

EDINBURGH
COMMUNITY
YOGA

THE EVOL

NEOCORTEX
rational
conscious
thinking

LIBIC SYSTEM
emotional
feeling
memory

BRAIN STEM
primal
automatic
survival
instinctual

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH
EDINBURGH
COMMUNITY
YOGA
WELLBEING FOR ALL

LEGACY REPORT

A Celebration of Edinburgh
Community Yoga
2012-2026



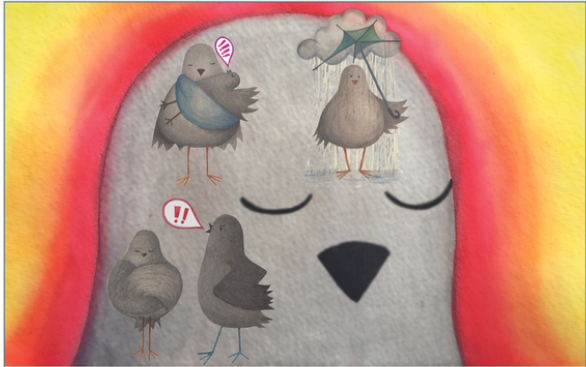
EDINBURGH COMMUNITY YOGA THEORY OF CHANGE



Edinburgh Community Yoga offers inclusive and accessible classes to all. Everybody is welcome to Edinburgh Community Yoga classes.



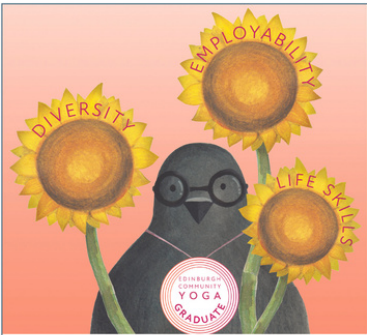
Classes take place in community settings, hospitals and prisons to provide opportunities for everybody to benefit from doing yoga.



Practicing yoga can help to improve mental and physical health. It can help to feel balanced and to build emotional resilience to support us when we experience stress and conflict in our everyday lives. It can help us stay in the present moment and perhaps feel safer in our bodies.



Edinburgh Community Yoga also offer scholarship and mentorship to outreach students who want to study yoga in more depth, or perhaps to become yoga teachers.



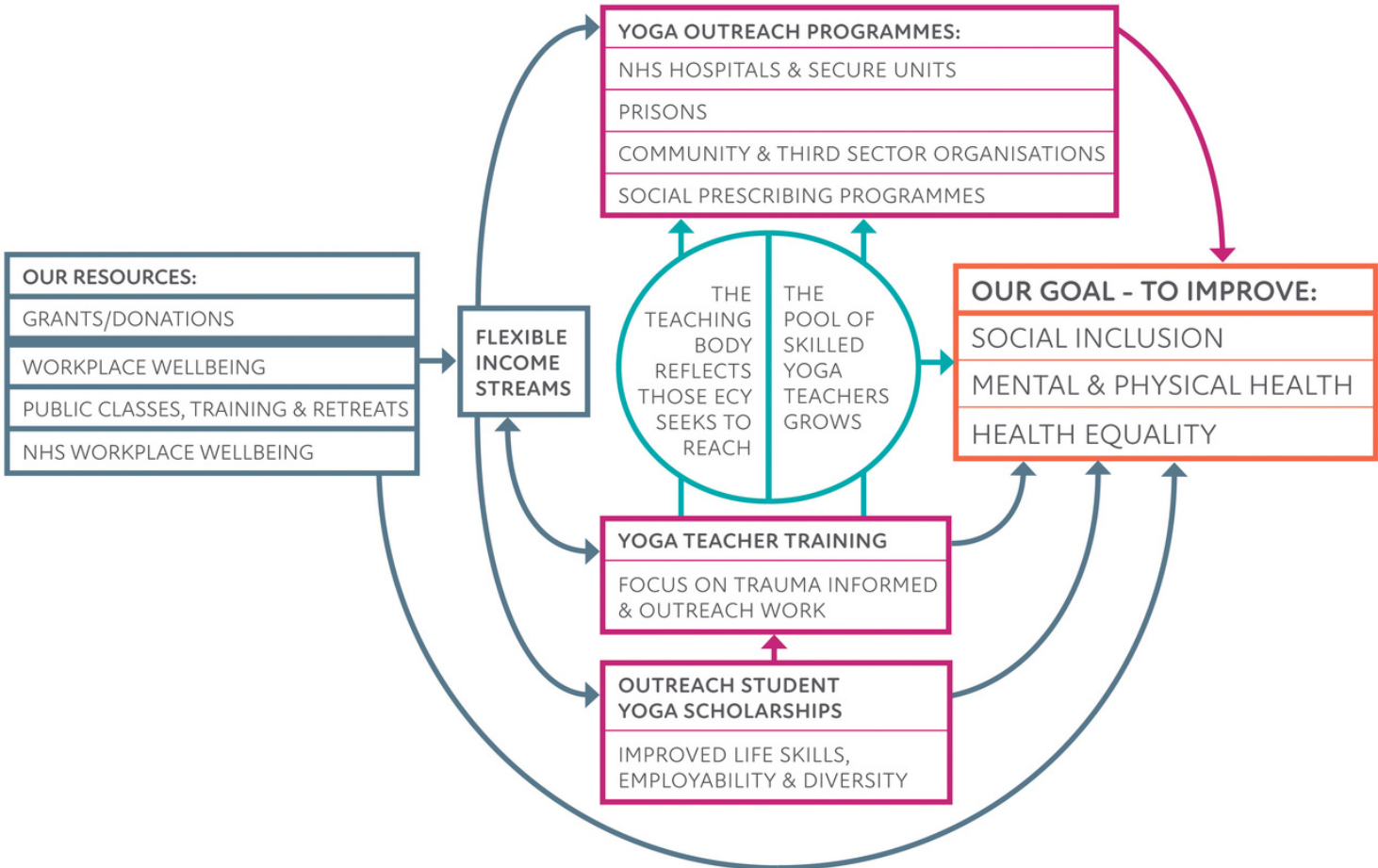
Studying yoga helps with life skills, may increase employability and increases diversity in the yoga community.



New teachers can go on to provide yoga classes in their communities with a unique insight into creating inclusive and welcoming opportunities for all.



ECY SYSTEMS & PROCESSES TO AID LEARNING





Directors Note

As the journey of Edinburgh Community Yoga reaches its end, we want to take a moment to reflect on all that we have achieved with a final report.

What began as our founding director, Laura Wilson's, vision in 2012 flourished into a thriving social enterprise, bringing yoga to those who needed it most. Your support has been instrumental throughout this journey, helping us to grow, adapt and deepen our impact in communities across Scotland.

In 2014, Laura and Lorraine met and quickly struck up both a friendship and a business partnership. Together, they formally established Edinburgh Community Yoga as a not-for-profit social enterprise, launching outreach classes to bring yoga to underserved communities.

By 2016, we were running many public and workplace classes, as well as regular residential retreats and an established 'workplace wellness' programme running both in the NHS and other high stress workplaces. We also launched our first CPD course, Teaching Yoga in Community Settings, which opened the door for other yoga teachers to join our mission. This was followed by a series of CPD offerings and contributions to teacher training programmes, and in 2020 we launched our first 60-hour Trauma-Informed Yoga Immersion, led by Lorraine, our Outreach Director.

Our teaching team grew and over the years, we worked with an incredible range of people -from military veterans, and women affected by trauma to NHS staff and, more recently, individuals referred through our growing social prescribing programmes.

As our work expanded, we deepened our commitment to a trauma-informed approach, ensuring that our teaching remained safe, accessible and empowering. We have built meaningful partnerships and relationships that have made this work possible.

Of course, the journey has not been without its hurdles. The global COVID-19 pandemic forced us to move online, drastically altering our financial landscape and ultimately leading to the difficult decision to phase out our public classes. Instead, we shifted our focus towards grant-funded outreach, ensuring that we could continue making a difference where it was needed most.

Our Theory of Change highlighted the importance of supporting outreach students to access equitable opportunities for training and learning about yoga, so that they could, in turn, offer yoga to more people within the communities we serve. We are proud to say that, in recent years, this theory has increasingly become a reality.

In 2021 our incredible Operations Manager, Elle Donnell, began to transform our systems and processes, making our work more efficient and impactful. She has also been instrumental in developing our social prescribing programmes and building connections with participants referred through GP practices and community organisations, supporting them to access and attend our classes. We have successfully delivered programmes in Craigmillar, Sighthill and Wester Hailes in The City of Edinburgh, Dalkeith in Midlothian, and Methil in Fife.

Directors Note

In recent years, the organisation has felt stronger than ever, with a dedicated core team of three staff members and 15 inspiring teachers committed to our work, supported by volunteers, advisers and peer support workers. Perhaps that is what has made the decision to close even more difficult.

We partnered with University of Edinburgh on a grant funded research project conducting a realist evaluation of our social prescribing work, ensuring our legacy continues with an academic documentation of our impact. We believe that social prescribing, working in partnership with health and social care is the future of accessible yoga and well-being spaces and we are proud to lead the way on this front.

Sadly, while there is clearly value in the work and increasing demand for accessible trauma informed yoga programming the funding landscape on a challenging political and economic background has forced us to make the decision to close. We wanted to do this responsibly and in a way that felt measured and deliberate.

We close knowing we have made a difference. And we close with the utmost respect for every participant, teacher, community worker and organisation that we have encountered along the way. We close knowing our work is valued and that it will continue in other ways. There is still so much more to do but the future will be built with the legacy ECY has created and not with ECY as we know it.

As we move forward with our lives, and our work in different ways we want to take the time to acknowledge that none of this would be possible without you-our community, partners, and friends. Thank you for believing in our mission, for supporting us through challenges, and for celebrating this milestone with us.

We are forever grateful for each other in this wonderful journey and excited for what comes next and we hope this report may inspire others to pick up the mantle and to continue this important work.

Lorraine, Laura, Elle and Kate
Edinburgh Community Yoga

Directors Comments



What a pleasure and an honour to have been a part of ECY's journey. Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine when we began, that we would have grown in the way we have. In a world which can all too often feel uncertain and unjust, being a part of an organisation which exists to create connection, empowerment and community has been the perfect tonic. I have seen time and time again the impact our projects have had, as people are given space to take rest and come home to themselves. I am forever changed by this work and forever grateful for the opportunity to work with such extraordinarily people. Thank you to everyone who has been a part of our organisation and in particular an enormous thank you to Lorraine and Elle for their creativity, compassion, dedication and commitment. It has truly been an honour to be a part of this inspiring team.

Laura Wilson, Founding Director



I am immensely proud of what we have achieved at ECY. What started as a dream of running a couple of community outreach classes, has grown into a thriving organisation that is recognised as one of the most successful organisations of its type in the UK. Watching ECY grow beyond any one of us is a huge privilege. Leading it to a responsible closure has also been a privilege. We know the legacy of our work will continue and the essence of what we created together is out there in the world. More than anything I am grateful for the friendship and community that has grown from ECY. The relationships we have built reach far and run deep. Thank you to everyone who makes it happen.

Lorraine Close, Outreach Director

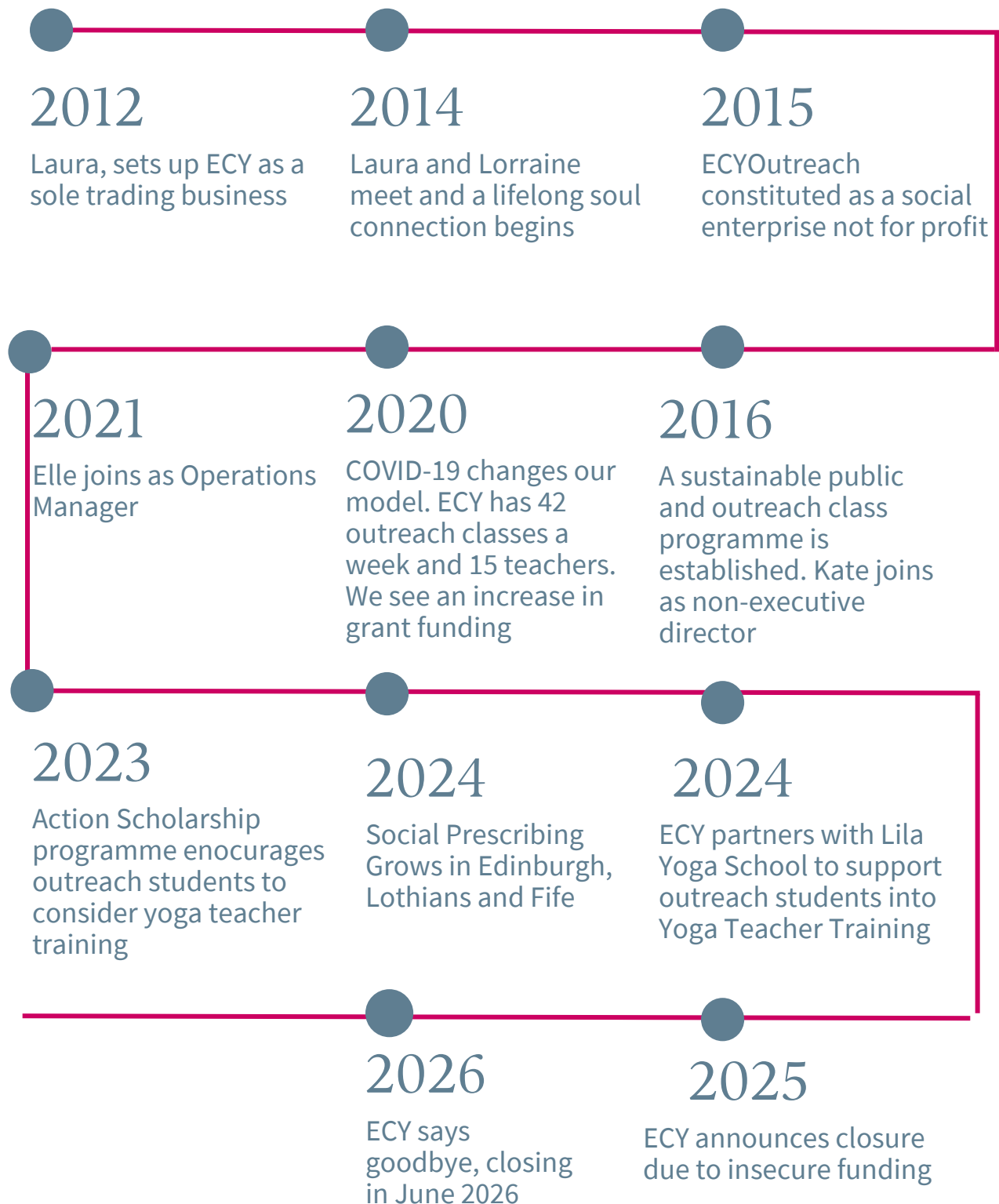


What's been the point of ECY's Non-Executive Director? With Lorraine and Laura at the helm, brilliantly supported by Elle, it's a good question. They've been ECY's public face and tireless dynamism over so many years. Sometimes, though, it's helpful to have a critical friend who's totally bought in to the vision, but who isn't involved in the day-to-day challenges. My job has been to offer a fresh perspective on the bigger decisions and developments to try to ensure we've been true to who we've wanted to be.

I've been truly moved by the stories I've heard first hand of the difference skilled teachers have made to individual lives. But I've also seen the scrimping and saving that ECY has done to keep classes going and teachers properly remunerated – and it's unsustainable. I'm really sad that we've closed, but know that we've nurtured something much needed and very good. The baton has been passed on and look forward to seeing what emerges next for community yoga.

Kate Dyer, Non Executive Director

Timeline of ECY



Celebrating Success

Milestones

52

Partner
Organisations

76.5K

Donations and
Fundraising

£340K

Grant Income

1000+

Students Reached
(exact figures not
possible)

65

Teachers trained in
Trauma informed
practice

400+

People referred on
Social Prescription

50+

Scholarships given

4

Prison Programmes
Delivered

15

NHS Staff Wellbeing
Programmes Delivered

108

Sun Salutations
completed by 108
people raising 12K for
ECY projects.

3

Yoga Festivals held
bringing people from all
over Scotland together

3

Humans Born and
Raised as part of the
ECY family

1

Churchill Fellowship
exploring Yoga Not for
Profit Completed

Countless

Memories, Friendships, and Tools for
Life gained

Impact in Words

"This class has been amazing. I suffer from rheumatoid and osteoarthritis, also depression and anxiety. I have been able to feel more calm and a bit more flexible also I feel more stable and included. Ali and Lucy are amazing. Very approachable friendly and easy to talk to - just lovely human beings."

"We can have a chat and a cuppa, restoring my hope in life again. Feel comfortable to chat."

"Hannah and Vanessa are very friendly and kind, nice to work with."

"I am learning to self care for me. I have learned belly breathing when I panic. Chatting with people I feel care. I enjoy the guided meditation. Helps me relaxation tools."

"Im learning to like myself and appreciate kindness to me. Self care, enjoy myself. Breathing helps me relax."

"I'M LEARNING TO WORK WITH MY BODY RATHER THAN
AGAINST IT.

MOSTLY I WISH THAT SOMEONE COULD HAVE SHOWED ME THIS
SPACE WHEN I WAS GROWING UP SURROUNDED BY VIOLENCE
AND FEAR. THAT SOMEONE COULD HAVE EXPLAINED THAT THE
TERRIBLE NOISE IN MY HEAD WAS MY NERVOUS SYSTEM
CRANKED UP AND ON OVERDRIVE - THAT THERE ARE SIMPLE
WAYS OF FEELING BETTER. I'M GLAD I FOUND YOGA
EVENTUALLY"

"I feel full of anxiety and nerves and my whole body is tense, but as soon as the class gets going, all these things leave my body and I relax. Very very grateful."

Impact in Words

“This is one of the best pieces of CPD that I have ever completed. I have come away with new knowledge and ideas around the complex interplay between trauma, neuroscience and yoga, social justice and power dynamics and how to practically and meaningfully implement choice, collaboration, trust, safety and empowerment in a yoga class. It was the facilitators experience of teaching community yoga and working with people who have experienced trauma, which was shared and explored very freely, that brought the theory and material to life and helped consolidate the learning around trauma, neuroscience and yoga. Thank you ECY”

“A great course, encouraging self-reflection about ones own beliefs and practice in an inclusive and judgement free environment. The combination of evidence based science with the people focus was excellent”

“I learnt so much within the ECY Trauma Informed Yoga Teacher Training and feel like I could go over the course content all over again and take other little bits of learning away - there was so much valuable content within it. As somebody with a background of working within mental health care, the course was still incredibly valuable for helping me to further build on my understanding of the impacts of trauma and consider how to apply this understanding to my yoga teaching. I now feel like I have a good foundation and understanding to develop my teaching in a way that promotes autonomy, choice and safer spaces for students to explore their practice within”

“Edinburgh community yoga creates and facilitates such important spaces and programmes for folk facing significant life challenges. My students regularly feed back on how the classes are life-changing and that it's their favourite time in the week”

“ECY hooked me when I went to the first class with them eight years ago. Laura and Lorraine personified Yoga for me, they took time to explain the what and the why of yoga, not just the asana's but the importance of breath and cultivating a minded practice. They showed great compassion and wisdom in people so young and they also had a great sense of humour. From the benefits I received from attending their classes at a time of great stress and hurt in my life, I understood how this type of yoga could help my community. They inspired me to practice daily and to become a teacher working in the recovery community which I have done for 6 years now.



Key Partnerships

The Womanzone project was one of our first programmes for women affected by trauma starting at the Serenity cafe in 2014. Our relationship with Cat Grant, Louise Cowie and many women who were supported and who supported others through this work has continued in a variety of forms. 'Yoga at 12 on a Tuesday' was a key feature of this as well as several retreats and embodiment programmes exploring wider forms of embodied practice for women in recovery and affected by trauma.

We partnered with NHS Lothian over the last 10 years, working in partnership with Inga Cosway and many others to offer staff well-being programmes, well-being in Leadership, drop in stress busting sessions and a range of online workshops focussing on well-being, embodiment and self care. We also have worked extensively with patients and service users in NHS Lothian working at LEAP, the Royal Edinburgh Hospital, Orchard Clinic and Merrick Pope at the self-harm service developing long term partnerships and friendships along the way.

The Corra Foundation have offered 3 years of funding support to help us develop our trauma informed programme in Wester Hailes over the last 3 years. These classes, for people affected by addiction and their families have become so important for the people who attend them and the social prescribing model has worked successfully here with referrals coming in from many different health and social care partners.

John Arthur has run one of our most successful Community Programmes in Craigmillar, where he was born and bred. Working with a range of community organisations including Thistle Foundation, The Craigmillar and Niddrie Medical Practice and The Bothy we have some longstanding programmes there, taught by John and Moira. Our work in Craigmillar is embedded in the community and has developed from local folk asking for more yoga. John's classes are regularly stowed out and we are delighted him and Moira can keep them going moving forward.



Key Partnerships

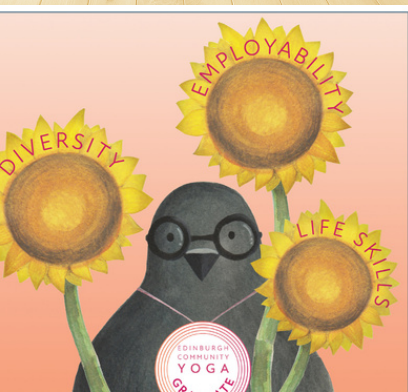
Emma Isokivi at Ashtanga Yoga Edinburgh has been one of our longest term pals and supporters. From the days of Meadowlark, under Karen Kirkness the Mysore Programme supported ECYs work and Emma was always there to organise a fundraiser, a scholarship or just a friendly ear. Our relationship has grown over time, and AYE has become one of the most trauma informed Ashtanga Programmes in the word (in our opinion) thanks to the work we have done together and to Emmas committment to supporting her teachers to develop skills in Trauma Informed Practice.

Our pals at Lila Yoga have been generous to us in offering space for programmes, and supporting us to support outreach students through Yoga Teacher Training. Lila yoga is growing and is rooted in creating community. It is wonderful to see some of our outreach students finding a home there. To watch Frankie teaching brilliant chair yoga in their lovely space and to see them grow the concept of Community and Yoga rooted in social justice is truly a joy. Thank you Moira, Sarah and Nadine.

Norman Blair deserves a special shout out for his support and fundraising and championing of ECY along the way. Thank you Norman. We appreciate your recognition of the role of Activism in Yoga and all you have done to help us out along the way.

Be Healthy Together was one of our first classes that focussed on supporting people with physical health conditions. The class offered gentle chair based movement for people with a range of conditions. Hannah and Eva taught this class for many years offering people the opportunity for connection, laughter, movement and relaxation in a supported environment. We are delighted this class will continue post ECY.

There are many more! We are so grateful for the collegiality, friendship, support and partnerships we have made with so many health and social care, third sector, corporate and Community Partners as well to every teacher, studio and Yoga Partnership formed. Thank you to each one of you.



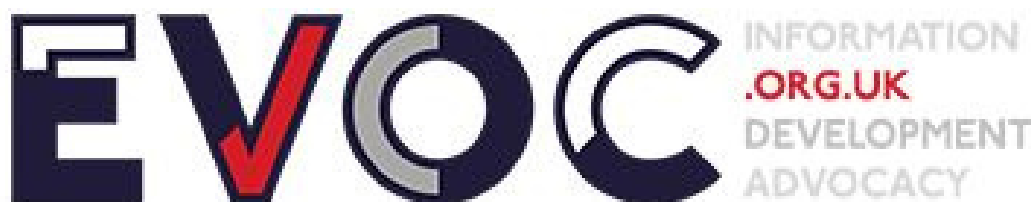
Key Funders



AWARDS
FOR ALL
SCOTLAND

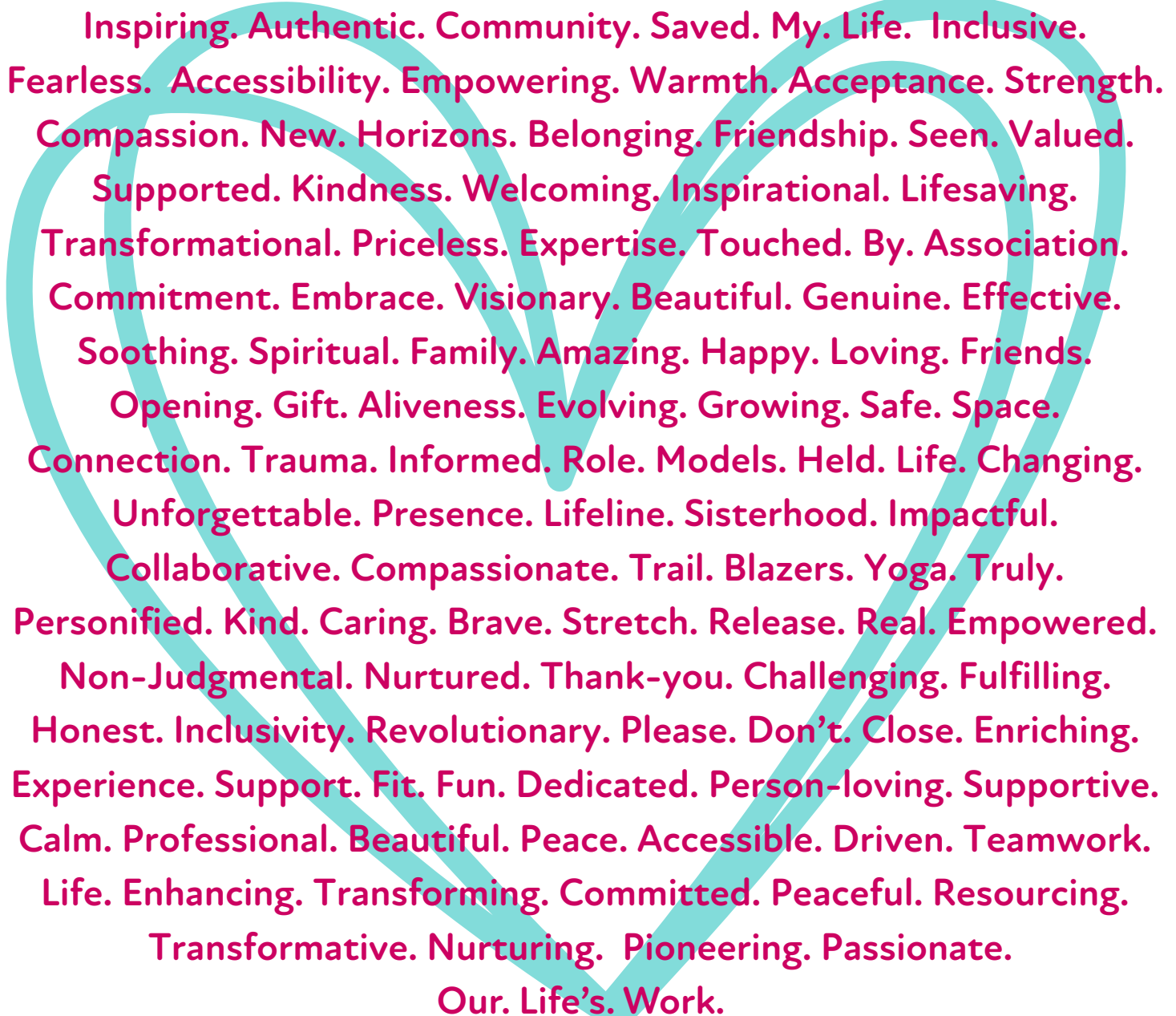


the
CHURCHILL
fellowship



and many more...

Edinburgh Community Yoga



Inspiring. Authentic. Community. Saved. My. Life. Inclusive.
Fearless. Accessibility. Empowering. Warmth. Acceptance. Strength.
Compassion. New. Horizons. Belonging. Friendship. Seen. Valued.
Supported. Kindness. Welcoming. Inspirational. Lifesaving.
Transformational. Priceless. Expertise. Touched. By. Association.
Commitment. Embrace. Visionary. Beautiful. Genuine. Effective.
Soothing. Spiritual. Family. Amazing. Happy. Loving. Friends.
Opening. Gift. Aliveness. Evolving. Growing. Safe. Space.
Connection. Trauma. Informed. Role. Models. Held. Life. Changing.
Unforgettable. Presence. Lifeline. Sisterhood. Impactful.
Collaborative. Compassionate. Trail. Blazers. Yoga. Truly.
Personified. Kind. Caring. Brave. Stretch. Release. Real. Empowered.
Non-Judgmental. Nurtured. Thank-you. Challenging. Fulfilling.
Honest. Inclusivity. Revolutionary. Please. Don't. Close. Enriching.
Experience. Support. Fit. Fun. Dedicated. Person-loving. Supportive.
Calm. Professional. Beautiful. Peace. Accessible. Driven. Teamwork.
Life. Enhancing. Transforming. Committed. Peaceful. Resourcing.
Transformative. Nurturing. Pioneering. Passionate.
Our. Life's. Work.



The Team

It is difficult to put into words what the team at ECY means to us and to describe how it has grown over the last 13 years.

From the early days of Lorraine and Laura covering all classes themselves, we became a thriving team with a dependable group of teachers skilled in teaching in outreach settings and trauma-informed environments.

Each person who is part of ECY brings their unique life experience, skills and qualities to the work that we do, creating a rich and diverse team that feels resilient and supportive.

Strong, long lasting friendships have developed and we rely on each other for moral support, sharing of ideas and discussing challenges. We are incredibly proud that each member of our team show up committed to the vision and mission of the organisation and this shared understanding has created a strong sense of teamwork.

Some of our team is skilled in the corporate environment, some excel in community settings, others in prisons or with older people. Several have developed their roles to take on more project management of outreach programmes and workshop delivery with the support of the core team.

Watching several long term students grow their journey of yoga over the last decade to become peer volunteers and yoga teachers teaching in outreach setting as part of our team is incredibly special and these individuals are truly doing the work in increasing accessibility and inclusion in yoga.

We are grateful to have been able to offer mentorship and peer supervision over the years.

Without the dedication, commitment and passion of our teachers and peer supporters to show up week after week this organisation would not exist. We are all ECY and we will all carry a part of ECY in our hearts as we move forward to the next Chapter. The next pages contain words from some of our team around their ECY journey.



Team Talk

Kate Dyer Non Exec Director

For me, ECY was ‘love at first workshop’! Living in Tanzania, but knowing I was moving to Edinburgh, I’d found ECY online and was keen to be involved in some way, maybe becoming a yoga teacher. I signed up for a basics of outreach workshop back in 2016, and was overwhelmed by what I experienced of ECY in practice. I loved the simplicity and clarity with which Laura and Lorraine explained their outreach vision, backed by their knowledge and experience, and the skills to hold space for a very diverse range of workshop participants.

Keen to know more, I asked for their annual report, but was met with puzzlement. What was the purpose of such a document? They’d never had one before - why would they need one? This was the start of my relationship with ECY. I never did become a yoga teacher, but I did write the first few annual reports (until with customary enthusiasm, Laura and Lorraine, accompanied by the wonderful Elle) took that on. I’ve been much involved in the discussions about what legal status to adopt, getting the financial systems on a sound footing, how to make our monitoring and learning systems insightful without being burdensome and how to make our commitment to diversity and inclusion meaningful.

Supporting the monitoring and learning – including recent research with Lorraine on social prescription of yoga - involved me in visiting classes, and interviewing teachers and students. The detailed stories folk were willing to share leaves me angry and frustrated that this is a contribution to ECY’s legacy report. The quality of what we offer is beyond all doubt, the possibility of health and well-being that ECY has opened up for so many people is unquestionable – especially when the NHS is under increasing strain. It still seems extraordinary that we had to make the decision to close.

But we live in challenging times. When I was first involved in ECY it was possible to get multi-year funding for a diversity of programmes. We had huge ambitions such as the Edinburgh Yoga Festival across the whole City, and some donors were happy to work on the basis of trust and our growing reputation in the UK wide yoga community. We overcame the challenges of Covid, and even formerly reliable funders changing their policies with no notice, leaving us with budgets stretched wafer thin. Funders give for shorter and shorter time frames, unwilling to support the level of back-up care and support that ECY has always sought to offer both teachers and students. Support for place-based work is a wonderful idea, but sometimes I feel just a mask for asking people to do the same for less. We wondered if we should become a charity – but looking around us we saw other organisations similarly stretched and/ or closing, and charitable status didn’t seem to help them. Laura, Lorraine and Elle cut their hours and juggled so many different demands to keep the show going, but in 2025 it became clear that we had reached the end of the road.

Maybe a phoenix will arise from the ashes. I have high hopes for Lothian Community Yoga Collective, drawing its teachers from those who’ve been part of ECY. Maybe we are just starting to answer the question of what ‘Community Yoga’ actually means – based on 10 wonderful years of ECY, and all the brilliant connections and relationships that forged, and looking forward into the different classes, organisations, and networks that are yet to emerge, driven by that same desire to bring the benefits of yoga to those who would never see themselves in a conventional yoga studio. Let’s hope so.

Team Talk

John Arthur

ECY Teacher, Project Worker & Course Facilitator

Approaching 60 years old, my world was turned upside down. In a short time, I experienced the devastating losses of two loved ones to suicide and drug overdose, alongside the heartbreaking news of terminal illnesses affecting both a family member and a close friend.

Though I had been in recovery from substance-use addiction for nearly 20 years, the weight of these tragedies left me struggling with depression and questioning my mental stability. To be clear, I never wanted to return to alcohol or drugs, but I felt myself slipping into the same darkness I had fought to escape 30 years earlier.

This was when I discovered Edinburgh Community Yoga (ECY). They held classes at the Serenity Cafe, Scotland's first recovery cafe, I had tried yoga before in leisure centres but never felt a connection. As an older, working-class man, I often found myself the only male in the class, out of place and disconnected. The instructors provided little explanation, making it even harder to engage.

ECY, however, was different. The classes were inclusive, with people in recovery. The instructors explained the purpose behind each movement and offered modifications for all abilities. For the first time, I felt at home. I left the classes feeling 'yoga stoned'—a deep sense of calm and peace. Inspired, I began practicing yoga daily at home and attending as many ECY classes as possible.

The classes were inclusive, with people in recovery. The instructors explained the purpose behind each movement and offered modifications for all abilities. For the first time, I felt at home. I left the classes feeling 'yoga stoned'—a deep sense of calm and peace. Inspired, I began practicing yoga daily at home and attending as many ECY classes as possible.

Soon after, I discovered my teacher, Krisna, whose classes and workshops I have attended for nearly a decade.

Yoga became a cornerstone of my life—a source of healing, community, and connection. It lifted me out of darkness and into a world of opportunity and hope. My journey led me across the globe, exploring community yoga classes, volunteering with yoga communities, and ultimately completing my Yoga Teacher Training in Kerala, South India—the home state of my teacher.

Since returning to Edinburgh in 2016, I have remained deeply involved with ECY. I now deliver yoga classes for men, individuals experiencing homelessness, those struggling with mental health and addiction, and veterans.

I worked as a development worker with ECY, helping establish social prescribing programmes in Craigmillar and Wester Hailes. Currently I run weekly classes in Craigmillar and at LEAP, an NHS addiction recovery centre. Additionally, I have set up a Sikh men's group with Sikh Sanjog and supported the Wester Hailes Social Prescribing Class.

As I approach my 70th birthday, I have never been happier or more at peace. My journey with ECY and the incredible people I have met along the way has introduced me to 'proper' yoga—far beyond physical exercise. It has led to healing, resilience, and profound personal growth.

Team Talk

Elle O'Donnell

Elle O'Donnell, ECY Operations Manager

In 2016, a friend and colleague, Penny Horner, introduced me to Lorraine Close, Outreach Director at Edinburgh Community Yoga (ECY). She shared the incredible work they were beginning to do across the city and inspired me to get involved. I had the privilege of teaching a 12-week programme that combined yoga, mindfulness and health education for local women in the Dumbiedykes community. This project was funded by Spirit of Dumbiedykes.

Our classes were held at the Braidwood Community Centre, a space with amazing views of Arthur's Seat. Each session included about an hour of yoga, followed by a "tea and chat" session where we discussed yoga practices, stress management, and the challenges of daily life. There was also plenty of time for informal conversations and catching up on local news! Many of the attendees were new to yoga, with some managing conditions like arthritis, and my youngest participant was just five years old (it's hard to believe she'll be a teenager now!). The Braidwood Centre remains one of my favourite venues to this day.

Reading back over the project evaluation the key takeaway from this project was that ECY, needed to collaborate more with other local organisations to increase community participation and engagement. That's certainly what ECY did!

At that time, my life also shifted as I closed down a business and returned to full-time studies in counselling. Fast forward to 2020, and with a new baby in tow, life had changed dramatically. It was then that I joined ECY, firstly as their administrator. That same year, we began navigating the challenges of COVID-19—transitioning from face-to-face classes to virtual ones, then back again. We faced many obstacles, from reduced income streams to adjusting our staffing hours. Then, the financial crisis led to the difficult decision to cease running public classes, which had previously been a key source of income. For a while, it felt like there were more lows than highs.

Fast forward a few years and I've witnessed first hand the dedication and hard work that goes into all our projects—many of which go beyond yoga, such as The Embodied Project, Action Scholarship Programme, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL), Workplace Wellbeing initiatives. There's simply too much to mention in detail, but it's a reminder of how much we've accomplished together.

From 2024, social prescribing became a major part of my daily work; ECY offered yoga classes in partnership with medical practices since 2019. It's incredibly rewarding to speak with attendees as they begin their first class and then hear their feedback if they continue their journey.

One of the most heart warming pieces of feedback recently came from our teachers at the Gyle Community Space. The majority of attendees are aged 65 to 80+, and they've reported significant reductions in social isolation and loneliness since starting the class. One participant, who had struggled with depression and isolation, shared how she spent four hours after a class chatting, shopping, and having a cup of tea with another attendee. It's a reminder that the value of our work isn't just in the yoga practice but in the community and connections we build.

I feel incredibly proud of ECY's Theory of Change Model, and it's truly inspiring to see it in action. Attendees becoming volunteers, students, and even teachers in their own communities, which demonstrates the far-reaching impact of our work. Being part of Edinburgh Community Yoga has been an immensely rewarding experience.

Team Talk

Frankie Walter

Frankie Walter, ECY Teacher and Lived Experience Advisory Panel Member

It's hard to put an exact date on my first yoga class – I think it was in autumn 2018. I had had a major breakdown and was a couple of years into NHS mental health treatment. Existing was bleak and relentless. I heard there was a Women's Trauma Informed yoga class and I went along because I was desperate. The class was taught by Lorraine Close, Outreach Director at ECY and it was a turning point in my life. At the end of the class I lie on the mat in savasana and I felt at ease in my traumatised body, possibly for the very first time.

I started attending weekly, and I never stopped. It was the bright light in my week and between classes I would repeat "I am safe, I am safe, healing has already begun" in my head. Yoga set in motion a process of me connecting with my true self. But my life didn't get easy once I found yoga. In the first year of practising I left my marriage, came out, got given a hugely stigmatised mental health diagnosis, attempted suicide and spent time in psychiatric hospital. But I kept practising, I took ECY classes in the Hive at The Royal Ed and ECY lent me a mat and I practiced in my hospital room every day. When I was allowed out on day-release I would use it to go to yoga.

In early 2020 I was deeply depressed and struggling to look after myself when COVID hit. I moved in with my mum for that first lockdown, I remember feeling so isolated from anything familiar. Less than a week in I logged onto Zoom for the very first time and heard Lorraine's voice. It was a lifeline. I pretty much took every Zoom class ECY offered for months. I took up Yin online with using a pillow, a dressing gown belt and a children's dictionary for props. Lorraine began to mentor me 1:1 and we worked towards gradually exploring the possibility of becoming a yoga teacher. I started a foundation course with Yoga Scotland and found the reality of trying to fit into a mainstream yoga setting really challenging. I felt very out of place. In the middle of that course I got sick. I had a life changing blood clot – and various other physical health complications. I spent months on crutches, had major surgery and developed chronic migraines and fatigue. But I never stopped practising. By this point I knew yoga was so much more fancy shapes you pull on a mat. I moved my asana practice to the chair and kept attending my normal classes as much as I could. I already knew that I could adapt yoga to my changing body because ECY had exposed me to so much accessible yoga.

I was super lucky to be a part of ECY's Action Scholarship program – a 6-month course with other women from ECY's outreach community. It was a transformative experience. Everyone who taught on that course had a deep impact on me. I made deep connections with the other women and got to learn so much more about yoga off the mat (or chair!) At this time I also met Moira McFarlane – another ECY teacher with a wealth of knowledge on yoga for people with health conditions. She became a sort of unofficial mentor, cheer leader and friend. Moira saw something in me that I couldn't quite see in myself: "One day you'll make a great chair yoga teacher".

I gained hugely in confidence during ASP and after we graduated from that course Nadine Watton offered me a scholarship place on her 100hr Yin and Restorative teacher training which I nervously took up. With Nadine's beautiful support this was a much more successful experience of the wider yoga world. I got a huge amount out of the course – perhaps more than anything the confidence that my knowledge of adapting yoga for disabled bodies was valuable. From there Laura Wilson prompted me to apply for a scholarship to train as a chair yoga teacher with The Mindful Institute.

Frankie Walter

I was one of the only chair yoga practitioners in the group on that training. I passed my written and practical assessment in December 2023. I taught my first chair yoga class at the studio Moira runs and continued to take more CPD trainings including ECY's brilliant 60hr Trauma Informed Teaching Practices.

In November 2024 I began teaching with ECY – a weekly chair yoga class by social prescription. It has been the very best experience as I grow in confidence as a teacher. When they offered me the class ECY asked me “what can we do to make it feel possible for you to teach this class?” ECY made yoga accessible for me as a student in 2018 and they made teaching yoga accessible to me in 2024. The assistant teacher in my chair class is Ali. She was the assistant teacher in my first ever yoga class. She is also an ECY outreach student turned teacher and we have the most magical working relationship. In 2026 I completed my Yoga Teacher Training with Lila Yoga, supported by ECY.

My story with ECY doesn't have a neat ending, I still struggle hugely in many respects. Yoga hasn't fixed everything. But it has been my constant through every challenge. The people I have met through yoga have filled my life with joy, connection and understanding. When I try to thank ECY for this Laura and Lorraine tell me that I did all the hard work. And they might be right – but they gave me the tools and the community that made that work possible. I will never not be grateful for this amazing organisation.



Team Talk

**Volunteer
Champion
2025**

WINNER :SOCIAL ENTERPRISE
AWARDS

Dalvina Kerr, ECY Volunteer and Peer Mentor

Dalvina Kerr

As a woman in recovery I have been met with belief, trust, and opportunity I just want to acknowledge that, through the work I do with ECY. This has categorically transformed my life my children's life and the lives I touch every day.

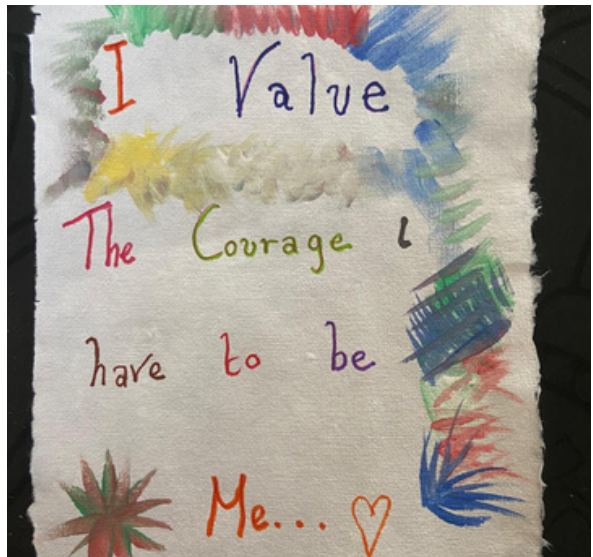
Working within my community through my recovery I have experienced profound change, I got my children home after 5 years! I was told this would never happen. I now have the privilege of witnessing positive change in the lives around me and within my own recovered home. I see people finding hope, connection, and opportunities that once felt out of reach. Recovery has also transformed my family home.

What was once affected by the challenges of addiction and generational trauma is now a place of stability healing and love.

This experience has given me a deep understanding of the power of recovery and community support.









Final Words

From Laura and Lorraine

Reaching the end of this journey is an experience filled with both pride and sadness for us. Pride, because the impact ECY has had on individuals, local communities and even nationally is profound and well documented. We trust that the ripples of this impact will be felt long after ECY has gone, and we hope this report goes some way towards celebrating that legacy.

There is much for us personally to celebrate, both as yoga teachers and as ECY directors. We have been unbelievably privileged to work alongside the people we have. We have learned so much and thrived in a working relationship that was nothing short of perfect. While we quickly learned that our minds work in radically different ways, our heartfelt and shared vision of making trauma-informed yoga truly accessible and inclusive has fuelled our collaborative fire in ways we could never have predicted. Alongside our team - and notably our incredible Administrator and Operations Manager, Elle O'Donnell we have worked tirelessly and determinedly to make that vision a reality. We are forever grateful for this opportunity.

We are also exhausted!

The sadness comes because we were not done. The importance of safe-enough spaces, where isolated people who are traumatised, dysregulated, and mentally, emotionally and physically unwell can steady themselves through breath, body and community, has not gone away. It is a worrying time for all of us, and our concern that we are not prioritising grassroots community work — work that encourages agency and empowerment through long-term, robust funding opportunities — is very real.

We trust that the power of community, driven by compassion and agency, will rise up against the short-term thinking that sees projects like ours struggle. We hope that real people, with real struggles and real strength, will one day be placed at the top of the priority list rather than the bottom.

We are forever grateful to every single person who has sat on a mat or in a chair with us over the years.

Thank you for trusting us.
Thank you for teaching us.
This is your yoga.



Lokah Samastah Sukhino Bhavantu
Om Shanti. Shanti. Shanti

May all Beings Everywhere be Peaceful and Free and may my
Words, Thoughts and Actions Contribute in some way to that
Peace and Freedom for All

Peace. Peace. Peace

Edinburgh Community Yoga

Empowerment through Yoga
Well-being for All
2012-2026