



Equal Futures

In the Loop - Edition Five November 2021



Update from Jayne - Managing Director

I hope you've all had a chance to enjoy the beautiful colours of Autumn and been out amongst the fallen leaves on a cold but sunny day. I love this time of year. Although the nights are long and dark we can 'coorie doon' and enjoy the season's activities, from Hallowe'en and Bonfire Night to St. Andrew's Day and Christmas – which isn't far away now.

It was lovely to see so many of you at the Hallowe'en tea in Glasgow last month. What fun we had! I look forward to seeing you again at our next social gathering before the end of the year.

As ever, we've been very busy behind the scenes too. We are coming towards the end of our scoping work across 4 different local authority areas. I'll soon carry out some analysis of the data and this will help the Board and I to decide the areas we want to expand to ensure more people can benefit from the support of Equal Futures.

We recently had a very productive Strategy Day and explored the direction we want to go in over the next 3 years. We recognised that we need to generate sufficient income from our fundraising activities to make our ambitions for growth become our reality. I'm now in the process of drafting the Strategy and look forward to hearing your input in due course.

We had a successful AGM in Edinburgh on Thursday 28 October, and it was good to see familiar and new faces. Thank you for joining us. The team deftly navigated some technical glitches and presented about the work they've been doing in each of the three geographics areas we cover. Hopefully we will cover even more areas in future.

Following our AGM we bid a fond farewell to some of our Trustees. Patricia Jackson, Gillian Brown and Julie Golding have all stepped down from the Board. We thank them for all their service to Equal Futures over the years and wish them every success and happiness for the future.

Have a wonderful Autumn folks, and coorie doon to enjoy this colourful edition of our newsletter.

Jayne

Volunteer Training Days

Early October saw another round of remote volunteer training delivered to a new intake of volunteers.

We are thrilled to be able to deliver the training this way which enables the coordinators to mentor Volunteers from different geographical areas all in one place. This allows for open discussion and knowledge and experience sharing.

A group of fantastic and keen individuals attended 3 online training sessions to ready them for their volunteering journey. These volunteers are a mix from both Glasgow and Ayrshire areas.

Below is some feedback from our newly trained volunteers about the training:

“After joining as a volunteer with Equal Futures over the summer I was eagerly anticipating undertaking the training and learning more about the work which Equal Futures perform and the people they assist.

The training took place over 3 sessions, all of which were very informative and engaging. The sessions were held over zoom but it was still ensured that myself and the other volunteers had the opportunity to discuss the content with each other.

Feedback from our newly trained volunteers about the training (continued):

There was a very supportive and friendly environment where I felt free to ask as many questions as I needed. The training has left me feeling prepared and excited to start volunteering with Equal Futures.”

- K.

“After taking part in the equal futures training, my understanding of learning disabilities, difficulties and mental health issues massively improved.

Donna, Kelly and Jane were great teachers and approachable for any questions or queries we had. They made sure we were in a comfortable learning environment and supported our learning processes. They detailed relevant information and made me excited to continue as part of the volunteer team!”

- C.

We are looking forward to planning in another training session soon

Kelly, Donna and Jane



School Transitions Project

Kelly and Donna have started a transitions project for some S6 pupils who are due to leave school next summer. They have been working closely with pupils in St Ninians High School in East Renfrewshire and soon to be delivering sessions in Loudoun Academy in East Ayrshire.

The programme will cover topics such as decision making, confidence building, rules and consequences, budgeting, and time management. This is an excellent opportunity for the pupils to work together in a safe group space where they can build on their existing abilities and learn new skills to ensure the transition process goes as smoothly as possible.



Ayrshire project co-ordinator at St Ninians High School.

Creative Corner - Healthy Recipes picked by Liam

Tomato, basil and orzo soup

An easy, filling and delicious soup.

Preparation time: 5 mins

Cooking time: 30 mins

Servings: 4

Ingredients:

- 2 tins of chopped tomatoes
- 2 carrots - washed and roughly chopped
- 2 cloves of garlic - chopped finely
- 1 onion - peeled and diced
- 1 litre of vegetable stock
- 1 large handful of fresh basil leaves
- 1 teaspoon of oregano
- 225g orzo
- Salt and pepper - to taste
- Low calorie cooking spray or spray oil



Method:

1. In a large, deep pan, fry the onion and garlic using low calorie cooking spray/spray oil for 2-3 minutes until the onion has softened
2. Add the tinned tomatoes, vegetable stock, oregano and carrots and simmer (uncovered) on a low heat for 30 minutes
3. In the meantime, cook the orzo according to the packet instructions
4. Season the soup, throw in the fresh basil, and blend using a hand blender or food processor until the soup is nice and smooth
5. Drain off the cooked orzo and stir into the blended mixture
6. Season to taste with salt and pepper and serve with a little extra fresh basil

Tip: A little grated parmesan on top of this is also lovely, and a few dried chilli flakes adds a nice kick

Recipe sourced from: www.theslimmingfoodie.com/tomato-basil-orzo-soup/

Creative Corner - Healthy Recipes picked by Liam

Raspberry baked oats

A warm, satisfying and filling breakfast.

Preparation time: 5 mins

Cooking time: 20 mins

Servings: 1

Ingredients:

- 40g rolled oats
- 2 tablespoons fat free natural yoghurt
- 2 teaspoons of sweetener
- 1 egg
- 50g raspberries
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Low calorie cooking spray



Method:

1. Mix together all of the ingredients and leave to rest for 2 minutes
2. Pop into a small oven proof dish sprayed with low calorie cooking spray, or into muffin cases
3. Bake at 180c for 20 minutes until golden brown on top
4. Serve warm with yoghurt and fruit

Our next newsletter is out in January, we would love input from all our Equal Futures community.

If you have any stories to share, recipes, ideas for our Craft Corner. Interesting stories, poems you may want to let everyone know an exciting achievement or even introduce a favourite pet please contact your local coordinator who will be more than happy to help you contribute.

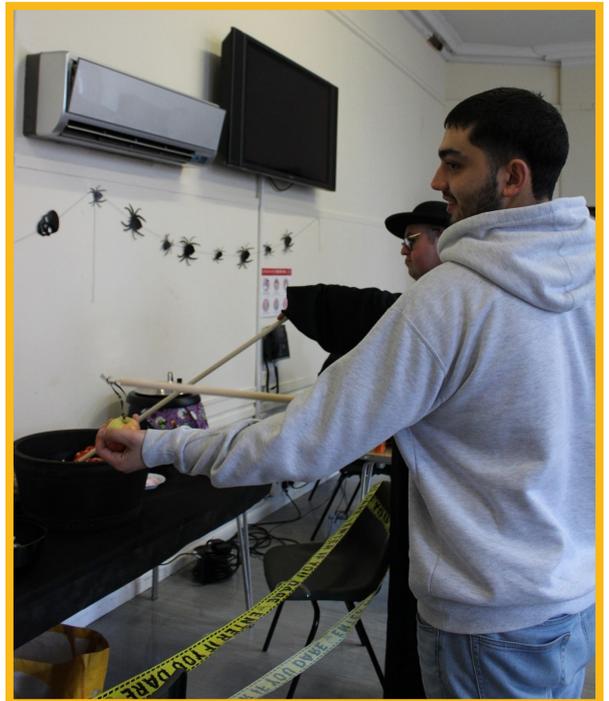
Recipe sourced from: www.theslimmingfoodie.com/raspberry-baked-oats/

Halloween Event

On Tuesday 26 October we held our Halloween High Tea event at the Community Central Halls in Maryhill, Glasgow. We all had a fantastic day, with lots of games and a best dressed competition. The costumes were all brilliant and it was great to be able to finally meet up and have a catch up!

These events give our volunteers and our community members the perfect opportunity to mingle together and form new friendships. It was a truly joyful outcome.





Feature Article

Friend of Equal Futures Lea Berta has written an article about their experiences.

Empowered, Not Estranged

The people I should have
-by Lea Berta

To my Friends and support team, and to W., JJ, my Baxter and The Horses.

A woman is getting off a plane. Her colourful ethnic clothes are distinguishing her from anybody else around. She has her belongings contained in two large tote bags, her cheeks stained with the dust of a strenuous journey that was a mile too long, and the silent marks of some tears. Many more to come. She may never see most of her relatives again and her origin soon will be reduced to a one-liner on a social housing application, her national identity becoming an input next month in a charity's database who will send her food-packs each week until she finds a job.

When she will tell her story to her new coworkers in three months' time, they will comment 'Good for you!', praising her bravery for taking the risk to start a new life in a new country, away from the conflict that is raging through her land, away from the continued devaluing of the vulnerable, and far away from a traditional system that would force her to be an everyday servant to a home, a man, or an older woman owns.

They will never question whether it was the right decision that she left, or suggest that she should perhaps get back in touch with her abusers to talk it out. She will be considered an example of courage, and of determination. People will invite her over for a meal or offer her time spent together, visiting local sights or a patisserie. Put her in touch with folks they know. People she could know too.

When I was around five years old, there was a curious little box under the Christmas tree that one of my relatives placed there for me. My anticipation couldn't be higher as I opened it. The object inside had a strict square shape, and a tiny door on the front. It was a toy size 'mosogép', a washing machine in Hungarian.

When we were playing, little girls like me often had to stop participating, then we were called to the table to help set it, while the boys played on. There was no narrative accompanying my Christmas washing machine, but I was encouraged to try it - a lot. There was no explanation why I had to quit playing and why the boys didn't before meal times. The silence of those things felt puzzling and painful to me.

I was an A student in primary school, a 'fiver' how they called it because five was the best grade you could get. I was dreaming about becoming an astronaut or a TV presenter. Once one of my parents died - who was my Best Friend, my teacher, my Safe Place and my mentor - my surviving parent was abusive to me from the month after the funeral when I was less than ten years old, till the moment I moved out of their home in my mid-twenties.

I don't blame them much; they were abused too, by their parent, by their sibling. Generation after generation passed like that, in fact. And possibly that was the reason why they never stopped their new partner either when they were hurting me.

I spent many hours watching planes taking off from Ferihegy International Airport, somewhere on the edge of the city, through a little window in the staircase when it became dark enough so that I could see their hopeful lights well. I very strongly imagined that I was on one of those planes, and I spent a large part of my free time perfecting my English. During the day with TV channels from the UK and after midnight, when some local channels gave space to foreign programs, those broadcasted from the US.

I was forbidden by my parent to speak about their partner's visits to our home to other people and I was told that I should really be kind to our guest because their daughters from their first marriage didn't talk to them... I didn't know how to be kind to myself as well, or how to walk in to a police station to speak to an officer, but I knew I could speak English all day long. Maybe all the time if needed, and I wasn't afraid of flying at all. I knew I could get out of there. From that world where older women simply changed the subject when I turned to them for help, trying to speak about things I felt should not be happening to me, about the kind of things I thought my boyfriend should not be saying to me. About his aggression.

When I was little, I was watching those planes shifting into the air, wondering if there is somewhere a distant relative of mine, maybe, who would soon find out about me and would come for me, and would take me away with them, to a much better life. But gradually I realised: I will need to be that relative to Me. So, throughout some years, I got myself accustomed to the idea of getting on a plane alone and possibly never coming back. It happened one June afternoon in 2013. I remember how deep the air was able to enter my lungs that day, after what felt like a century, yet I was only in my thirties.

Through a counselling centre in Scotland for abuse survivors, I tried for almost two years to create at least a friendship with my one living parent. (Mainly out of respect towards the parent I lost so early.) Attempted one communication after the other, to try and find a common ground to build a non-harmful connection on. But my parent did not want to discuss what happened in the house while I was growing up and never acknowledged my need to get support for my post-traumatic stress symptoms.

After a while, I couldn't do this anymore, their gaslighting carried on and I had no sense of future. When I told the therapist that I eventually went no-contact to save my sanity and wellbeing, she looked at me and said: 'You know, you are so brave. I really admire you, Lea. I don't know if I would have had the strength to try to find a resolution as long as you did.' That felt really good amidst the chaos of realising that I didn't just lose my surviving parent: I lost all the people too that were connected to me through them. And, being an undiagnosed autistic child, teen and then adolescent, that was all the people I had around me regularly. But it was still okay - because finally I could fully breathe. Those grey skies above me never seemed bluer! The horizon was opening up for me and, surprisingly, the idea of next week and the week after that was suddenly not depressing me.

I still do not understand what the word *estranged*, the thing supposedly I am as an adult, means. I did not become *strange* in any way, and definitely not strange like my abusers who thought what they were doing to me was okay. I wasn't *straying* from anybody either, since they disappeared first from the nurturing roles they were supposed to play in my life.

I don't understand the lines in Christmas services like 'There's no parent who would not give everything for a reunion with a long-lost child!' going without the sentence: 'There's no adult without a supportive family who would not give everything for a lunch invitation from a local family'. I really do not get it why comments do not go beyond "That's a shame" and "So sorry" when I share my story of escaping people-hell to live a better life. The reason why I do not use the words 'mother', 'father', 'stepfather', 'brother' or 'sister' in this writing is because I feel that it doesn't matter.

My story is also the history of many other grown-ups who chose safety and health over the people who raised them. Empowered.

We are your new colleague,
your flat mate,
the person near you on the bus,
that lone person next door,
a student from abroad,
your employer,
staff member in your favourite café,
the smiling visitor services assistant,
that person with the LGBTQI badge in the bank window.

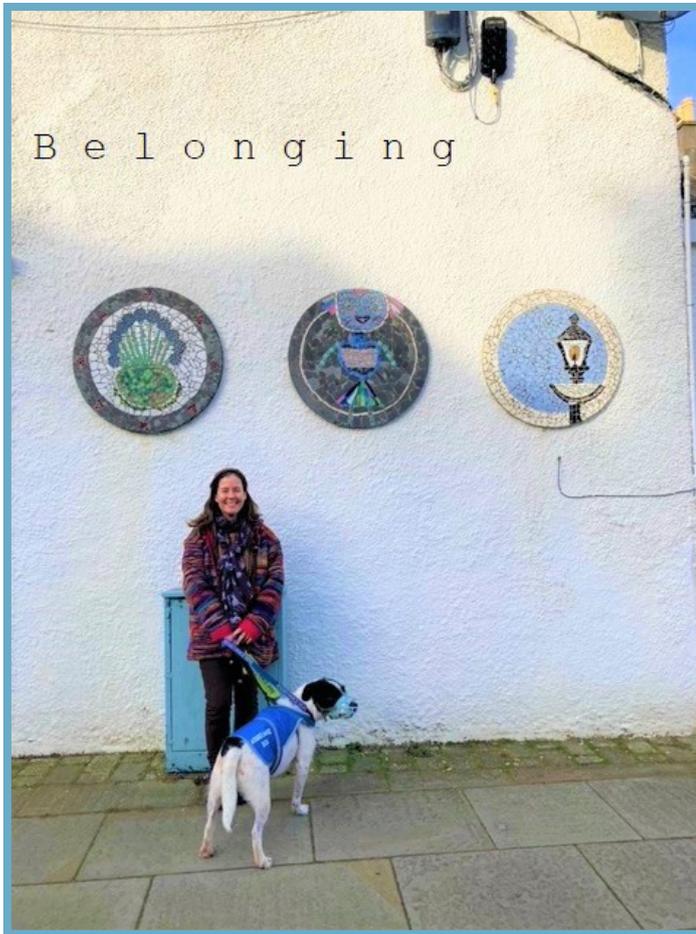
We may not have a skin tone different than yours.

We may even speak the same language as you. Or come from the same town. The same area. Same neighbourhood.

And we need you. To be our buddy. Even our friend. Our chosen Family. Our next of kin we can write on a form we need to fill.

Someone to tell us how courageous and determined we are, again and again if needed. And that we are never expected to go back to that 'land of war' where we are originally from. Because we deserve much much better.

These are the kind of people I should have.



'Blue Skies'

Photographed by
Isabella Webster
(November 2021, South
Queensferry),
word-art by Lea Berta.

Lea standing in front of a historical cottage with their support dog, Mr. Baxter. Lea is wearing a colourful coat and a small brown hat, and Baxter his blue working attire. The edited word against the white wall reads 'Belonging'. There is a patch of blue sky visible in the top right corner, above some circular mosaics on the facade of the old building

Lea lives in the Lothians with their autism support-dog, Mr. Baxter and completed their BSc (Hons) combined degree this autumn, predominantly in Social Sciences. Fun fact: the photo that goes with this article was actually taken in the morning of the graduation celebrations.

The author's original qualifications are in radio journalism and community development (2006) and Lea is passionate about using the media as a tool to raise awareness of issues of inequality in society. They love Nature, animals, flowers, trees, old books and pancakes, and reading news from around the world (very) frequently.

Lea can be contacted at: leapublish@gmail.com

Equal Futures 2022 events calendar - January to June

Month	What's on
January 2022	Newsletter out Mid-January
February 2022	Burns Lunch: Equal Futures Social Ayrshire Venue and details to be confirmed
March 2022	Newsletter out Mid-March
April 2022	Spring celebration: Equal Futures Social Event Glasgow Venue and details to be confirmed
May 2022	Newsletter out Mid-May
June 2022	Picnic in the park: Equal Futures social Event Edinburgh Venue and Details to be confirmed Equal Futures celebrates Volunteer's week

How to contact us

Your first point of contact is the Project Co-ordinator for your area, and you can reach them by email or telephone as follows:

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Please note that all Equal Futures staff are home based and don't have an office. If you no longer wish to receive our Newsletter please contact Shona Fleming.