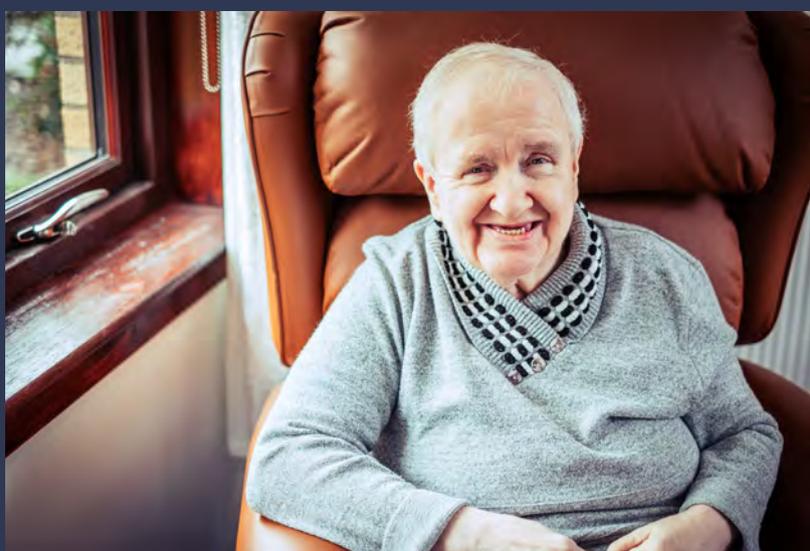




# 40 YEARS OF KEY





40 YEARS  
OF KEY

Celebrating  
40 years of Key





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# Thank you

It has been a real honour for us to have spent so much time over the past year with people connected with Key.

People have been really generous with their time, their memories, their laughter and their lives.

We have been truly humbled by this experience and our heartfelt thanks are due to everyone who contributed to this publication and participated in the many events and activities that took place over the year to mark 40 years of Key.

40 YEARS  
of KEY

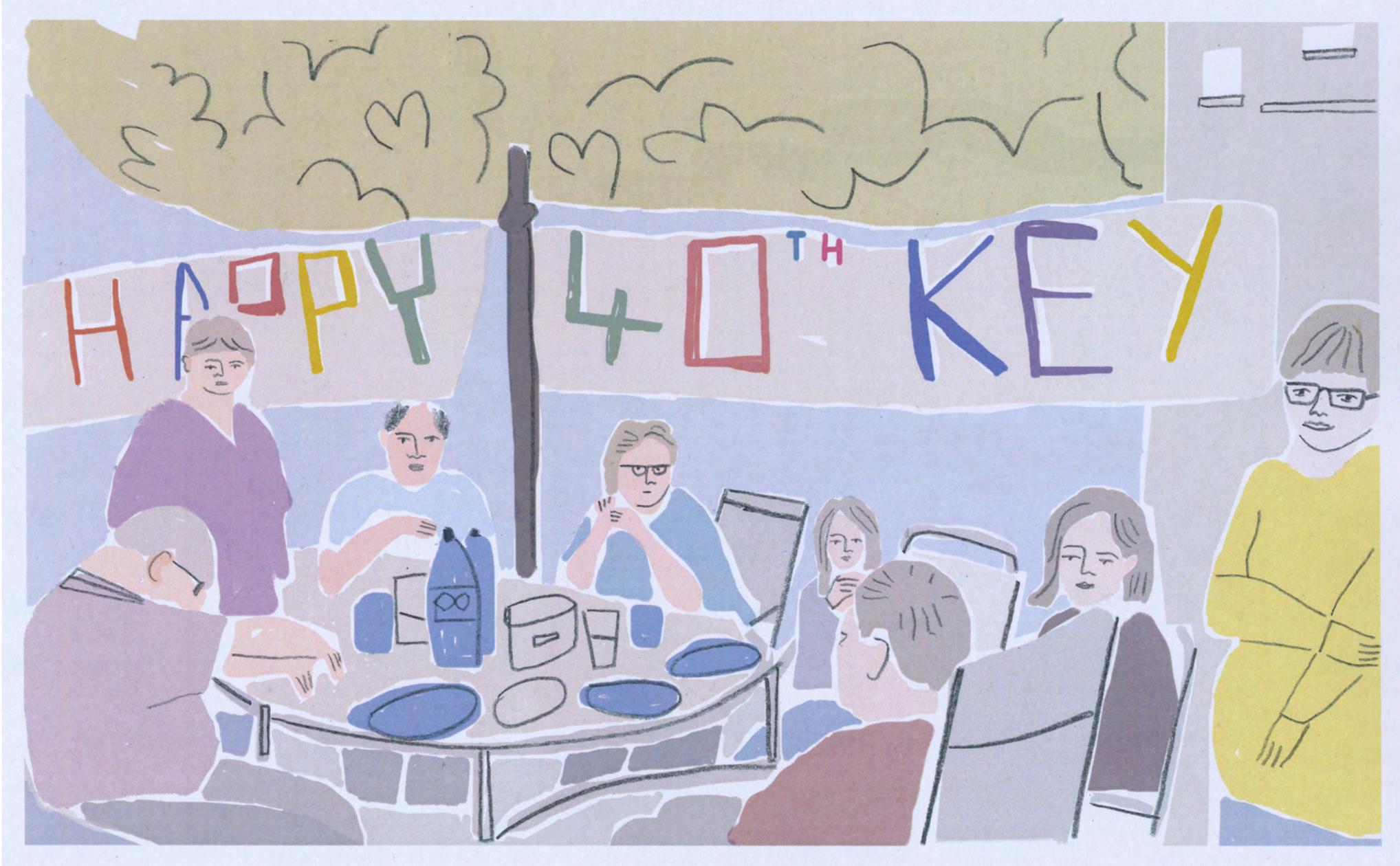
# Celebrating 40 years of Key

It is 40 years since a group of parents got together with a vision for their disabled children's futures.

Their vision was for their sons and daughters to live full lives at the heart of their local communities, close to family and friends.

They were passionate, committed and focused on finding the way to make this happen and their idea was way ahead of its time. They wanted to develop housing in local communities where people would be supported to live their life.

Here we commemorate the ground-breaking achievement of those founding families and also tell our story through the experiences and memories of some of the people connected with us.



# Where it all began

Recollections of **Jack Crombie** (former solicitor and founding Key Board Member), **Bill Mooney** (parent, retired civil engineer and founding Key Board Member) and **Angus Turner** (parent, retired Church of Scotland Minister and Key Board Member)

At that time as parents all we were offered for our children was institutional life and this was very distressing for us. Even though people were well meaning, this was not what we wanted.

We came together because the early conversations we had with professionals gave us the passion to change things. We all wanted a different future for our sons and daughters and we wanted to be able to influence what would happen when we were no longer around. We used this parent pressure and the support of sympathetic professionals like Iain McMurray, who was General Secretary of ENABLE at the time, to come together and look at alternatives to institutions. The idea we came up with was forming a housing association as this movement was really gathering momentum at that time.

Looking back on it, the thinking of the parents and other Key Board Members was way ahead of its time. Up until then no one had thought you could provide accommodation and support to people with learning disabilities in their communities. Those early days weren't easy. It was difficult to get money for anything other than buildings and we knew people would need more than that. Demonstrating that need was problematic as this hadn't been done before. Although we were fortunate to have people like Harry Smith

involved with the Board who brought experiences and connections from political life and helped drive us forward.

There were lots of technicalities to navigate too and in many ways we were 'innocents abroad' in terms of dealing with these but we had such a clear vision of what was required and were so committed to working out how to get there.

Things really didn't move much for us until we appointed our first Director and began to bring in some expertise from architects and the like. This enabled us to open our first developments in 1983 and we continued to work to get things right not just for the accommodation but also, most importantly, the support.

It was in the late '80s that things really took off and Key began to grow. This was partly due to Val Jeffrey, and later Malcolm Matheson, coming into their posts as Depute Director and Director. At this time not only did we want to provide an alternative to life in an institution, we also wanted to get the people already there out of them. We knew the institutions weren't good enough for anyone and as they closed it became clear just how limiting and degrading life in a hospital could be.

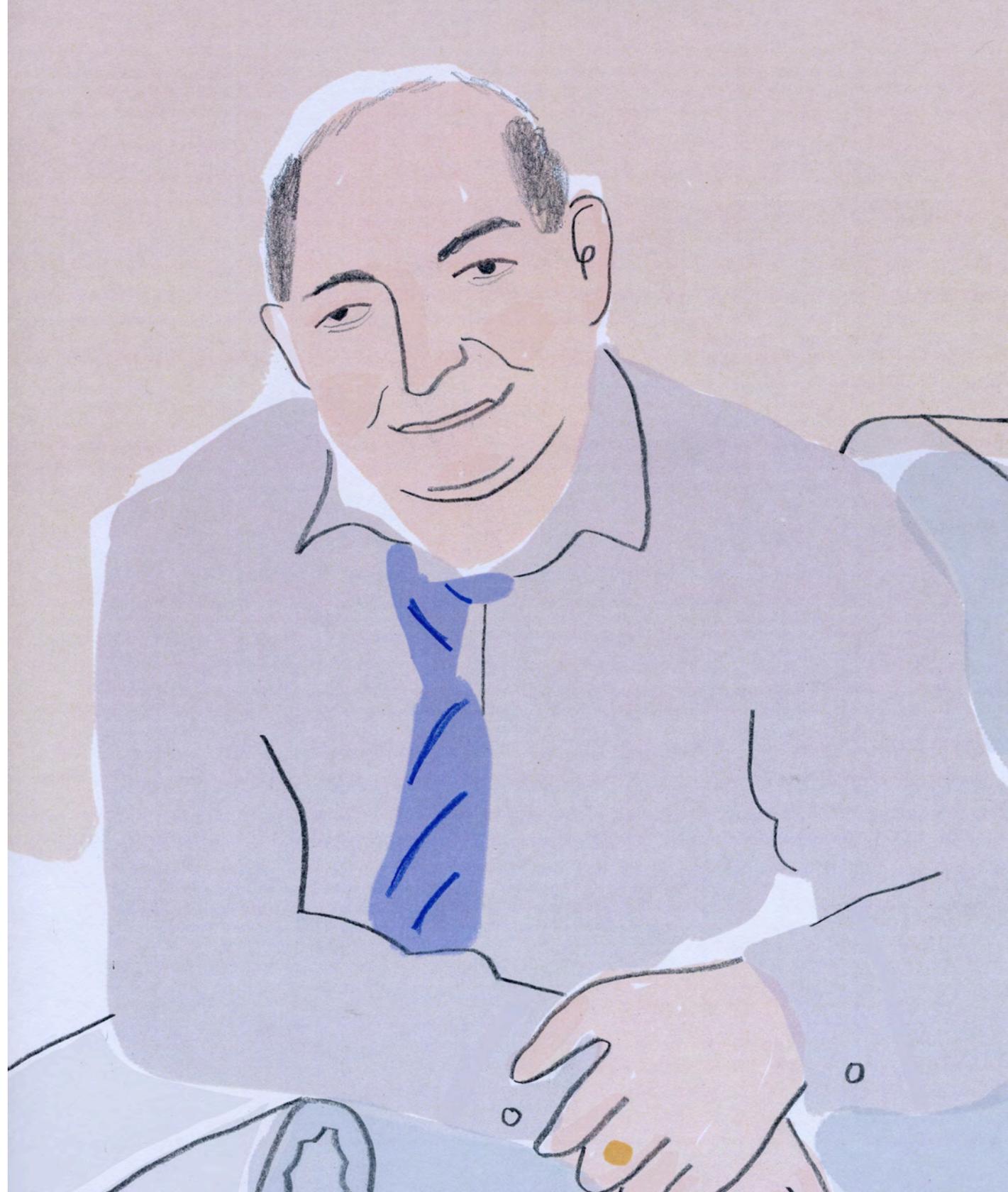
When we started Key we saw what lives people could have.



*“We were fighting for an alternative to institutional life and that’s what’s changed, that’s not the option anymore”*

**Clockwise from top left:**  
Jack Crombie, Bill Mooney and Angus Turner.

*“I was lucky cos I was  
hardly in the hospital  
as the years went on”*



# Lennox Castle memories

Recollections of **Robert McLean** (Key tenant and former resident of Lennox Castle Hospital)

I was the eldest of 8 children and spent most of my childhood in a convent school, then when I was 16 I went to Lennox Castle. When I came out again I was 30. I was in there for 14 years.

I had a friend, Peter, who spoke to the staff member in charge of the jobs and he managed to get me a job in the gardens. I had a number of jobs in my years at the hospital with the painters, the plumbers and on the vans that did the laundry and deliveries.

I was informal at the hospital which meant I could go in and out of hospital by myself. If you were formal you couldn't do that. It was my friend, Ellen, moving out that helped me as I would go visit her every Sunday. I walked 12 miles there and back to Glasgow every week! Seeing Ellen move on from Lennox Castle made me think I could do that too. I would've struggled otherwise.

I've lived with Key for 33 years now and I can remember the first day moving into my own house, the warden said "Welcome home Robert" and I felt fresh.

It felt like home from day 1. I got out and that was the end of the story. When I came in the house at first, I heard the weans playing at the school and I sat, enjoying listening to them.

I was glad to leave Lennox Castle and some of the people should never have been there in the first place.

I've worked since I left the Castle too. When I first came out I got a job gardening and on my first day going to work I got off the bus and saw a wee shop. I was hungry so went and bought some midget gems, they tasted great! I've worked in a day centre for people with dementia for 14 years now, doing the gardening, tidying up, that kind of thing... I have a busy week!

# Moving out, moving on

Recollections from **Shirley Lowrie** (Key tenant and former resident of Lennox Castle)

I was 16 when I went into Lennox Castle and stayed for 27 years. I went through a lot there and I remember one time we went a bus run — we went a bus run every year — and I bought a dress. Then the sister wouldn't let me wear it. The boys would get to go into town and all over the place and we, the females, were not allowed out at the weekend. But now I can pick what I want, I can go to my bed anytime and I can make a cup of tea when I want a cup of tea.

While I was in Lennox Castle I had no contact with my family but when I got out my sister wrote to me and told me I had brothers too and I got to meet them all. I visited my brother in the Highlands and decided that I'd like to stay up there. So I moved up in 1988, six years after getting out of Lennox Castle. I have nieces and nephews here too and visit my brother and sister-in-law every week – they are the reason I wanted to move here.

I have my own flat that I like to keep up to date and I go and please myself. I am a keen gardener and I've got a good social life visiting my friends. I wouldn't go back to Glasgow now.





*“I didn’t used to know  
my family until I got  
out of Lennox Castle”*

*“Sharing life’s  
journey ... being  
alongside people  
through the years”*



# Turning ideas into reality

Recollections from some members of *Key's early staff*

The late 1970s brought some favourable policy developments like Wolfensberger's 'Principles of Normalisation', the 'Warnock Report' and the 'Jay Report' which led people to begin to think about the kinds of lives disabled people could have. However, it was still really those early families who saw the potential to support people away from hospitals.

As this was pioneering and hadn't really been done before, the early days were very much about finding ways to make things work. This included lots of different issues from the very technical, such as architect plans, planning permission and building houses, through to how to support people in these new houses.

We knew right from the start that relationships and really listening to people were crucial to making things work. People looking to be moved out of hospital did so on a three month trial which meant they could go back. We worked hard to make sure this didn't happen by meeting people in the long-stay hospitals to find out about them, supporting them to make

the choices they had never had a chance to make before, and through time by constantly adapting what we were doing to meet each person's needs.

What we were trying to achieve was community living, with housing developments which had both tenants with and without support. This wasn't always appreciated or desired by the communities we wanted to build in and there were some hurdles to overcome in challenging the stigma around people moving from institutions to community-based living.

What we found over time is that the people we supported were the strongest voices in tackling this discrimination and stigma. They were the ones that told us that they didn't like the labels they had and were clear that as tenants they had a right to speak up about their homes, lives and the barriers facing them. We started having tenant group meetings locally and really this was the start of people with support becoming increasingly involved with the organisation and the origins of TAG.

40 YEARS  
OF KEY

# It's all about people

Recollections of **Anne Finnegan** (former Key Board Member and retired Special Needs Housing Manager for Glasgow City Council)

It was a really exciting time when I joined Key's Board. Lennox Castle was beginning to close which was challenging too as it was difficult to get accommodation and funding to move people out. My background was in housing so I could help with finding places for people to stay but what we were doing hadn't been done before. As people moved out of Lennox Castle we had to adapt what we were doing so that we could support people with a wider range of more complex needs.

Setting up Community Lifestyles in 1995 really helped us to address these new demands from people leaving institutions and moved us towards supporting people with more challenging lives in their own homes. Community Lifestyles has been a great success and has really enhanced Key's approach and reputation.

Another highlight for me has been TAG (The Advisory Group). I truly believe it is one of the best things we've done. It began that process of listening to the people we support and ensuring that they have a strong voice in the organisation. Their involvement on the Board has been, and continues to be, crucial. After all who knows better what their needs are than people themselves?

We've always been about people; those parents who first came together 40 years ago and without whom we wouldn't be here, the staff who are, and always have been, our greatest asset, to the people we support who have given me so many lovely personal memories over the years. A favourite among these was going to Joseph and Margaret's wedding. It was just lovely to share in such a special day for them and the support they got to make that happen.

Things have changed so much; people now have opportunities to show their talents and abilities.



*“Our heart and  
soul comes  
from people we  
support, staff  
and the Board”*



# Having our say

Recollections and reflections from current *The Advisory Group (TAG)* members and the staff who support it

Hearing directly from people has always been central to Key's approach. Over the years how this is achieved has evolved greatly. In the early days engagement took the form of 'flat chats' which focused on the practicalities of living in particular housing developments. Through time these became regional 'tenants' forums' which were supported by managers and provided a platform for airing views on how things were working out for people living in Key houses.

Through these forums people pushed for more opportunities to not just talk about their housing but how they could influence the organisation. The organisation recognised and responded to this by securing funding for a part-time post to support and encourage the involvement of tenants.

In 1996 following an organisation wide 'What matters most?' consultation, the Tenants' Advisory Group (TAG) was established by a group of volunteers from across the country. This was quickly followed by the formation of regional groups in Dumfries and Galloway, Lanarkshire, Clyde Coast, Highland and Central.

The beginning of the new century brought new opportunities for TAG with the publication of 'The same as you?', the largest review of services for people with learning disabilities there had been in a generation. This opened up new avenues for TAG members to be involved in external events and policy discussions, and as Key began to support people who weren't Key tenants, the diversity of TAG's membership increased and what people wanted to talk about dramatically changed.

These developments were reflected in a name change from the 'Tenants' Advisory Group' to 'The Advisory Group' and through the meeting structures people told us they wanted to talk about their lives now, not just housing repairs and getting support from Key.

From 2005 onwards TAG continued to grow in size and restructure into more local groups which enabled more people to become involved and the focus of discussions to be really relevant to what was happening and important in the local area. And although TAG representatives were involved in a subgroup of Key's Management Committee, about 10 years ago the

What TAG members say...

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*“We talk about community involvement, politics, campaigning and access”*

*“We’re involved in different campaigns like ‘Changing Places’ and want to change things for the better”*

*“We’ve got plans to run a conference on accessibility”*

*“We’ve been involved in setting up sports and activity groups”*

*“We helped Key by running ‘Getting together, getting it right’ events”*

publication of the first ‘Charter for Involvement’ prompted Key to consider how people’s voices could be further embedded in its governance structures. As a result it was decided that two members of TAG should now sit as full members of Key’s Board.

Alongside these developments, TAG members were becoming increasingly keen to get involved with things that had nothing to do with Key, their houses, or their support. They wanted to challenge issues at a local and national level and engage with an even wider range of people and partners. They also wanted to organise their own community events and be able to fundraise for projects that they were keen to get off the ground, things like community gardens, allotments, community cafes and so on. This led to the idea that TAG could become an independent charity.

In 2012 TAG became a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation and has not looked back since. TAG has been successful in securing funding for community development and Self-directed Support projects. TAG continues to work in close partnership with Key and Community Lifestyles; Key commissioned TAG to develop and facilitate interactive engagement events to gain the views of people we support.

This separation between TAG’s commissioned work with Key and their everyday priorities is incredibly important to TAG. It has enabled them to follow the agenda set by their members to talk about communities and campaign for greater access for disabled people.

*“It’s all about  
people and  
relationships”*



40 YEARS  
OF KEY



# Building on strong foundations

A conversation with members of *Key's management team*

From our very beginnings people and relationships have been at the heart of everything we do. We have never wavered from being guided by the views and wishes of disabled people and their families.

As the external policy landscape has continued to evolve so too have we. We embraced policy changes from long-stay hospital closure programmes through to the advent of Self-directed Support (SDS), as further opportunities for disabled people to have yet more choice and control over decisions about their lives and support.

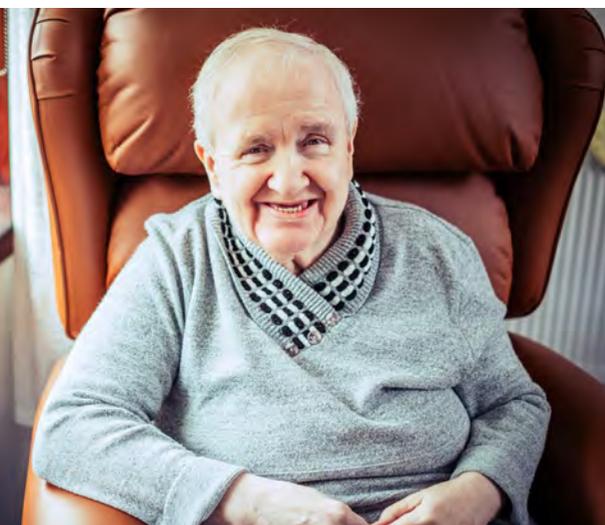
Throughout these developments we have continued to listen carefully to disabled people and their families when they tell us about what they want and how we can best support them to achieve their goals. This has led us to arrive at where we are today... a modern, dynamic organisation which supports around 1600 people, over 700 of whom receive an individual budget.

And yet at the same time still where we started, which is with people living the lives they want, in their communities.

*“It's just what we do”*

# Ordinary people living everyday lives

Conversations with people supported by Key in Annan, North Lanarkshire and Helensburgh



## *Paul*

"I began to be supported by Key back in 1989. Back then there was a great community feeling and lots of chances to get together. For one of my big birthdays I thought people might be up to something and they surprised me with a party. I came home from the pub to the house in darkness. When I opened the door, the lights went on and everyone started singing 'Happy Birthday!'"

The three most significant days of my life were: 22nd December 1966 when I left school, 1st May 1989 as this was the day I moved in to Key Housing and 1st August 2005 which was my wedding day.

Sometimes I wished hadn't left school at 15, but if I hadn't done that and all the things I've done since then, I wouldn't have the life I have now and I can honestly say I have lived a life without regret.

My wife Pam and I really enjoy going on holidays. We go a lot of cruises, we especially love going round the Mediterranean. There's also a lovely hotel in Newquay which is very special to us."

## *William*

"I'm originally from Dumfries but stayed in a hospital in Lanark so moved to Bellshill when I got out of there.

I love football and enjoy watching most sports. On Mondays I go to a club and I'm involved with church. My church is very important to me and a big part of my life.

I also love nature, especially birds and I'm looking to find some activities where I can get more involved with nature. I do have a pet budgie called Josephine; she doesn't speak but does make a racket at night to get out of the cage.

My next plan is to talk to my team about planning a holiday, maybe to a caravan or somewhere near a lake."

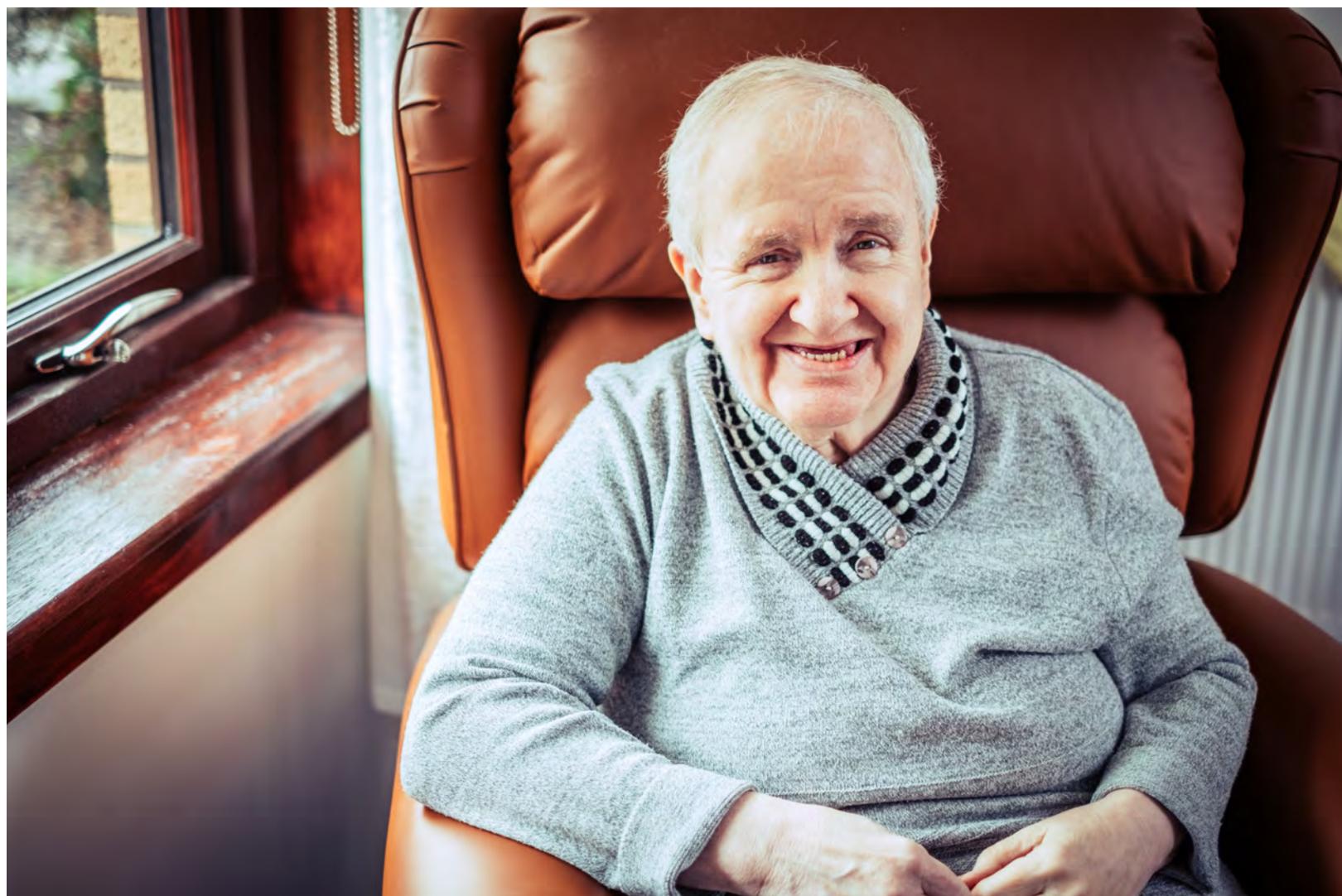
## *Colin*

"I live in Blackburn. I've got my own house and I like having it. My favourite thing to do is go stay with my mum and dad at the weekends as I get spoiled when I'm there! They make all my dinners and cups of tea. On Saturdays my dad and I like to sit and watch the horse racing on the TV."

## *Monica*

"I live in Coatbridge and moved in 18 years ago. Before that I lived in Key Housing in Glasgow. It was in July when I moved to Coatbridge and it was nae bother opening my own front door for the first time.

I've always enjoyed going on holiday and can remember going to Rothesay with my family when I was wee. When we went we'd go for walks, get some ice cream and maybe have a fish supper. I've also been to Blackpool. I went on the trams, up the tower to see the ballroom and I even walked over the leap of faith where it looks like there's no floor and you can see the ground beneath you! I still like to go on holiday; I went to Loch Lomond earlier this year and really liked it."





## *Bill*

“Before I came to Key I lived with my mum and dad. I also have a sister, she’s terrible but I love her!

My dad was a nurse at Stoneyetts Hospital and we had a car when we were growing so we were lucky to be able to do lots of things together as a family. We used to go on holidays ‘doon the watter’ to Rothesay.

Then when my mum passed away in 1992 I couldn’t keep the house going so I moved into Key. Having someone special to share my life with has always been really important to me. I was engaged but sadly she passed away. Every Sunday me and my support worker would get a taxi to my fiancée’s house and we would maybe go for lunch together. We shared lots of good times and I have lots of nice memories but I miss her terribly.”

## *Andrew*

"I can remember when I moved in 1988 as I was still at college. Louise moved in before me, I remember her being there. I live in my own place with my wife Lynn. Key in Annan has grown a lot over the years I have been here. The service goes out beyond the town now too. Most of the workers who were here at the start are away or retired now.

I'm also involved with Stirling University as a co-researcher in a dementia research project. I was doing this with someone else supported by Key. She has dementia and was trying out some things to help her with this like a memory book, apps for her iPad, a digital photo frame and they also made some changes to the lighting in her house to help her.

As a co-researcher I would talk to her about the changes and take photographs to show how these things seemed to be helping her or not. I'm looking forward to finding out what we're going to do next with this, because one of the ideas we had was having a conference to tell people about the research.

I'm also involved with Powerful Voices Together, which is a group of all the self-advocates from across Dumfries and Galloway, it's a really good meeting."

## *Louise*

"I can't really remember when I moved to Key as it was a long time ago. I was in a shared house to begin with and then I moved to another couple of houses with other people but now I live in my own place and I'm happy there. There are a lot more workers in Key now and we've got lots of different places in Annan too.

Having a healthy lifestyle is really important to me, I do a lot of cooking – healthy cooking, healthy menu planning. I also do training at the track, like walking, ball skills, that kind of thing.

I've also started to go back to the Advisory Committee of ENABLE and Dumfries and Galloway TAG (The Advisory Group). I was doing the dementia research project too with my friend but she's now moved into care so I'm not doing this anymore. She had a memory book and I did get the chance to do some of the photos early on but even though I didn't get much chance to do this work it was nice that it gave me time to spend with my friend. I'd like to help people understand dementia better."





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## *Graham*

"I live in Cumbernauld and have been supported by Key since 2007. I did Computer Aided Design at college and this got me a job in the design department with Cumbernauld Development Corporation where I was involved in landscaping gardens. I worked there for 21 years but had to retire at age 41 due to my health deteriorating.

Then someone suggested that I apply for a civil service position and I was successful in getting a position with the Lord Chancellor's office where I became involved with tribunal panels for benefits appeals – I was the disabled person representative on the panel. I really enjoyed doing this, but unfortunately my health deteriorated again last year after a bad fall and I had to resign my position. It was a really interesting experience.

Travel is really important to me and something which I love to do. I have many travel stories from all the cruises I've done. I've seen lots of different places in the world; it's Russia and the Baltic region this year!"



Graham, Key staff member, Monica and Wendy

## *Wendy*

"I've always lived in Bellshill and been supported by Key for 23 years. I like Key and my team: they're brilliant. I've seen a lot of changes over the 23 years: people used to live together but everyone has their own home now. It's good because I'm glad people have their own home. Before Key I lived with mum and dad, and when I first moved to Key Bellshill I shared with three other people, but now I have my own wee house and I love it!"



Gareth and Catherine

## *Gareth*

“I’ve been with Key for about a year. My experience is totally different to some of the older people supported by Key. I went to a mainstream school and often my teachers didn’t know anything about my conditions. I didn’t know that people had lived in hospitals away from their families in the past. I am moving into a new house with my girlfriend and we’re planning how we’ll decorate this. My dream though is to live in Oban; it’s somewhere I’ve always wanted to go to.”

## *Catherine*

“I’ve lived in Key for a long time and was really young when I moved in. Before that I was in the Larbert [the Royal Scottish National Hospital]. I hated it there; it was a terrible place and I was glad to get away from it.

It was a great feeling moving to Helensburgh and opening my own front door. Life is good now. I do a lot of arts and crafts stuff as we have a group here. I do embroidery, sewing, make pom-poms and go to some local clubs too.

I went on holiday to Blackpool recently and had a wee dance at the Tower Ballroom when I was there!”

## *Charles*

"I used to live in England with my mum and dad. My dad's Scottish and so we moved back here.

My life changed when I met Joan as she got my support sorted out, she didn't work with Key when I first met her but she does now. She's like a sister to me.

I just moved out from my mum and dad's this year. It's been difficult to get a place to stay sorted as finding a place to rent in Helensburgh isn't easy.

I just do what everyone else does with their week: go my shopping, meet up with friends for a bit of a chat and get out and about to do the things I enjoy."

## *Duncan*

"I've been with Key about 16 years. I lived with my mum and dad before that. I got a flat and it was good moving out as it was getting difficult to always get along with mum and dad.

It was a wee bit daunting going out into the community. It was good in one way to get from under mum and dad's feet but I did miss them too.

I got involved in doing work around personal safety; I had done martial arts years ago and that led me to doing self-defence. People said 'why don't you pass all this knowledge on to others?' So I did and became involved with Andy who was the Community Safety Officer and we put something together. As I got to know him better we shared our knowledge and I worked on a community crime prevention pack and doing presentations to people with disabilities.

Having Key has meant having a support network for me and it's helped me grow. If it hadn't been for Key I'm not sure where I'd be now; it gave me a sense of belonging."

## *Annie*

"They call me 'Lady Davenport' as I keep the young ones right but to be honest sometimes they struggle to keep up with me! I guess you could say I'm well-known in the community.

I lived with my mum and dad and was the youngest in my family. My dad died when I was young and then my mum died not long afterwards. At first I went to live with my sister but I took really unwell and went to live in Quarriers' Village where I stayed for 31 years.

I met a young woman when I was there who helped me move on, so I was 55 when I came out. It was great when I moved into my own place. I have got a better life now and my epilepsy is under control.

I have my wee routine: Monday is my day for sorting things out like getting my pills and so on, Tuesday is my pyjama day when I enjoy sitting looking out the window as I hate the television. Wednesday I go to bocchia and every fortnight I go to a ceilidh.

My dream was to get a house of my own and it's gorgeous. My dream came true and it changed my life. I love everything about it and it's exactly the way I want."



Clockwise from top left:  
Duncan and Charles, Annie

## *Key staff*

As well as talking to people supported by Key we also spoke to groups of staff about how it has felt for them to be a part of Key's story.

They spoke of an organisation which has shifted from providing hostel type living at a time when there were few other options for people with learning disabilities, to the highly individualised support that people receive in their own homes and communities today. All the while retaining a clear focus on everything we do being about improving the lives of people we support.

Staff also talked about Key sometimes feeling like a family where people pull together and there will always be someone to help you find a way through a situation even when you're not sure of it yourself.

There was a real sense that stories and "life's wonderful moments" have always been at the heart of Key and through the workshops staff shared many experiences of fun, laughter, happiness, silliness and sadness from across the years. For some it was indeed a place where they had experienced many of their life's wonderful moments.

*"Literally seeing people's lives changing ... getting a house, living a life ... being a part of that"*

40 YEARS  
OF KEY





*“We’re all in it together”*

# Facing the future, guided by our past

Any period of reflection is often accompanied by a desire to also look forward.

We have reminisced and paid tribute to our history and the many remarkable people who have contributed to it. We have also paused to consider how this legacy continues to influence the kind of organisation we are today and want to be in the future.

The stories retold here serve to remind us that the place people call home has always been important and still is today. Our founding families were determined that their children shouldn't call hospital home - and this is equally relevant today. Supporting people to live in their own homes, in their own communities, remains our core purpose.

The significance of people and relationships has been undeniable across all of the reflections offered here. The relationships highlighted here are varied: between families and professionals determined to deliver something that hadn't been done before; between the people we support and the people we employ; between colleagues working towards common goals; between disabled people and their desire to claim their rights and change things. Continuing to nurture and develop relationships like these - ensuring they are positive and carefully balance the power that exists within them - will always underpin our approach.

Above all, the stories are about people living their lives. We are an organisation that strives to celebrate and support the everyday ordinariness of people living in their communities, connected to those who are important to them, enjoying what their community has to offer and playing their part in the richness of it.





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Forty years after a group of parents got together with a vision for their disabled children's futures, this book commemorates the ground-breaking achievement of those founding families and also tells the story of Key through the experiences and memories of some of the people involved.

40 YEARS  
OF KEY