

#Edinburgh2050 – Ella Simpson offers her vision



Ella Simpson, Chief Executive Officer of [Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations Council](#), joins the #Edinburgh2050 City Vision blog with her insight into the future of how Edinburgh's people and communities must come together to solve problems and overcome inequality.

My Dad was a shepherd – that might not seem relevant when considering a City Vision for 2050, but what he taught me was that you have to live and deal in the immediate while planning for the future. So with that in mind, what kind of city should we be planning for our grandchildren and great grandchildren?

It's hardly surprising that as a Third Sector in Edinburgh we start everything by thinking about people – and in 2050 the city will first and foremost be a collection of people. No matter how amazing the buildings are or the physical space is, the city has to live and breathe, and that's about how people feel – a sense of belonging, caring and connecting. As a Sector that is our gift to the city: we connect people, we believe in people and we care about people.

In 2050 what will help people to feel connected to each other, their community and their city?

We have to design our city to enable people to make connections in the very heart of our communities. Our challenge is to support and stimulate our communities – not areas within administrative boundaries but where people call "home". Our mental health and wellbeing is directly impacted by our environment; a safe warm home and access to green spaces are vital.

By recognising each other's strengths we will be able to find solutions to the big problems of today that are well documented – increasing numbers of older people needing help and support, increasing need for affordable childcare, poverty and inequality are just a few. We must take responsibility for creating spaces where we can have honest and respectful conversations with each other. There are no magic wands, but perhaps together we can look at things differently.

People are social animals and we make friends where we live and work. We meet strangers, who become our friends, at work and by saying “hello” in our street or at the bus stop. Houses still need to be built, bins still need to be lifted, hotels and restaurants will still have customers, so people will still work as teams to produce stuff. The sense of satisfaction for a job well done is deeply rooted in our DNA and work fulfils this need.

We are at our most creative when we work together solving problems and these skills have to be a central part of our education system. Technology will continue to develop and impact every aspect of our life, but it's a tool not an end in itself. The gold standard will be how we use technology to make connections, solve problems and make life easier – not create different barriers.

Edinburgh is an increasingly unequal world. As a city we have talked about ending inequality for the last 50 years, so why will it be different in the future? I believe as a Third Sector we can drive this aspiration, making it a reality and not a dream. As a sector we are a part of the fabric of the city, but it's everyone's responsibility to speak out against injustice and prejudice.

We must change things by investing – time and effort as much as, if not more than, money. It's an old cliché but a true one: we are greater than the sum of our parts. People care and make huge commitments in their communities, so surely by

2050 we will have found a way to say “thank you”.

People, trust, space, technology, living, working and investing – in short it’s about the personality we want our city to have.

Edinburgh in 2050 – a city where everyone belongs.

You can take part in the discussion about Edinburgh in 2050 by clicking on the link [here](#).