

THE HARD-WORKING TEAM AT ENGAGE RENFREWSHIRE

Making dreams a reality

Kathleen Speirs

Tucked away behind The Tannahill Centre in Paisley's Ferguslie Park, a small team of staff at Engage Renfrewshire works flat out to help people in the community all year round.

Whether a charity is looking for more volunteers, a social enterprise needs help to secure vital funding, or someone has an idea but no clue where to start, Engage is a one-stop shop for getting the ball rolling.

"This isn't a normal job," Iain Cunningham, third sector and social enterprise development officer, said.

"Everyone here has the same goal — to do everything possible to help other people."

Of the 83 social enterprises in Renfrewshire, Iain works with the vast majority.

From offering legal and funding advice to organising networking events in the area, Iain has helped lots of worthy causes in Renfrewshire thrive.

Two of those organisations — Klas Care and We're Here — couldn't be more thankful for Engage Renfrewshire and Iain's support.

"Iain's like a guardian angel — he just does so much for us," Pogie



Massive help Pogie Manson and Lesley Compston say their organisations wouldn't be anywhere without Iain Cunningham, pictured right

Manson, from We're Here, said. "We're Here would not exist without Engage."

"Iain just gives you so much confidence and self-belief. He's amazing."

We're Here provides a companionship service for isolated older people in the community.

"Whether a pensioner needs someone to do their shopping for them, a hand with the ironing or even just a bletcher for an hour or two, we'll provide it," Pogie said. "We even took an elderly

resident to a wedding in Perth the other week."

Pogie approached Engage with an initial idea and was passed on to Iain.

Pogie explained: "There were so many elements that I had no clue about."

"Iain put me in the right direction and has been there every step of the way. It's brilliant."

Lesley Compston's childcare service, Klas Care, has gone from strength to strength thanks to Engage.

Noticing a gap in the market for after-school care in Linwood in 2010, Lesley took her childminding business to East Fulton Primary, in the town's Gilmartin Road.

Klas Care now works with around 70 families from Linwood and the surrounding areas.

Securing £300,000 funding to go towards two purpose-built premises in the community is one of Lesley's greatest achievements — for which she credits Iain's help.

Lesley said: "It's so true what Pogie says about confidence building."

"Iain fills us with knowledge and puts you in touch with all the right people."

"He really wants your social enterprise to thrive as much as you."

"He gives you such confidence,



Rewarding Stuart Miller has been providing help and support at Engage for over 13 years

which is so important.

"When you're starting a business, you can feel a lot of self-doubt, so the support is amazing."

Iain works alongside a team that he insists "are all cut from the same cloth" and "just want to help".

Two of those colleagues are Karen Miller and Kim Cameron, who work in volunteer development.

The dynamic duo recruit volunteers across Renfrewshire and say all parties reap the rewards.

"Not only are the volunteers giving back to the community, but it helps them in so many ways too," Kim said.

"Volunteering builds confidence, makes you feel part of



Volunteering works Kim Cameron and Karen Miller revealed generous Buddies want to give back



STARS with Justin TOPER

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22 - JANUARY 20
No matter how sad you feel, put on your glad rags, grab your friends, say bye to 2017, and have fun all weekend. And so you shall, though the approaching full Moon tends to make others snap. No reason why a relationship won't survive. Life is a miserable life without someone.

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AQUARIUS JANUARY 21 - FEBRUARY 19
Not every Aquarian is feeling unloved or isolated. Though, you may be spending this New Year's Eve quietly and possibly alone. For others, you hardly ever stay up this late. Whatever mood you are in, odds are you cannot be away from somebody. Have you considered a party for two?

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PISCES FEBRUARY 20 - MARCH 20
You may decide to stay at home, rather than out on the tiles. The party can wait, though you might go out at a moment's notice. It's just a peculiar time for emotional ties. Auld Lang Syne could mean acquaintances really are forgotten as you ring in the New Year.

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ARIES MARCH 21 - APRIL 20
It's party time, though your plans may already be in tatters. Actually there are a myriad of activities, but you are not exactly giddy with excitement. Vida loca, it isn't. However, you could still be the last one to leave. By far the biggest surprise comes after New Year's Eve.

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TAURUS APRIL 21 - MAY 21
New Year's Eve was supposed to be meticulously planned. A fun filled party marathon, with no expense spared. Now, for some reason, you may have nowhere to go? Don't despair. This should still be a night to remember. Whether or not someone arrives on time, your hopes will soon rise.

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GEMINI MAY 22 - JUNE 21
You haven't lost your joie de vivre, even though the festive season was costly. Simply that, you may believe that New Year's Eve is one big con, and that others are trying to relieve you of your money. True, security and serenity is your priority, but you only live once.

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CANCER JUNE 22 - JULY 22
You appear to be in a reflective mood as New Year's Eve approaches. And with a powerful Full Moon in Cancer immediately after, the party may be over before it has even begun. You have an emotional decision to make. What are you waiting for? You should be celebrating your freedom.

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LEO JULY 23 - AUGUST 22
This New Year's Eve may be fairly low key. After all, if you are a typical Leo, then life is one big party. Even so, you will let friends know what you are doing, as you prefer to wait and see. Feel free to call somebody. Only you probably won't.

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VIRGO AUGUST 23 - SEPTEMBER 22
Invitations should be forthcoming. Whether you have any notion of leaving home this New Year's is another matter. A night in on your own? You Virgo's sure know how to have fun. The approaching Full Moon suggests that one friend never lets you down. The same cannot be said for everyone.

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LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23 - OCTOBER 23
Whatever your plans for New Year's Eve, you don't want to get your hopes too high. However, before you withdraw from the fray, why not throw a party in your own front room? It looks as though someone is finally coming home. No more sorrow. This calls for a celebration.

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SCORPIO OCTOBER 24 - NOVEMBER 22
You may have a few plans up your sleeve for New Year's Eve. If only you were completely free. You could still be the life and soul of the party. Ensure you leave early. For others might well be returning, possibly from abroad. The night is filled with awe.

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SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 23 - DECEMBER 21
You too may decide to make your excuses and refuse to spend one penny this New Year's. What with the inflated prices. It's true, that you are particularly money conscious at the moment. Partners are not over excited by your choice. Don't withdraw. How about a compromise?

CALL FOR MORE 0903 658 2012 (75p/min + access charge)

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