UTHEO Ltd. is a dynamic community based organisation, operating as a recognised Scottish Charity and Company Limited by Guarantee for the benefit of people living in the Orbiston and Bellshill area of North Lanarkshire.

# Formed in 1993, Utheo sprang from an urban theology study undertaken by two churches in Bellshill’s Orbiston area, which looked at the needs of the local area. The study found that there was little sense of community, no meeting place and little group social activity.

# In 1995, Utheo secured a four-year funding packing from the Urban Programme (£120,000 pa), along with other charitable and trust grants, which allowed the company to refurbish the church building and run a neighbourhood centre to address these issues. It started by providing four key services: a community café; day centre for older people; a food co-op, and out-of-school care.

The long-term success of the organisation has been due to the hard work and commitment of all those involved. The Neighbourhood Centre is governed by a Board of Directors with 60+ volunteers and 12 staff, most of whom are residents of the local area. The Centre caters for approx.1000 users each week from the local area, and the organisation has developed relationships with other groups, partners and funders who have supported its work over the years and allowed the organisation to provide the services and facilities it offers. Everyone involved has worked tirelessly to help UTHEO achieve its goals and create an environment where people are welcomed and encouraged to fulfil their potential and our aim is to bring together the communities around Bellshill to enrich the lives of local people. *‘A place for people and a centre for all’: ONC provides easy access to a wide range of services and activities for learning, leisure and self-improvement. We support the wellbeing of the people in Bellshill and the surrounding area in an open, friendly and caring environment, where everyone is welcome and all are treated equally.* (Vision & Mission).

Since 1995, the Neighbourhood Centre has been pulsing at the heart of Orbiston, providing a community focus and playing an important part in many people’s lives. Through the operation of the Neighbourhood Centre UTHEO has continued to seek ways of addressing the social, economic, environmental and spiritual needs of the local community by breaking down the many barriers that exist for local people and developing and delivering many new services and activities.

Despite improvements Orbiston remains within the 20% most deprived areas of Scotland (Scottish Index Multiple Deprivation). From the work we are doing we know there is a lack of facilities for older adults, disadvantaged people and young persons.

The main objective is tackling the issues facing local people – Poverty, Isolation, Intolerance, Unemployment and Poor Health – through the provision of a range of services and recreational activities for people of all ages:

* *Older People’s Services* - The Older People’s Day Service offers support and short-term respite to Older People and their carers who live in Bellshill and surrounding areas. This service enables older people to maintain independence and continue to live in their own homes in the community. There are up to 20 places per day available, we currently have 58 members. This supportive and flexible service continues to meet the needs of the older adults of the community by gaining trust, building relationships, helping maintain dignity and independence in a friendly and sociable atmosphere with the company of friends so they can enjoy their older years. We work in partnership with North Lanarkshire Council, NHS Lanarkshire and other local agencies in delivering this service.

Our Men’s Social Group meet on a Monday & Friday with approx. 25 men regularly attending, including men from local care homes, who attend with the support of their carers. Activities provided on both days include lunch, dominoes, darts, carpet bowls, pool, table games, but the most important thing is the companionship and support the men find at the group.

* *Theo’s Café/Catering* – Theo’s community café provides healthy nutritious snacks and meals within the Neighbourhood Centre and outside catering for local groups and businesses helping to address issues of Health and Well Being. Theo’s serves customers from the local community, including older people who attend the Older People’s Day Service. The café also provides an excellent focal point for users of our Centre. Our staff also deliver healthy eating cookery classes.
* *Digital Learning* – We provide access to training opportunities for those seeking employment needing to develop their IT skills or learn the very basics of computing to improve their chances of employment. Also deliver weekly drop in computer class, Work Club and sessions for older adults. We work in partnership with Routes to Work, NL Digital and Jobcentre Plus to deliver training and provide support. Sessions are supported by volunteers.
* *Volunteering* – Volunteering is at the heart of all we do, providing volunteering opportunities that allow people with a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences to be more involved and integrated in their own community. Volunteers contribute to the running of the Centre whilst having the opportunity to meet new people, gain skills and receive support and training. The Centre provides volunteering opportunities for people who require extra support, those who experience isolation or mental health issues and local unemployed people. The Volunteering Programme also provides valuable work placement opportunities for volunteers attending further education courses, particularly in childcare and older people’s day service. Over the years this work has been recognised and in 2004 we received the ‘Volunteer Engagement Organisation Award 2004’ for North Lanarkshire by the North Lanarkshire Volunteer Centre and the next year were runners up in the ‘Supporting Disabled Volunteers Category’. In 2011 were nominated in four categories and a double winner at the VOSCAR’s (awards for North Lanarkshire voluntary groups), receiving awards in the Volunteer-Engaging Organisation and Engaging Support Needs Volunteers categories. In 2016 we were awarded a VOSCAR for the Volunteer-Engaging Organisation, quite an achievement.
* *Befriending* – Our Befriend in Bellshill project recruits; trains, supports and matches volunteer befrienders with older or disabled people who are isolated in the community. Currently supporting one to one matches, 3 befriending groups in local sheltered housing complexes, and telephone befriending. This service, which started in 2006 was developed in response to our experience in delivering Older People’s services and volunteer projects, supports some of the frailest, most isolated members of our community. Our befriending work has been recognised in the Scottish Parliament and commented on by the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.
* *Employability & Training* – The Neighbourhood Centre has been supportive of initiatives which help people into training or employment and is currently engaged with the Community Jobs Scotland programme. This initiative offers young people paid employment where they can gain valuable work experience and training. We have supported individuals in catering, childcare and project development positions. A Work Club also supports those seeking employment.
* *Out of School Care* – in 2021 the difficult decision was reached to stop providing our out of school care service. A victim of the pandemic where people’s childcare requirements changed and the service was no longer viable. It was with great sadness that we reached this decision as it was a service we had been delivering since 1998.

The Neighbourhood Centre receives up to 1000 visitors per week through the services provided and the local groups and projects that also use the Centre, such as Mosshill Credit Union, NHS Lanarkshire, Motherwell & Coatbridge Colleges, Routes to Work, parents and toddlers group, line dancing, keep fit classes, yoga class, Bellshill & Mossend Scouts, various dance classes, digital inclusion, men’s social group, Musical Memories, Crafty Crafts, Fool On, health walks, gardening group and short act of worship three times per week.

The organisation holds various quality standards including: the Volunteer Friendly award, Healthy Living award, and Approved Providers standard (befriending).

Directors, Volunteers and Staff continue to strive to help UTHEO and the Neighbourhood Centre to meet the needs of local people in Orbiston and maintain the vision and ethos of “A place for people and a centre for all”.

*Contact Details: 01698 842215* [*W: oncbellshill.org*](http://www.oncbellshill.org) *E:* [*info@oncbellshill.org*](mailto:info@oncbellshill.org) *Find us also on Facebook*