

History of Passing the Baton

Passing the Baton is a befriending service that was born out of Bethany Christian Trust's support services to homeless people. Bethany Christian Trust is a homelessness charity that relieves the suffering and meets the long term needs of 6,000 homeless and vulnerable people in Scotland each year.

The organisation has grown consistently from its small beginnings in 1983 and currently offers support across a range of services. These services are designed to deliver support to people moving from the despair of rough sleeping through to sustainable interdependent living in the community

In 2005 a Pilot was started out of Bethany House, an emergency resettlement unit supporting men and women who had been rough sleeping through to moving on to their own tenancy. As people were leaving Bethany House to move into their new home they found that they knew no one in the new area leaving them feeling isolated and lonely. They didn't want another 'paid worker' to be assigned to them but just wanted someone they could turn to for a chat and friendly support. The Passing the Baton befriending service was started to help combat the isolation and loneliness these individuals felt which made them vulnerable to losing their tenancies.

Today, Passing the Baton has grown from its small beginnings to being a valued service across many areas of Scotland. Its primary aim is to support any individuals at risk of homelessness as well people who have experienced homelessness. In doing this, as well as supporting individuals, the project also seeks to educate, challenge, rebuild and empower communities to take up the 'baton' of responsibility and support survivors of homelessness and vulnerable people in their goal of becoming part of a community as a valued member.

There's a great Bible verse in Ecclesiastes chapter 4 which sums up the ethos of the project: "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labour: If they fall down, they can help each other up. But pity those who fall and have no one to help them up!"