

# Upmo Newsletter

## January 2024

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### Happy New Year!

Welcome to our newsletter, with updates from the service as well as information on upcoming events. If you want to be added to our mailing lists to receive updates, please reach out to [communications@upmo.org.uk](mailto:communications@upmo.org.uk)



**Update  
from  
Andrew Thomson  
CEO**

2024 sees the start of a New Year and with this new opportunities, changes and challenges.

### **Chair Of The board, Eric Mitchell Stepping Down**

Eric Mitchell has announced that he is stepping down as an Upmo Trustee and Chair of the Board. Eric became a Trustee in January 2017 and has served as Chair since May that year. With Eric's background within the Care sector, he has provided a wealth of experience to the growth and development of Upmo. Eric was heavily involved in 2020 when the Covid pandemic saw services to students suspended and the introduction of Upmo Connect to maintain online support to students and families during this challenging time. Eric's knowledge of the sector and his commitment to Upmo and our students will be sorely missed. There will be more thought given over the coming weeks to how Upmo will celebrate Eric's service to Upmo. In the meantime, Upmo Trustees have begun process of recruiting a new Chair and have engaged consultants Bruce Tait Associates to identify and assist in the appointment of a new Chair. Further announcements will be made in due course.

### **New Upmo 3 Year Strategy**

In 2024, we embark on a significant milestone, marking the commencement of the implementation of a new three-year strategy that will guide us through to 2026. The Senior Leadership Team have prepared an extensive strategy which has been put to the Upmo Board with Trustee comments expected back by the end of January. The document will then be finalised and the action plan implemented to help Upmo move forward to grow our services in a sustainable way.

### **Faith Nicholson, Funding and Grants Officer, is moving on**

We are sad to say that Faith will be leaving us to exciting pastures new. Although we are sad to see Faith go, we know what an exciting opportunity this is for her. I'm sure you will join with me in thanking her for all her work at Upmo and wishing her well in her new post. We are currently recruiting for a new team member to continue our Funding and Grant work.

# Site News

## Gorebridge

Students are looking ahead to this coming year with lots of projects planned. Beginning this month, they will be working towards creating a Robert Burns mural. Alongside learning the famous poem “A Red, Red Rose” which they will video themselves reciting, and of course doing an address to a haggis. They are continuing on with their garden projects and putting into practice all the knowledge and skills they have learnt from their Grown and Learn in Nature Awards last year. They will be making a plan on what to grow, checking seeds and tidying up. As well working on their “mini garden project” where they will be growing house plants, strawberry plants and making bird boxes for a quid pro quo contribution.

An exciting upcoming trip for students will be visiting Lord-Lieutenant The Duke of Buccleuch, Richard Scott’s farm, where they will be getting a guided tour. Focusing on their history project they will be visiting the Trimontium Museum with the Prestonpans group and on Thursday afternoons they will be visiting old churches and castles around the Borders, Midlothian and East Lothian. They will be collating all their research in to a slide show presentation.



artwork mural created by the Gorebridge students

## Links House

Students are planning out projects and Monday’s workshop group are planning art projects based around disabilities including researching different superheroes who have disabilities. Wednesday’s art group are making games based on their favourite movie or TV show. VR have a new app called Liminal, which allows students to choose games based off their mood. The IT and VR groups wish to do more collaborative projects this year to allow students to work as team.



IT Workshop on Wednesdays

## St Margaret's House

After a very busy festive period, students are easing back into the new year, and taking time this month to plan out their workshops and projects. They recently received funding from The Pear Tree, which will be used to encourage confidence in performing experience for our music groups. Before Covid, they often played various gigs outside of Upmo and we are hoping to reintroduce this again this year. Students are also hoping to record and release their own music. Additionally, staff are in the very early stages of planning another variety performance in the summer involving all the sites from Upmo,



Students and staff of SMH on the last day of service before xmas break

## Prestonpans

The students this year want to put on a Summer Showcase, allowing parents and carers to view their work and garden. Work such as their project with Dynamic Earth on Climate Change. Their first visit is this month and they will be learning valuable lessons for them to carry out themselves and incorporate with their garden. Our Boccia Ball players will be doing more training sessions to perfect technique and help improve their performance in tournaments. The Friday drama group are writing a script called, Martians of Craiglang, based off the fictional town from the TV series, Still Game. They will then collaborate with other students to put together a performance with props and decor created in the art workshops.



Stained glass art work to be put in the window of Prestonpans CO-OP



**Update  
from  
Claire Farquhar  
(Head of  
Operations)**

Welcome back! I hope everyone had a restful and fun-filled festive break. 2023 was a busy year across all our sites and I appreciate all staff and students working together to keep everything running smoothly.

Students took part in lots of events and activities, created some wonderful pieces of art and music, and I know staff have exciting plans for the year ahead including a large performance in June, watch this space!

We have recruited more Project Workers and you will see many new faces around the various services this month, so please introduce yourself and give them the usual warm Upmo welcome. More staff will allow us to bring in more new students who have been waiting to join, and allow us to expand our Retail and Eat workshop programmes.

### **New Upmo Breaks Service**

The creation of the Upmo Short Breaks service has taken a major step forward with the appointment of our Short Breaks Manager - Kirsty Sangster. Kirsty joins Upmo with 15 years experience in the sector and we look forward to engaging with our students in the weeks ahead with some exciting opportunities to get out and about as part of the Upmo service offering.

Information will be sent out to all students directly and also posted on social media, but if you have any questions on Upmo Breaks please don't hesitate to get in touch [clairefarquhar@upmo.org](mailto:clairefarquhar@upmo.org).



### **Outdoor Learning**

Despite the onset of cold weather, students persistently engage with the Outdoor Learning curriculum, demonstrating remarkable dedication, particularly in the unique environment of Jock Tamson's Gairden. Funding from Scotmids' Community Connect fund has allowed us to revamp and improve the garden space there, with new and more accessible pathways, improved water access, and the installation of a natural hedgerow. Feel free to pop along to the garden to visit, and if you are interested in finding out more about what students can do there, email [davidmontgomery@upmo.org](mailto:davidmontgomery@upmo.org)



Update  
from  
Alan Smart  
(Head of  
Development)

I hope you all had an enjoyable festive break with family and friends.

### **Upmo Eat Cafes**

As we look towards the year ahead our Upmo Eat Café operation continues to grow with increasing customer demand. We are now open at Ainslie Park on a Saturday and hope to shortly do the same at Drumbrae.

### **New Website Coming Soon**

We have recently signed off the design for our new Upmo website and hope to be able to share a preview soon, the new site will make it easier for student's families and partners to interact with us.

### **Siobhan Scott, Comms Officer, is moving on**

I am sorry to say that following the birth of her daughter Fern, Siobhan Scott our Communications Officer will not be returning to her role at Upmo. I would like to thank Siobhan for her tireless efforts and commitment during her time with Upmo where she led a number of significant initiatives and was an invaluable support for me.

Going forward I am delighted that Johanna Jamieson whom most of you will by now know, will take on the role of Communications Officer on a permanent basis working Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday each week.

### **New Trustees Mailbox**

As an aim to broaden the communication across Upmo, we have created a dedicated mailbox to allow you to submit questions, suggestions or comments directly our Trustees using the address the mailbox [asktheboard@upmo.org](mailto:asktheboard@upmo.org)



### **Digital Multimedia Workshops**

Since august 2023, Upmo Connect have been developing and delivering a year-long programme of Digital Multimedia workshops, giving participating students the opportunity to learn about film production, sound-design, animation, and music for film. Sessions have been designed in such a way that they are supported through interactive web-content such as online videos, animations and learning aids.

Our team are experimenting with ways that digitally provided content could facilitate self-directed study which not only benefits students attending Upmo, on-site as usual, but also can benefit students who are challenged geographically or simply cannot attend Upmo in person as often as they'd like. Designing workshops in this way gives a lot of flexibility and allows students in different situations to benefit the same quality of learning in a way that suits their needs.

