

Cyrenians aim to help even more out of poverty #tellyourstory



More than a quarter of Scots believe poverty is a result of laziness according to a new poll published by a Scottish charity seeking to challenge public perceptions of those in need.

The poll, commissioned by Cyrenians as part of their newly launched “Tell Your Story” campaign aimed at changing public perceptions of those living in poverty, found that 28% believed poverty was a result of laziness on the part of those living in poverty. 24% believed a lack of willpower was another contributory factor to people living in poverty

The same study found that the majority of Scots think that unemployment (76%), addiction (59%) and family circumstances (56%) are main causes of poverty.

Scottish people believe early intervention and working with those most at risk, along with providing more jobs, are the best ways to reduce poverty, with only a tiny minority backing reductions in benefits. The poll found that Scots believed providing jobs (59%), working with families at risk of poverty (58%), early intervention (53%) and providing education (51%) were the best ways the Government should help those living in poverty in Scotland; with only a tiny minority (6%) believing cutting benefits would do so.

In order to tackle poverty, Cyrenians aim over the next five years to increase the number of people they support annually

from 4400 to 6000 people in a major expansion of their work in Scotland as they respond to a rise in demand from those who feel excluded from family, home, work or community. These interventions include:

- **Conflict Resolution, Mediation and Support for Families** – Cyrenians worked with over 1400 families and young people to resolve issues, repair relationships and increase confidence in dealing with conflict.
- **Addictions** – Cyrenians peer-led recovery service supported 650 people on their journey away from addiction
- **Homeless Prevention** – advice and support, helping people to keep their homes. 87% of 630 customers last year said Cyrenians helped them avoid homelessness
- **Work and Skills** – changing lives by bring people and employers together. Last year Cyrenians supported over 1200 clients into employment, training or work experience.
- **Good Food** – sharing food that would otherwise go to waste. At present Cyrenians provide food to 2,000 vulnerable people each week, along with 180 cooking and budgeting classes per year.

The leaders of Scotland's 5 main political parties, along with major celebrities such as Irvine Welsh, Mark Greenaway, Brian Cox, Grant Stott, Bill Paterson, and Mark Cousins have backed Cyrenians call for people to tell their own personal story to remind us that everyone has a past, a present and a future. Cyrenians aim is to shine a light on the different ways anyone can find themselves in poverty in order to change public perceptions of those in need. (See Notes to Editors).

To encourage others to tell their story, Cyrenians has published a series of case studies of people they have worked with and who, for a variety of reasons, have been excluded and fallen in to different types of poverty, only to turn their lives around with help from the innovative work of the charity

Announcing the expansion at an event with award-winning TV chef, Mark Greenaway, at Cyrenians Good Food depot in Edinburgh, Cyrenians Chief Executive, Ewan Aitken, said: “The Scottish public clearly believe that the type of support provided by Cyrenians, such as working with people in danger of becoming excluded from their family or home at an early stage and working with those most at risk, are the best ways to reduce poverty rather than blunt financial instruments or stigmatising language. We want to build on that and challenge any perception amongst the public that those in poverty are only there through laziness or lack of willpower.”

“Politicians, along with the rest of society, must stand-up and tackle the causes of poverty and change public perceptions. To do that we must work to prevent people from feeling excluded from family, home, work or the wider community. Through our own stories and those of people we support, as well as the services we provide, we can achieve that change.”

“We should remember that we all have a past, a present and a future, so we are urging people to come forward and, please, TELL YOUR STORY.”

