

What the Alliance meant to us

Glasgow Alliance to End Homelessness (GAEH) was created in February 2020 as a collaboration of organisations to kickstart a city-wide movement to end homelessness and rough sleeping by 2030. It was the first of its kind in the UK and brought together the Health and Social Care Partnership, third sector and independent organisations, and local people with experience of being homeless.

Here, **Martin Boyle** and **Mark Cairney**, who both sat on the Alliance Leadership Team (ALT), share their experiences of the Alliance. Both have experience of homelessness and are Associates on the Glasgow Homelessness Information and Feedback Team (GHIFT) at Homeless Network Scotland.



I went into the Alliance right at the start as a Homeless Network Scotland Associate. I already knew quite a lot of stuff, but I came out of it a completely different person. It changed my life.

I would have to go to university to learn the skills I got through being part of GHIFT and the Alliance. I didn't have much of an education and I don't claim to be an expert on all the jargon you hear working in homelessness, but I learned masses through being part of it, even down to things like learning sign language during the pandemic.

When you're a service user you don't get to see how things work at policy level. It was a privilege to be part of the Alliance – being in there with managers, decision makers and CEOs, holding them accountable for things you don't agree with, giving them a reality check.

It gives you a bit of power and it has made me a better human being.

I might never be involved in another co-production like this – the more I reflect on it I realise how big it was. Hearing people talking about it outside made me realise the scale of it.

We gave it everything. Without support from Homeless Network Scotland, I wouldn't have been able to do any of this. If I can get someone else to benefit from my experience, that's good. You see people with no hope, you see them growing and you think 'there you go pal'.

I wanted to write this because it will be beneficial for other people to hear about the Alliance and GHIFT. We've got new Associates at HNS and I want them to see what has been done and what they can do.

Now I'm reflecting on what else I could do to get the same buzz from the working environment. Lived experience does have a voice and I want people with lived experience to get buy-in to homelessness policies, so they can help to improve things. People's lives have been changed for the better through this.



Mark Cairney

My GHIFT roles and responsibilities within the Alliance provided me with the opportunity to move beyond merely amplifying the voices of lived experience to delivering co-production and change in decision-making arenas.

I feel that my experience has enabled me to significantly shape pathways at a strategic, operational, and practice level. The production of the Your Outreach Unified (YOU) has brought true transparency to What's Best for People – a unified and seamless outreach service.

I was privileged to be fully engaged in the Appreciative Inquiry process, solution-build workshops and the design and writing of the YOU model. Even personally naming the model reinforced the rationale for the need for a unified approach to service delivery, within a turbulent homeless landscape.

As a member of the Leadership Team, I was able to experience consensus decision making, the evolution of a new, unique iterative Alliancing model and varying approaches to shared experiential learning.

It was refreshing to witness competition being replaced by collaboration as collective and individual accountability and responsibility amongst the partner participants was achieving What's Best for People. This was a significant strength of the ALT as value-based reflective leadership was driving solution focused inquiry in the complex interactions of Alliancing.

The greatest asset, I believe, across the sector is the people who deliver services. A thriving, inter-connected, rewarded, people workforce co-producing change will remain a priority. The GAEH has reinforced to me that we are interdependent on one another and must co-produce.

My involvement in the design and development of the Frontline Forum both face to face and online via the People's Delivery Team provided evidence for a desire for people to share their talents and assets and develop Best Practice within new transformative partnership working.

Being given the opportunity to rewrite policy documents and create learning and development documents enhanced my desire to use every medium to achieve change and recognise the value of the people workforce.

As a Homeless Network Scotland Associate, I am driven to be a partner in a sector that continues to learn and build on the momentum and energy generated by the GAEH.

The necessity to be trauma and language informed as we remove stigmas and labels is of particular significance to me as I applied GHIFT learning to my engagements with stakeholders across sectors. I remain dedicated to a city-wide Frontline Forum and multiple platforms for people to connect, learn and act especially at the dawn of new preventative duties.

I would love to see a multi-agency learning academy across the city, the one we envisaged and described in the YOU model as part of a city-wide Learning and Development Strategy.

My personal learning and achievements are reflected in my relationship with Martin Boyle, a mentor who became a friend and who is a symbol of how HNS brings people together, connects and delivers change.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank individuals across the Alliance and its leadership and delivery teams for their ongoing support and encouragement.

