

Dr Bell's repositions itself for the New Year

The board at Dr Bell's Family Centre is very pleased that they have secured funding for a new project called ***Breaking Barriers for Families in Leith.***

This new project will be delivered with support from their partners at [Home-Start](#), Multi-Cultural Family Base ([MCFB](#)) and [Edinburgh NE Foodbank](#).



Sarah Gunn Chair of the Dr Bell's Board

The funding is made available to the charity under the umbrella of the Aspiring Communities Fund, a partnership between the Scottish Government and the European Social Fund, and it will address issues around poverty and inequality experienced by families with young children living in Leith.

This is something that the staff Dr Bell's know a lot about. It is their raison d'être after all. Last year they lost a considerable amount of funding previously paid to them by the council and they have been searching for new ways to allow them to continue their good work.



Ben Macpherson MSP with Centre Manager Anna Templeton and Chair Sarah Gunn at the launch of the new project

There were politicians and members of the board along with some of the people who benefit from the work that Dr Bell's does at the launch of the new project in December. The food was (as ever) great – put this café on your list of places to go for a hearty plate of soup and a scone!



The Edinburgh Reporter had a moment or two with Sarah Gunn who is Chair of the Dr Bell's Board.

She has been a Trustee for Dr Bell's since November 2012, joining the Board as Treasurer and then Chair from November 2015. Sarah is a Chartered Accountant and has been working in the Third Sector for 30 years: working with Down's Syndrome Scotland, St Giles Cathedral and Westminster School.

Much of her experience has been on the financial support for charities and she is full of admiration for the dedication and motivation of her colleagues in delivering projects to support local communities as well as national causes; often with only a small amount of funding. She is particularly dedicated to Dr Bell's aims of supporting families in Leith who face disadvantage. She has three children and is very keen to apply her skills towards every child having the same opportunities to thrive in life.

Sarah told us about the new ***Breaking Barriers for Families in Leith*** scheme : "For this project we will be employing a development worker who starts in January. She will be getting out into the community, meeting agencies and third sector organisations who are working with families experiencing 'multi-deprivation'.

"The data zones that The Scottish Government wants agencies to work with are those areas around Dr Bell's Family Centre. So the development worker will visit schools and health centres. She will work closely with The Trussell Trust who operate the food banks in the area and also supporting the agencies already using our facilities here."

Due to financial constraints, and cuts in funding from some of their big supporters, Dr Bell's had gone back to our core activities this year. Sarah continued : "We reduced our services in the creche from five days to three days this year. We revisited the aims and objectives of why the centre was set

up ten years ago.

“We all know that statutory funding will be decreasing year on year, so we were preparing ourselves for looking at other sources of income. We were able to maintain those core services three days a week. We were financially sustainable and it gave us time to reflect on where we wanted to be.

“The fact that we have a childcare facility in the same place as rooms offering other services is key. Most families that we are working with now are families who face difficulties for a number of reasons but who may not be on the poverty line.”

The new project will be run on a referral basis with Dr Bell’s partner organisations, but some families may refer themselves for help and assistance.

Families using the services may be experiencing domestic violence, poverty including the need to use food banks, but the needs and problems are many and varied.

Sarah Gunn continued : “We look at the whole family. We are trying to facilitate the benefit for the whole family and we hold support groups here for whole families. Children can be cared for in the creche while we help parents for example.

One of the mainstays of their work is the building they rent from Port of Leith Housing Association who have been most generous to the charity and who have assisted them through the last year when they experienced difficulties.



Ben Macpherson MSP spoke to the assembled audience about Dr Bell’s

Mr Macpherson said : ““I’m delighted to support Dr Bell’s and their ‘Breaking Barriers for Families in Leith’ project.

“Having worked closely with Dr Bell’s over recent months, to support their important work and to help them access more funding, I warmly welcome that the Scottish Government’s

Aspiring Communities Fund is going to facilitate this new initiative, which aims to engage with more local families, support more Leithers and enhance local childcare provision. "I wish Dr Bell's all the very best in establishing the project and look forward to continuing to do what I can to support the organisation and what they do for the community."

Dr. Bell's Family Centre

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