be able to take your shirt off and swim, but you don’t want people staring,” said Bill, who had the tattoos applied after undergoing two mastectomies.

“They do the job.”

Breast cancer in men is rare but not unheard of. Bill is doubly unusual in that when his cancer came along, he already knew about the condition.

As a young man he knew a German exchange student and eventually met his friend’s professor from back home. The professor died of breast cancer some years ago. But when Bill’s wife found the lump on his right breast he remembered the German, and guessed, with a feeling of dread, he now had the same problem.

“It was actually a relief when

they confirmed it,” he said. “Getting rid of any uncertainty.”

Bill kept a journal during his initial treatments, to help him make sense and come to terms with what was happening to him. He recorded his feelings:

...I spent the first of many sleepless nights. Even after taking the painkillers and a sedative the doctor had given me. As soon as my head hit the pillow my brain kicked into gear and all the horrible imaginings you could think of arrived. A headache became a brain tumour a pain in my stomach another. I imagined it was spreading even as I thought about it and my hand forever found its way to the hated lump to check that it was still there...

After having one breast removed Bill went on to chemotherapy, and then a longer-term course of drugs. His reaction to the drugs

suggested he might be susceptible to problems in his other breast so as a precaution it was also removed.

His cancer is in remission now but life is harder than it used to be. He lives with a daily cocktail of medicine – one chasing off the effects of the other. He is diabetic. It is not clear if that has been caused by the cancer treatment or if he would have developed it anyway. And he suffers from osteoporosis as a side effect of one of his treatments. Another drug caused him to experience symptoms of the female menopause – complete with hot flushes.

His lowest ebb came not during the rigours of chemotherapy and surgery. It was after all the fuss had died down, and he was home. Depression hit him hard and out of the blue.

“I felt abandoned,” he said. “Just bleak and quite empty. It was delayed shock, I suppose. When

Bill shares a laugh at Kiama.



you are diagnosed you have appointments and treatments, things to find out and doctors to see. Suddenly it was just me, with nothing to do to take up my thoughts.”

Loneliness became an issue. Friends and family were supportive, but Bill reckons there are some aspects of cancer that only other sufferers will understand.

That was the point where the Kiama Trust played its part. Bill says the members help each other through the hard times and that talking to people there has made all the difference – keeping him positive and making the most of things.

Bill is the first and still only male sufferer to attend the Trust, which helps breast cancer sufferers in Ayrshire.

“I have never felt less than welcome,” he said. “Thinking back though, it must have been strange for some of the women when I turned up.”

The Trust gives sufferers

a chance to talk about the problems they are facing and provides stress-busting relaxation treatments like aromatherapy and head massage – but it is another therapy that is Bill’s favourite.

“Reflexology is fantastic,” he said. “I wish I could have someone permanently working on my feet. It’s unbelievable.”

Throughout his experience Bill was struck by the fact most sources of information were geared for women – and he vowed to push for more male-oriented material. His diary records this frustration:

...After three weeks, the leaflet explained, I would be able to do up a back fastening bra and the side zip in a dress. I found it amusing in one sense and sad also because there was no indication given in any literature that men could succumb to this disease – albeit rarely and I resolved to make the leaflets a bit more PC....

He has now helped Breast Cancer Care produce a booklet for men. He still crusades to stop people using the term “male breast cancer.”

“It’s just breast cancer. Women get it. Men get it. But it’s the same condition,” he said. He has also pushed for parity with women sufferers over reconstructive work – such as his own nipple tattoos.

Whether he’s dealing with his own lot or campaigning on behalf of others, Bill says Kiama helps keep him going, and depression at bay.

As Bill confided to his diary:

...The members of the Kiama trust have given me a platform to present my hopes and fears, to explain my feelings and learn how to cope with living with a life threatening illness. Listening to others, who have walked the same road, has truly made me understand the nature of empathy and I feel privileged and grateful to have been exposed to that...

FURTHER INFORMATION

It is rare for men to have breast cancer. Approximately 290 cases are diagnosed in the UK every year – compared to over 41,000 in women.

The Kiama Trust aims to reduce isolation and stress amongst breast cancer sufferers in Ayrshire and has received £41,000 from the Big Lottery Fund.

In from the cold

When Angela left home as a teenager, independence was tougher than she expected, but with the help of Edinburgh Cyrenians Trust her life is now back on track.

Like most 17-year-old girls, Angela Paterson wanted to have some independence. Juggling a Beauty Therapy Course at college with a part-time job, she wanted to be treated as an adult and have the freedom and respect that goes with it.

But life at home was difficult. Her mum had suffered from depression for years and things got worse after she had a breakdown and had to go into hospital for a few weeks. Angela took time off school to look after her two younger sisters and felt that she struggled to have her voice heard.

"My mum and dad were too overprotective, especially my dad," she said. "They were constantly telling me what to do. I was never allowed to do anything after work and I had no freedom to do anything or see anyone and had a curfew of half past seven every night."

Things came to a head one night after a verbal and physical fight with her mum. After a sleepless night thinking over her options, Angela decided to leave home.

Now 21, she recalls: "I couldn't take it anymore. Me and mum had a severe clash of personalities and I knew it would never get better if I stayed at home. I needed to break free and start being me. I knew that my dad had more than enough on his plate with work and taking care of mum and the rest of the family."

Angela left home with only the clothes she was wearing and her mobile phone.

"I had no idea where I was going. I found myself just wandering around for hours in floods of tears", she said.

Angela feared the worst – a life on the streets. She headed straight to the Job Centre to see what her options were and whether they might be able to find her a place to stay. The Job Centre found her a place in secure emergency accommodation.

She spent her first long and lonely night in an open door outreach hostel, which provides emergency accommodation and food for homeless people. During the three weeks she spent there, Angela became increasingly

unhappy as other residents badgered her about whether she used drugs and alcohol.

"I found that really scary and could not relate to anyone else living there," she said.

"I felt vulnerable and intimidated and was determined not to go down the drug road."

Angela then moved into another hostel but she could no longer afford college and had to go on the dole. This was far from the life she had imagined.

"A lot of my friends did not want to know me anymore. Everyone staying at the hostel was using drugs and alcohol – I hated it. I had no one to talk to. I could not trust anyone. People were stealing from me. I felt isolated and lonely. I'm such a people person and all of a sudden I did not seem to have anyone I trusted around me.

"I was on an emotional rollercoaster, I wanted to go home but so badly wanted a life to myself and to have the freedom to do my own thing, so I decided to stick it out.

"I phoned home quite regularly and relations were getting better

Angela's life is back on track.



but I knew I could not go back. My key workers gave me the best advice I have ever had. They told me to stick it out and if I gave up and went back and the same thing happened a year down the line, I would be back to square one again. However, they did encourage me to build bridges with my parents, which was great.”

Although, Angela was putting on a brave face she was emotionally distressed and suffered depression.

For three months, she struggled emotionally and financially and felt like a failure. During this time she began to start calling on the Edinburgh Cyrenians Trust for help after she saw their details on a notice board at the hostel.

The Trust provides support and learning opportunities for people who are rebuilding their lives after homelessness. These include recreational activities, training, volunteering, educational and employment opportunities.

The project helped organise Angela's next move into secure accommodation, which is the stage before finding your own home.

Angela continued to share for a few more difficult months before finally being offered a place of her own.

“The Cyrenians Trust have helped me with everything and helped me get my own place sorted. They've listened to and understood me and given me support and guidance in every way, as well as teaching me how to open up more and handle

my emotions. They've also been instrumental in building the bridges with my parents. The simple things like going out for the day or going to football training through the Cyrenians have made such a big difference to me.”

The long emotional journey has certainly taken its toll on Angela who eventually gave in and dabbled in drugs and recently tried to take an overdose.

“I hated myself, felt worthless and was completely lost, I felt as though my life was not going anywhere. My best friend had died of diabetes and I took an overdose the night before the funeral – it was the last straw.”

The project put Angela on a three-week course called “People with Potential.” The course aims to teach essential skills such as team working, communicating, confidence, self-esteem and interview techniques.

The course has given Angela the boost she needed and through the continued help of the Cyrenians, she got a job working in the call centre at Sky.

“I absolutely love it – I'm dead

chuffed. I feel as though I am somebody and that's all I've ever wanted,” she said.

“Running away was maybe not the best way to go about things but now my relationship with my family is so much stronger than ever before and I'm really happy.

“I didn't think that there were people in the world that could be so supportive and helpful. They gave me exactly the help I needed and I don't think I would be here today if it wasn't for them. The workers at the Cyrenians have given me the confidence and courage to believe in myself and have turned my life around”.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Edinburgh Cyrenians Trust provides learning opportunities for people rebuilding their lives after homelessness. Its People with Potential project provides employment help and transitional support to young people disadvantaged by homelessness. It has received £159,386 from the Big Lottery Fund.

Just the job

Moving thousands of miles away from family and friends to pursue your career is a daunting prospect for any youngster but contact with a Lottery funded project has allowed Naheed Akhtar (pictured right) to take the first steps to her dream job.

Naheed Akhtar is a bright and bubbly 21 year old whose smile lights up every room she walks into. She moved over from Pakistan last summer to study social care at Anniesland College in Glasgow.

"I knew that the education system was good over here and I wanted to try living and learning in another country," she said. "My parents were a bit scared at first as I don't have any family here but they soon came round to the idea and they are now happy and proud that I am here."

Naheed is partially sighted in one eye. "My right eye is so much worse than my left one and sometimes it takes me a bit of time to adjust and to recognise faces," she said.

"Because of the problems and experiences I have had with it I always knew that I wanted to help people in some way or other – whether it be

social work or social care."

When she first came over to Scotland Naheed found it lonely and difficult to adjust to her new way of life – the language was especially difficult.

"For the first four or five months I found it difficult to keep up in my classes. I found it hard to understand the accents; they were talking so fast I just thought to myself, 'What is going on?'"

But eventually she settled in and, being the person she is, made lots of friends in her class.

However, she was still struggling with life in a new country. She had to get a job to give her practical experience for her college course and money to live. This was proving to be difficult as she was still finding the language a problem and she did not know how to apply for the kinds of jobs she was looking for.

One of her classmates told her about a project called The

Opening, which had helped her find a placement. The Opening supports unemployed people across Glasgow who have a disability, health problem or impairment. The project is managed and resourced by staff who themselves have an impairment or disability.

"Right away the staff were so helpful, they made me feel like an old friend"

Naheed was assigned to a job access worker Nichola Shearer and benefited straight away from her advice. "Even on my first visit I got so much general information that has helped me – even silly things like finding out about buses was a big help. Right away the staff were so



Naheed loves her job.

helpful, they made me feel like an old friend.

"I had drafted a CV but, to be honest, it wasn't very good," she said. "They showed me what it should look like and how best to describe my own abilities. Nichola helped me to prepare for interviews as they made me extra nervous. They even told me what words I should use and shouldn't use.

Nichola said: "I arranged for Naheed to go for part-time positions which she might be interested in and told her to text my mobile anytime, day or night, when she was feeling anxious. We even provided transport to take her to and from interviews as the stress of getting there was a worry and she would not be out of pocket as she is not entitled to any benefits over here.

Meetings took place in the local coffee shop before interviews or after college to do interview

preparation. Naheed went for several interviews, without success, but her confidence was continuing to grow all the time. After each interview she would meet Nichola to go over what had happened and try and learn from her mistakes.

Naheed went for an interview as a part-time support organiser for an organisation who work with people with learning difficulties. She said: "This was the one I wanted and I was so, so nervous before the interview. When they phoned me to tell me I had the job Nichola was the first person I wanted to speak to. I couldn't believe it."

Naheed is looking forward to starting her job which will be the first practical step to achieving her dream of helping other people. She said: "The Opening has certainly lived up to its name and opened up a whole new world to me. I can't

thank them enough for all the support and help that they have given me."

"The Opening has certainly lived up to its name and opened up a whole new world to me"

FURTHER INFORMATION

The Opening can provide individual support and help with compiling a CV, interview skills and techniques, and completing job applications. As well as helping people find jobs the staff can help with welfare rights and benefits advice. The Opening received £466,006 from the Big Lottery Fund under the Developing Communities Programme.

