

Our Kids Won't Wait!

The Yard's whole-family, inclusive family support model delivers strong social return by providing early, point-of-need support that prevents crisis, reduces service demand and helps disabled children and families build communities and thrive.

Why The Yard's Model Works

Supporting Whole Family Wellbeing at the Point of Need

The Yard's approach is:

- Point of need, not diagnosis led – families can access support when challenges first arise.
- Whole family – supporting parents, carers and siblings alongside the child.
- Non-stigmatising – open, welcoming spaces rooted in play and connection.
- Relational – built on trust, continuity and long-term relationships.
- Preventative – reducing escalation into crisis services.
- Inclusive by design – every child feels safe, valued and able to belong.

This combination drives both impact and value – improving lives while reducing long term public spend.



“The Yard has brought happiness back into my family. It's not just a place; it's a lifeline. We'd be lost without it.”



Scottish Policy Context

The Yard's model directly supports Scotland's national priorities, including:

- GIRFEC – early help, wellbeing and joined-up support.
- The Promise – relational, preventative, community-based support.
- Whole Family Wellbeing Funding – shifting investment upstream.
- Additional Support for Learning Review – inclusion, early intervention and family-centred practice.
- UNCRC incorporation – children's rights to play, inclusion and support.
- National Care Service ambitions – prevention, participation and local delivery.

The Yard provides a practical, scalable model that operationalises these commitments in communities across Scotland.



“The Yard is a place of no judgement and you can really relax and feel part of a community. They walk the walk.”



The Yard Urges Government, Funders and Decision Makers to:



1

Invest in Early, Preventative Support at the Point of Need

Children and families should be able to access support when they need it, not only after navigating lengthy diagnostic processes.

- Fund open-access, inclusive play and family support as core early-intervention infrastructure.
- Recognise that developmental, emotional and social needs often present long before diagnosis – and that delay increases family stress and system cost.

Why This Matters:

Diagnosis-led systems exclude families at critical moments. Early support reduces escalation into crisis and improves long-term outcomes and reduces pressure on statutory partners.

2

Scale Proven, Whole Family Support Models Across Scotland

Support the expansion and sustainability of trusted, community-based models that work with the whole family.

- Enable replication of The Yard's model so access to place-based and single point of access family support for disabled children is available Scotland-wide.
- Ensure inclusive family support underpins how we respond to family need and work collaboratively across all sectors.

Why This Matters:

Supporting parents, carers and siblings in non-clinical environments builds peer support, strengthens outcomes for children and reduces pressure elsewhere and services designed with families are accessed earlier, trusted more deeply and used more effectively.

3

Shift Funding Decisions Towards Prevention and Social Value

Commission and fund services based on the impact for the whole family and social return, not short-term outputs.

- Use Social Return on Investment (SROI) to evaluate long-term benefits and invest in organisations that build trust and long-term relationships with families.
- Move away from short-term pilots towards sustained investment in what works.

Why This Matters:

Prevention delivers better outcomes at lower cost than crisis-led intervention.

4

Adopt a One for Scotland Approach to Training on Meaningful Inclusion

Ensure that accredited training on inclusion is integral to education for professionals and practitioners working with children and families, and that all professionals Scotland-wide have ongoing free access.

- Ensure inclusion training is underpinned by lived experience and rooted in the social model of disability.
- Promote inclusive practice as a core approach across health, social care, education and justice and community services and ensure access to training for practitioners is centrally funded and available.

Why This Matters:

Training meaningfully co-designed with people with lived experience focuses on what makes the difference to the child and family and improves their experience of services in all settings.

The Value Of The Yard's Model



Demonstrating Social Return on Investment (SROI)

The Yard's values-led model delivers multiple layers of social value from a preventative, community-based approach with a single point of access.

Impact for Children

- Improved emotional wellbeing, confidence and communication.
- Increased physical activity, learning through play and developmental progress.
- Reduced isolation and stronger peer relationships.

Long-term value: Better mental health, improved readiness for learning and increased resilience into adulthood.

Impact for Parents, Carers and Siblings

- Reduced stress, anxiety and parental burnout.
- Increased confidence, peer support and sense of belonging.
- Increased family resilience to enable nurturing environments for children

System value: Lower reliance on crisis mental health services, social work and emergency interventions.

Impact for Public Services

- Reduced pressure on CAMHS, education support and social care.
- Fewer crisis referrals due to trusted early intervention and a trusted community of support.
- Increased partnership across sectors supporting a connected approach to effective systems change.

Financial value: Early, inclusive support costs significantly less than crisis response and delivers better outcomes

Impact for Communities and the Economy

- Parents and carers better able to remain in work, training or education.
- Stronger, more inclusive local communities.
- Increased understanding of meaningful inclusion and cross-sector skills development.

Wider return: Inclusive communities are healthier, more resilient and economically active.

Conclusion

Early, inclusive, whole-family support delivered at the point of need – not diagnosis – works. The Yard's model of building communities of peer support helps families thrive, reduces pressure on public services and delivers strong social return by supporting disabled children and their families early, locally and holistically.

Amy & Oliver's Story

Oliver – age 6 – was born prematurely at 30 weeks and lives with several complex conditions - chronic lung disease, autism, global developmental delay, sensory processing disorder, ARFID and hypermobility. He is also non-verbal.

Amy Clark, mum to six-year-old Oliver and a former mental health nurse, remembers how challenging life felt before discovering The Yard.



Oliver had spent so much time in hospital that he became fearful of new people, especially adults, not knowing how they'd act around him or what they might do next. Amy explained: He's never really had the chance to just be a kid, so he was often lashing out."

Alongside his communication difficulties, school was particularly challenging for him. Oliver struggled to engage with both pupils and staff.

"I felt like we'd never have a normal life. Oliver thought everyone was going to hurt him, and no one could get near him. He was hitting, kicking and biting. Instead of visiting play parks, I pushed him in his buggy through open spaces, deliberately avoiding children's areas.

We could only use sensory rooms if they were empty. Because of his eating disorder, we couldn't go anywhere where people were eating. All public places were out of the question. I couldn't even have friends round."

Discovering The Yard

Although Amy describes herself as an optimist, she was feeling increasingly isolated. Her world was shrinking.

Amy first experienced The Yard in May 2025, when Oliver's school arranged a trip to the Edinburgh centre.

"At first, I flat-out said I wasn't going. I usually take Oliver everywhere, but his teacher persuaded me, feeling it would be good for Oliver, so I agreed. Even if we only made it through the door, I thought that would be a win.

"The Yard has given me space to breathe"

So what's changed?

"As a single parent who gave up work, my life looks very different from what I imagined. But The Yard has given me space to breathe.

I can bring my parents, my sister, and even meet friends there. It's the only place I can have an actual conversation knowing Oliver is safe and happy.

Even though he still needs supervision, the staff recognise when I need a breather and step in. Now that we have The Yard, our world and our community have opened up."

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Amy & Oliver's Story (cont.)



"The facilities are fantastic too. Having a Changing Places toilet is a big deal as Oliver grows, and because the staff understand that toys might get chewed or broken, there's no pressure or judgement.

It's also affordable. I've gone from two incomes to none, so every penny counts.

Paying £8 a month for unlimited sessions is incredible and, if Oliver wants to leave early, it's no big deal. Raising a disabled child is expensive enough.

I recently had to spend £45 on a new harness after Oliver broke his! Knowing The Yard also has a hardship fund means no family has to miss out."

After just six weeks of summer visits, Amy noticed huge changes.

"We started going to other places that were previously out of the question, first just parking at a supermarket, then gradually going inside. The Yard staff have built my confidence, sharing their own experiences of being judged and always encouraging me to keep going."

"I can now see with my own eyes that Oliver will grow stronger and more confident."

The Future

Amy now feels hopeful, having met other families and seen older children thrive thanks to The Yard.

"We spoke to a teenager who reminded me so much of Oliver. It helps us all, including my parents,

imagine what the future might look like if we keep working at it. I can now see with my own eyes that Oliver will grow stronger and more confident.

"When he went back to school after summer, he ran in as happy as Larry! His teacher joked, 'Wow! Who is this child?' Yes, there are still challenges, but now I have hope. We're never far from one of The Yards. It's a guaranteed place that's safe, secure, fun and full of understanding.

They say it takes a village to raise a child - The Yard is ours."