

# WE ARE ALL ace

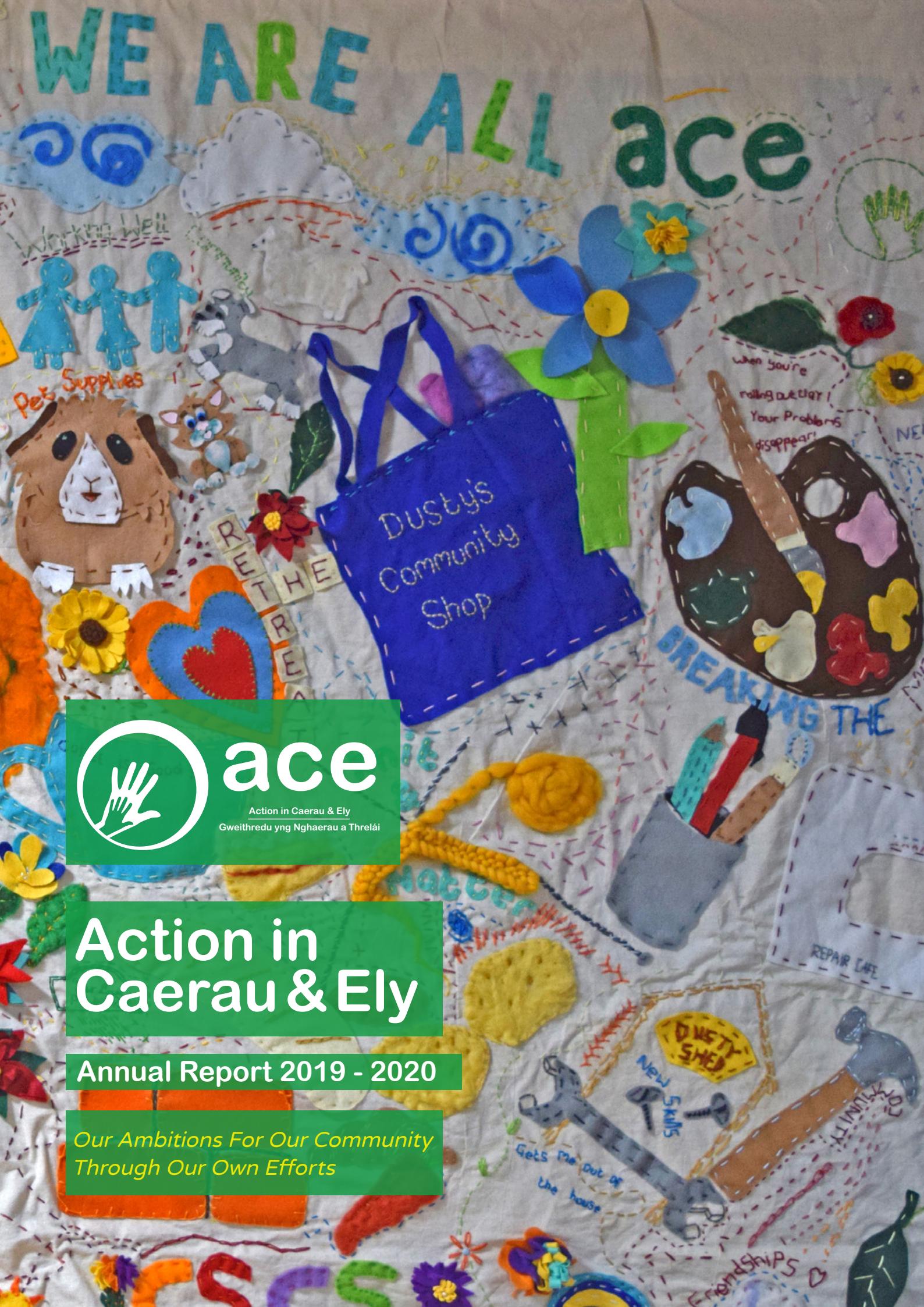


ace  
Action in Caerau & Ely  
Gweithredu yng Nghaerau a Threlái

## Action in Caerau & Ely

Annual Report 2019 - 2020

Our Ambitions For Our Community  
Through Our Own Efforts





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## 1. Message from the Chair

*Routine thanks to the staff, the volunteers and my fellow trustees won't cut it this year.*

Despite all the worries and stress, and whether they are furloughed, self-isolating, struggling with Zoom, confined to the weirdness of home working, or untiringly delivering essential services on the front line, everyone has played the most extraordinary role. And they continue to do so as regulations change from month to month.

This year my admiration and thanks for their flexibility, skills and commitment, which have in the past often been buried at the bottom of my reports, must

come at the top. It's not just that they have been vital for ACE; they've been vital for Ely and Caerau.

Many charities may report gloomily that 2020 was a year when nothing much happened because of the pandemic. ACE as ever, though, has refused to stand still. If anything the pace of change is accelerating.

As the government-funded Community First programme, on which ACE was founded, was drawing to a close in 2018 we were thinking we might need to

shrink the staff down to a core of just five or six. This year we reached 35. The range and scope of our work is no less striking.

The list of activities has grown from training and a few community support roles to include food retailing, community arts, heritage development, fuel poverty support, mental health resources, volunteering development, management services for other organisations, a community advice consultancy, and even bereavement support. Meanwhile, a £300,000 renovation programme at the Dusty Forge has transformed workspaces and facilities for the public and staff.



Getting here has required a monumental fundraising effort by senior staff, and a quality harder to pin down – a reputation for high quality service delivery. Funders from charitable trusts to the NHS are resourcing ACE because they are confident we will change people's lives for the better.

Fundraising success augmented by trading income from training, consulting and contract work has gradually produced a healthy reserve fund. This is essential to protect the long-term future of our core charity. But it has also given us the confidence to create our first dedicated volunteer development post, reflecting our commitment to helping

local people shape the services they receive. Another long-standing ambition was achieved in November – investing in property to house people who need support, by purchasing a house immediately next door to the Dusty Forge.

Despite all this success, the challenges remain significant. Money in future will be much harder to come by. So we must keep improving our financial management, stay focussed both on our key charitable priorities and on attracting earned income, and maintain the tricky balance between the two. An upgraded Strategic Plan will help with this.

Our greatest challenge, though, will be emotional as well as practical. Our Director and co-founder John Hallett is standing down next spring, and the months ahead will be dominated by efforts to safeguard his vision and replicate his very considerable management skills. On the other hand, I don't know a comparable organisation whose rock-solid foundations and endlessly resourceful staff are better prepared for such a task.

**Mel Witherden, ACE Chair, November 2020**



## 'Thriving Charity of the Year' at the Welsh Charity Awards



ACE was thrilled to be nominated for two prestigious awards on Friday 15 November 2019 at the inaugural Welsh Charity Awards, organised by WCVA (Welsh Council Voluntary Association) to honour excellence in the third sector in Wales.

ACE was named 'Thriving Charity' of the year and runner up in the 'Outstanding Charity' category at the prestigious ceremony in Cardiff at the National Museum. Special mention was made of ACE's ability to be demonstrably more financially sustainable and resilient by developing a range of community support and services.

On winning the award, John Hallett, Director of ACE said: 'The award was quite fantastic. I'm more of a person who likes to say well done or to give encouragement, so actually to have a bit of a pat on the back, a handshake, a bit of a well-done was quite well received'.

## 2. About ACE - our vision and values

### Our Vision:

To create 'vibrant, equal and resilient communities for all, where people find fulfilment in themselves, each other, and the place where they live'.

### Our Values:

#### Asset-based

Our community is not primarily a problem needing solving but a vibrant community with assets and opportunities that have been undervalued and ignored.

#### Co-productive

We work with local people as full participants to co-produce services and activities that make use of assets and meet needs.

#### Visionary

We mobilise local people behind a shared vision to achieve lasting positive change for an equal and just Cardiff.

#### Collaborative

We utilise local strengths and collaborate with private, public and third sector organisations to make our communities fairer and more inclusive.

### Our Theory of Change:

#### Need

We tackle poverty, disadvantage and related complex needs on all fronts using a fully integrated approach.

#### Solutions

Co-produced initiatives build confidence, skills, capacity and resilience, improving mental health and promoting supportive social networks.

#### Outcomes

Local people report a range of outcomes including improved wellbeing, securing employment, completing training, stronger social networks and greater aspirations.

#### Impact

Local people who have developed confidence, skills and energy contribute these to collective approaches to community development.



 Local people know their community best.

 Everyone has something unique to contribute.

 Everyone's contribution should be valued equally.

 Poverty should not be accepted as a fact of life.

 Social injustice should be challenged and changed.

## 3. ACE Community Support

### 3.1 ACE Advice & Support

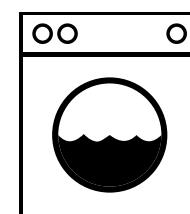
We work closely with our community partners, enabling us to provide tailored and holistic advice and support for people in crisis or who are vulnerable and struggling to manage. We have supported 326 households in 2019/20 through twice-weekly drop in sessions, providing advice on money management, problems with benefits, help with energy costs, support accessing grants for essential household items and many other issues.

“Nearly half of all households in Ely are living in poverty.” (Cardiff Council’s South West Neighbourhood Report (2017)). Using an assets based approach we build people’s skills and confidence to overcome challenges themselves. Our services continue to be oversubscribed and, with all of the additional struggles of 2020, we are supporting more people than ever.

We supported 93 low income households to access grants for essential white goods and learning packs for children, totalling £31,620. We helped 86 people save over £11,740 on their fuel costs through tariff switching and help applying for the Warm Home Discount. We issued over 200 foodbank vouchers and helped those at risk of food poverty and insecurity to access our local pantry.

#### 93 households

accessed grants for support with essential white goods, household items and learning packs for children.



### 3.2 Working Well

*“Engaging with Working Well has empowered our families to make positive changes and feel more in control of their situations.”*

- Ceri-Ann Gilbert, Family Engagement Officer at Windsor Clive Primary School

Working families are sharing their lived experience with us to help us understand better the challenges they face and together find solutions that tackle in-work poverty. 50 local families are working together with us to develop community action projects, based on identified needs and building on local resources and assets. Through community organising with Citizens Cymru, we can also tackle wider social issues affecting working families.

Increasing numbers of working households in Wales are living in poverty. “60% of those in poverty live in households where at least one adult is in work.” (Bevan Foundation). Low-paid and unstable jobs, coupled with rising living costs, cuts to benefits and now the impact of Covid-19 all increase pressure on working families.

This year we worked with families in 3 local primary schools to start school uniform and prom dress exchange projects, a period poverty red box scheme, and meal planning workshops targeting working families. These families have helped shape our Local Pantry project, including evening sessions for working families to do their Pantry food shop. Working Well is funded by the National Lottery Helping Working Families Programme.



“Although it’s hard work, I love it. I wouldn’t give it up for the world... it really has made my life a lot happier.”

- Julie, Volunteer at the Pantry

### 3.2 Your Local Pantry Dusty Forge

Your Local Pantry Dusty Forge is part of a network of community food shops run by volunteers. The membership scheme reduces food shopping bills through providing access to good quality surplus food. Our partners include Food Cardiff, Church Action on Poverty, and Fareshare Cymru. Cardiff and Vale Nutrition and Dietetic Service provide training and support to Pantry volunteers to encourage members to try new ingredients and make healthier food choices.

“A fifth of people in Wales are worried about running out of food.” (Food Security in Wales, FSA (2018)) Access to good quality, healthy food is vital for physical and mental health and wellbeing, but increasing food prices and squeezed family budgets are contributing to rising food poverty and food insecurity. Many families also lack basic cooking equipment and food skills.

Launched in June 2019 with 30 members, by March 2020 our pantry had 200 members, with over 100 accessing the shop on a weekly basis. Our trained team of 8 volunteers are all Pantry members and run the busy community food shop while supporting members to learn cooking skills, make social connections and access other projects and activities. This year we received over 2,000 shopping visits, with members saving an average of £15 for each shop, giving an estimated total saving of £30,000 on food costs.

### 3.4 ACE Community Shop



“We don’t judge anyone coming through the door because we’ve all been in the same situation”

- Natasha, Volunteer at the Community Shop.

The Dusty Community Shop has been running at Our Place: Dusty Forge for 4 years and is run by a team of dedicated volunteers. The shop provides clothing, household items and food on a ‘pay what you can’ basis.

“Almost a third of households in Cardiff are living in poverty. Nearly half of them are in Ely. With more than 3,000 homes where the household income is below 60% of the median income, Ely is the most deprived suburb in the city.” (Wales Online, 6/7/2019)

The Community Shop serves around 100 people a week and is greatly appreciated by community members. After having to shut during the lockdowns, the shop is now open again with Covid-safe arrangements in place. Many families have been able to access second-hand school uniforms from the shop. Donations are welcome, either cash or donated items.

# ACE STORIES:



“Everybody is friendly and listens.  
We feel more confident talking to people...”

## Alice and Tania Clarke.

We have been part of ACE for over 5 years, joining groups and volunteering. We are involved in ACE Arts, the Dusty Forge community garden, and CAER Heritage. In the CAER Love Our Hillfort group, we have been working as volunteers cleaning up the church, litter picking, cutting trees back, working as a team and helping each other.

Being involved in the groups has definitely helped with our confidence. We like everything about it! It helps to manage stress and anxiety. Everybody is friendly and listens. We feel more confident talking to people on the phone and chatting with people online.

Tania: My favourite project is the art group - it's reducing my anxiety, I've had no panic attacks. They are lovely people to talk to.

Alice: My favourite projects are the art group and the community garden. It's something to do, and it makes me more motivated to do more at home. Depression has decreased since being involved. That keeps me going.

## 4. ACE Health, Wellbeing and Social Inclusion

### 4.1 Tier 0 Mental Health Service

The Tier 0 Mental Health Service provides Psychological Interventions through 1-1 guided self-help sessions and the delivery of Psychoeducational Courses. Psychological Interventions involve working with patients through a range of workbooks on a number of different topics. The Psychoeducational Courses 'Stress Control' and 'ACTion for Living' are aimed at empowering participants to better manage their wellbeing.

Together for Mental Health – A Strategy for Mental Health and Wellbeing in Wales states that 1 in 4 adults experience mental health problems or illness at some point during their lifetime, and 1 in 6 of us will be experiencing symptoms at any one time. Poor mental health and mental illness can affect people of all ages, communities and the economy, with mixed anxiety and depression being the most common mental health disorder in Britain.

Tier 0 is an NHS Cardiff and the Vale service which ACE delivers in the East, North, South West and West areas of Cardiff. Over the last year the service engaged with 1449 individuals. 1000 benefited from the 1-1 guided self help sessions, and 449 accessed the psychoeducational courses. Positive outcomes reported by participants were improvements in: managing their mental health, physical health & self care, social networks, identity & self esteem, and trust & hope for the future.



Stacie Leek - our Primary Mental Health Worker

*"This service has helped me through the hardest times of my life."*

**A participant who completed the 1-1 guided self help sessions.**

**1449 people**

benefited from 1-1 guided self help sessions, psychoeducational courses.



### 4.2 'Yourspace' Wellbeing support



'Yourspace' is a new service providing 1:1 wellbeing support and developing new community-led wellbeing activities, working across South West Cardiff. The service was commissioned by Cardiff and Vale University Health Board and the South West Cardiff Primary Care Cluster as part of a local Transformation project to enhance care and support for local patients.

"Positive and meaningful relationships [...] can help lower our risks for developing anxiety and chronic illnesses like diabetes, obesity, and hypertension. Establishing and maintaining healthy social connections will go a long way towards keeping you healthy and happy." (Yang, Y.C., Boen, C., Gerken, K., Li, T., Schorpp, K. & Harris, K. M.)

"I feel more optimistic about making lasting changes."

"I feel less alone in this world."

**Two people supported by Yourspace.**

Yourspace has supported 173 people to improve their wellbeing through building self-confidence, taking action to resolve practical issues and remove barriers; and participating in local community activity to build their social networks. Some have also contributed to developing services for others. Wellbeing activities have been established to meet local needs and interests, including arts activities, support groups and physical activity sessions. We also supported our local Primary Care Cluster in establishing the UK's first GP-led Parkrun!

## 4.3 Social Inclusion projects

ACE supports a number of social inclusion and wellbeing projects. 'Retreat' and 'Knit and natter' are creative wellbeing groups run by volunteers from our community. The 'Grow Well' community garden project at Our Place: Dusty Forge is run by Grow Cardiff.

"Increasingly we understand the link between having strong and meaningful social connections and living a healthy and happy life. Greater degrees of social connectedness have been seen to be related to increased life expectancy; to protection against the development of depression and promotion of recovery from existing depression; and potentially to the promotion of cognitive health." (Welsh Government Connected Communities Strategy, 2020.)

Through 2019-20, 20 people a week engaged in our wellbeing projects, Retreat and Knit and natter - meeting new people, learning new skills, relaxing and taking time out in a supportive space. ACE's Wellbeing Connectors support patients referred by their GP to access wellbeing groups and develop more activities to complement this work.

"Just getting out of the flat, making friends, we have a good old laugh – they are my kind of people."

- Julie, who started coming to the Dusty Forge with her Wellbeing Connector.



## ACE STORIES:

"It's helped me to make new friends and do some socialising."

### Alex Withey.

I've been involved with the Dusty Forge Community Garden project, ACE Arts and the Love Our Hillfort group for 12 months. I like that it gets me out of the house. I have arthritis in my legs so I can't work. It's helped me to make new friends and do some socialising. I've only been living in Ely for 2 years so I didn't know anybody before, but I met Jeff (through the groups) and now I regard him as a friend. My favourite project is the Dusty Garden (with Grow Cardiff), it's practical and it gets me outside. I don't have a garden with my flat, not even a communal one. It's so nurturing, watching things grow. Being part of ACE and Grow Cardiff projects has made me more confident. I have more confidence to chat to people now so I volunteer in a charity shop in Canton 2 days a week.



## 5. ACE Programmes and Activities

### 5.1 CAER Heritage Hidden Hillfort



The Hidden Hillfort Project was developed by ACE in close partnership with local people and schools and working alongside Cardiff University, Cardiff Council and the Museum of Cardiff. A £830,000 grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund has been secured towards the delivery of a £1.6 million project to re-develop Caerau Hillfort and create a Hidden Hillfort Heritage Centre at the site along with accessible heritage trails, interpretation, learning and creative opportunities.

In 2019-20, we had  
**3,380 visitors**  
to events and  
**4,600 volunteer hours**



We are working alongside local people as co-creators, co-researchers and co-curators. In partnership with Cardiff city council and local residents, “Love our Hillfort” volunteering group has been formed. The group has been meeting regularly with new team members Sulafa and Charlotte, and running activities including litter picking and pathway maintenance. Since January 2020 the group has contributed 122 volunteering hours.

The project was launched in April 2019 and over the course of the last year we have had over 3,380 visitors to events and volunteers giving over 4,600 hours to project activities, including: a community excavation at the site, co-design of a children’s playground, and developing a Virtual Reality experience of Caerau Hillfort. We have awarded four adult learner scholarships and launched a scholarships programme for 6th formers at CWCHS.

“It’s a really good example of the importance of community learning in different areas of the city. It’s also an example of really strong partnership work; giving communities a proper voice.”

**Jordan Taylor-Bosanko, Learning and Outreach Officer at Museum of Cardiff**



## 5.2 ACE Arts

“Brilliant, made my day! It’s just the tonic I needed.” **Alex, Member of Ace Arts since 2019**

Our ACE Arts team delivers weekly creative workshops, accessible to community members of all ages and abilities. Our artists support every participant to experience a range of art forms, develop their skills and create meaningful, quality artwork. All of our members enjoy valuable art experiences, exhibitions, trips and belonging to a friendly, encouraging, creative group.



“Over recent years, there has been a growing understanding of the impact that taking part in the arts can have on health and wellbeing.” (National Alliance for Arts, Health & Wellbeing). Many of our group have intersectional needs regarding mental health, learning disabilities, addiction and socio-economic deprivation. These are all factors that make participatory arts less accessible.

ACE Arts achieves significant creative outcomes for each individual within a supportive group dynamic. They explore their creativity, challenge their artistic ability and create quality art for exhibition. As well as creative confidence, emotional wellbeing is essential to our practice. Participants report feeling more confident, creative and happy. Attendance has tripled from an average of 6 per week in 2019 to 15-20 per week in 2020.

## 5.3 Dusty Shed



Research conducted by Age UK has identified that men aged 65 and over are particularly vulnerable to being cut off from society and need access to facilities where they can interact with other men. Hence, the Dusty Shed aims to combat loneliness and social isolation, particularly in older men, by providing a safe environment where they can interact with their peers while engaging in woodworking and craft activities; or, if they prefer, simply hang out and swap stories over a cup of tea

During 2019-20 the Shed received grant funding from The National Lottery Community Fund to cover overhead costs, and from Comic Relief to construct a roofed outside breakout area. The roof construction is planned for completion by April 2021.



Feedback from a Members Survey conducted in March 2020 indicated that almost all members consider they derive benefit from the social interaction with other members and that since joining the Shed they no longer feel so lonely or socially isolated. Many said that they have felt ‘listened to’ by other Shed members, and more than half have listened when other Shed members wanted to unload a personal problem.

“I no longer feel so anxious when mixing with people.”  
- from the Members Survey, March 2020.

## 5.4 Repair Café

‘It’s great to share our skills mending everyday items and family treasures.’  
- A Repair Café ‘Fixer’.



Our repair café launched in October 2019 offering a free repair and re-use service supported by Repair Café Wales and the Dusty Shed. We ran four monthly pop-up events where our team of volunteer hosts and fixers welcomed people bringing broken items and shared their skills on the spot as they fixed bikes, kettles, coffee-makers, lamps, blenders, sewing machines, bags, trolleys, buggies and even repaired prom dresses for the Dusty’s community shop to hire out. We safety-checked all mended electrical items with a PAT tester donated by Unite Community’s Cardiff & Area branch.

We averaged 12 customers per monthly session with 1.5 items per customer and three out of four items were successfully mended. In September 2020 post-lockdown we relaunched with a more limited drop-off service at the Dusty - our volunteer fixers mended items in their homes\sheds\workshops. That trial run proved popular and we plan to develop further.

## 5.5 Citizens Cymru Wales (Citizens UK)



Citizens Cymru Wales is an alliance including charities, churches, mosques, unions, schools and colleges. Together we seek to identify challenges that our communities share and to engage with those in power to make change on key issues.

Some of our challenges can be solved at a neighbourhood level, but many are the result of political decisions made at a distance. In the Cardiff Council 2017 elections only 29% of voters in Ely and Caerau turned out. This crisis in democracy leaves everyday people powerless to make change

“As a parish Church we value our relationship with ACE and our fellow partners in Ely and Caerau. I know that Citizens UK brings organisations such as ours together in a collaboration that wins more for our neighbourhoods than we could ever achieve working alone. I look forward to supporting the Citizens UK approach in Ely to listen, organise, campaign and collaborate for a better future. There’s so much to build on here, and so much that we need to grow and develop.”

- Fr Jesse Smith, St David’s & St Tim’s Churches, Parish of Caerau with Ely.

This year we have been working together to develop a local ‘micro-alliance’ of schools, churches and other organisations specifically in and for Ely and Caerau. Members began by coordinating their responses to the Covid crisis together and are seeking to work together to identify and tackle local issues. We hope initial efforts will culminate in a public assembly before the Cardiff Council elections in 2022. Candidates from all parties will be asked to respond to our shared asks and to commit to working with us on key issues.

## 6.1 Youth Work

ACE Youth work is providing a safe and accessible space for young people. Our aim is to meet young people where they are, listen to their wants and needs, and develop provisions that empower and support them. Youth workers provide informal guidance to help young people make good decisions.

“The club was everything, I would always laugh and smile, never failed to have fun. The staff were amazing. Charlotte aka Karan and Aled aka Patrick they were always there right until the end before lockdown. My favourite thing was cooking.”

In 2007, an estimated 19% of working age adults in Cardiff West had no qualifications. Youth work seeks to empower young people to be ambitious and to reach their full potential, personally and academically. Alongside youth clubs, street based youth work meets the young people in their environment, connecting us with young people who are disengaged from their schools, households or wider community. We signpost to help and services available with the hope of creating opportunities.



Our new ‘Curiosity Club’, supported by BBC Children In Need, introduces STEM learning into informal extracurricular activities and creates space for questions, creative thinking, and developing self-confidence. In 2019-20 we ran two youth clubs, three times a week. On average, 50 young people a night engaged in Ely and 15 in Fairwater. We engaged 30-40 regular young people across the two centres. In street based youth work we engaged with around 10 young people an evening in both Ely and Fairwater.

## 6.2 ACE Training

“Thanks for being personable, chatty and above all informative. Made me feel very at ease and hence more in the mood to learn”.

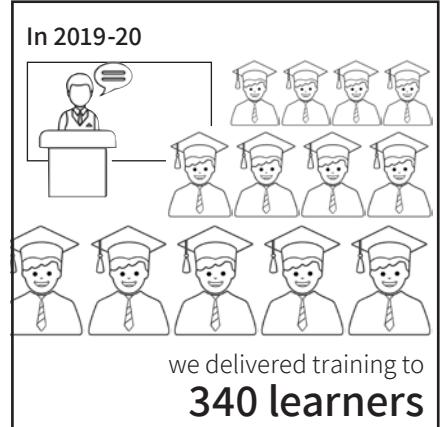


“I had a brilliant day learning new information and looking forward to using my knowledge”

ACE Training is our locally based training enterprise that delivers work relevant courses. We offer courses in Health and Safety, Food Hygiene, Health and Social Care and Asbestos Awareness. Our courses are accessed by people who are currently seeking employment and local businesses whose staff need training or refresher courses.

There are 7,300 people in Cardiff who are unemployed, this equates to 3% of the population. There are 10,600 people who are long term sick, this is 4.1% of the population of Cardiff who are economically inactive. Across the city 7% of the population have no qualifications. (Nomis 2019-20)

In 2019-20 we delivered training to 340 learners, in partnership with 17 employment support organisations (all course places fully funded) and 13 businesses. 68% of learners achieved a qualification that would enable them to gain employment. 22% of learners were aged 16-24, 84% of this cohort achieved a qualification.



## Covid-19: realistic choices

*Sam Froud Powell, ACE's Community Support Co-ordinator, spoke to Zoë Anderson, The National Lottery Community Fund's Knowledge and Learning Manager, earlier this year. This is a collection of quotes from the full article, which you can read on their website: <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/insights/covid-19-resources/responding-to-covid-19/voices-from-the-pandemic-interviews-from-the-frontline/action-in-caerau-and-ely>*

While ACE runs a wide range of projects, from children's play schemes to a community woodworking shed, most of the work is face to face. Lockdown meant choosing what to continue, and how. "For a few weeks, we were in crisis mode," Sam says, "but then we were able to settle down, have some sensible discussions with the whole team. **What could we realistically do, with our capacity?**"

Where possible, projects were delivered by staff and volunteers working from home, often with real ingenuity: the Hidden Hill Fort community archaeology project continued, with activities like a "Big Dig" in residents' gardens. Advice and information drop in sessions became a telephone service. Community arts work, a STEM-based after school club and a summer food festival were all put on hold. Some staff were furloughed. The Dusty Forge closed to the public, but ACE continued to run core services from the building.

"We focused on making best use of our resources, our building. **We turned The Dusty Forge into a food distribution hub, serving pantry members and providing emergency food parcels.**" Demand has shifted to the advice line, which received 500 calls by the end of June. Most calls are for help with food, prescription deliveries or money and benefits. For more complex problems, advisers can signpost to in-depth advice. Others are struggling to make claims online, due to lack of devices or internet skills. With a donation from Tesco Mobile, **ACE distributed**



**25 handsets and data to people who were digitally excluded.** Staff also supported people to navigate the application system.

Signposting to grant schemes such as the Welsh Government's Discretionary Assistance Fund can help with essential items, such as replacement washing machines. "Within that cohort of 500 callers, we've supported people to access £15,000 of grants."

Some of the advice line's callers simply felt isolated and alone, and wanted someone to talk to. ACE responded with a new phone friend service, training volunteers to make regular wellbeing calls. "The support line isn't really set up for people to have a 20-minute chat, so we'll offer a friendly follow up call." It's popular with both service users and with volunteers, mobilising those who can't take part in the practical activities.

ACE offered mental health support before the pandemic, working with mild to moderate anxiety and depression. Moving past the first impact of the crisis, demand is likely to grow. **Mental health, family breakdown – stuff has happened as a result of Covid, but we're now in the aftereffects, the economic difficulties people are facing.** That can't all be dealt with through grants or food deliveries."

Sam, who coordinates the practical side, feels lucky to work alongside a dedicated health and wellbeing team. "It's really important that people are whole people – they don't just need

food and washing machines. We're trying to provide things in a joined up way."

Sam is proud of the staff and volunteer team. **"People have stepped up, shown flexibility and huge compassion; wanted to make things better.** As a manager, it's been hard to keep a handle on everything going on – staff have taken things and just run with it! It's not just a step in the volume of work, they're developing new ideas, new partnerships. 'We've got a new partnership with a local church, and they're going to start delivering food.' It's been a lovely environment to work in."

Feedback has been another boost. "People understand why The Dusty Forge is closed, but they can't wait for it to reopen. That's really nice. **It brings home how valued the work was.**"

For Sam, it's the people who make The Dusty Forge what it is – and they're eager to return. "We've had good feedback over Covid, but it would be a disaster if we have to work like this forever. We're a community organisation, not a food distribution centre. People do value help on the phone, they do value the food support – but that's not what it's all about. **They want to have that community space again, where people come together and are energised by each other. I think they're feeling the lack of that – socially, but also because they want to be involved in making a difference.**"

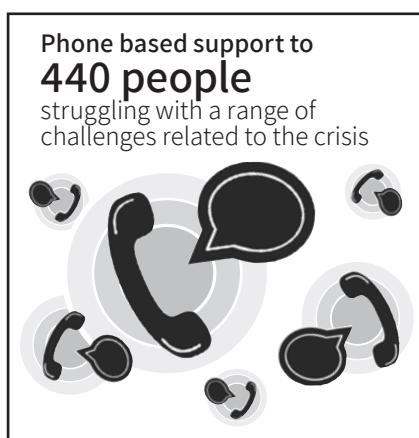
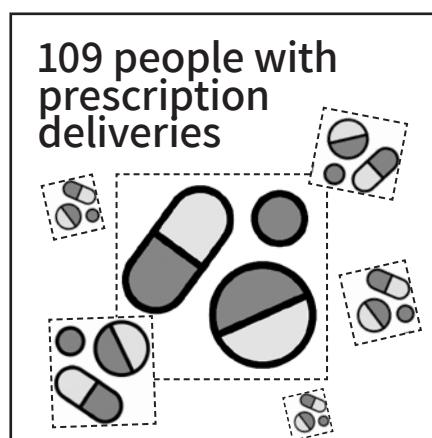
## 7. ACE's Covid response



### 7.1 A snapshot in stats

On March 17th 2020, following government guidelines regarding the outbreak of Covid-19, the Dusty Forge transformed overnight from a busy community centre to an eerily quiet hub for vitally important crisis response work. ACE rapidly adapted work and refocused resources to support the emerging needs of our community. While our doors remained shut to the public for months to come, our services continued digitally, over the phone and by home delivery.

Our staff and volunteers stepped up to the challenge and what we have achieved together is truly remarkable. There are many stories to be told from this season, but for now here's a brief snapshot of ACE's activity over 6 months from March to September.



During the Covid crisis and lock down ACE staff and volunteers have:

- Provided **1083 food parcels** to families through our Pantry collections and delivery service.
- Provided **phone based support to 440 people** struggling with a range of challenges related to the crisis.
- Provided **Mental Health support to 196 people**.
- Supplied 6 cooking packs each to **50 young people**, totalling **300 family meals**.
- Provided **27 people** with weekly 'Phone Friend' calls.
- Provided **109 people** with **prescription deliveries**.
- Supplied **45 people** with **Back Home Boxes** after a hospital stay.
- Worked with partners Grow Cardiff to get people in Ely and Caerau **growing fruit and veg** in their back gardens.
- Engaged **30 pupils** from Cardiff West Community High School in CAER Heritage Project activities.
- Supported around **100 people** to dig more than 35 back garden archaeological test pits exploring our local history through **CAER's Big Dig**.

In September we gradually opened up the Dusty Forge again to meet safely face-to-face and welcome back community groups. Life might be returning to some kind of normality, but the challenges brought by the pandemic will be affecting people in our community for months and years to come. And we will be right here, evolving and adapting as needs develop and continuing to support our local community.

This work was supported by Macmillan Cancer Care through their funding of a Macmillan Development Officer in the 2020-21 financial year (to be featured fully in next year's annual report). This additional investment came at the perfect time, allowing ACE to develop a community response to specific health and wellbeing needs arising from the pandemic, including the delivery of 'back home boxes', prescription collections, bereavement support and support for social isolation



Christmas 2019.

## 7.2 New songs for a strange land

'How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?' – Psalm 137:4

During the lockdowns of 2020, we were exiled from our beloved Dusty Forge and found ourselves in a new and strange 'land'! Up until that point, we were singing a song of sorts. A polyphony of diverse voices, sometimes a little out of tune, but with a unique beauty all of its own. We were finding ways of including new people in this quirky choir, many of whom had never been told they could sing and assumed they had no voice. There were busy days in the Dusty Forge when the cacophony was glorious and it felt like we'd welcomed a little bit of heaven on earth. While working from home I found myself humming the chorus in the quiet of my own home... it's not the same. It's too quiet now, and these songs are meant to be sung together.

If you spend a lot of time singing with others then you can learn to improvise together and it is similar

improvisational skills that have allowed flexibility in responding to the crisis in multiple ways. ACE is committed to a set of values and ways of working that provide a context for creativity. We believe everyone has something to contribute and that everyone's contribution should be valued equally. We see, and talk about our community not as a problem that needs solving by others, but as a network of people, places, buildings, knowledge, skills and creativity that too often go unnoticed, unacknowledged and untapped. We seek to identify and to nurture these 'assets' through communal relationships, by listening to each other and those around us in our community, and by seeking collective ownership of, and responsibility for, the spaces and resources around us. All this is energised by a large dose of experimentation. We have hoped to create a culture that grows these skills and attitudes in us all so that when

change happens, or crisis emerges, we are fit to the task of responding creatively, flexibly and with hope. If the notion of 'community resilience' means anything to us then it looks something like this.

We are just starting to warm our voices for a different but equally beautiful song in the new and strange land that we are entering. The land will form the song, if we take notice of it well enough. But the song will also help us make sense of, and live in, the new land. Our vision, as ever, is not to be passive but to act together, and in acting together to find shared meaning, life and joy. As we move towards 2021, I can hear the faint sound of singing in the distance!

**Dave Horton,**  
**ACE Development Manager**

## 8. Dusty Forge - new look, same feel



The Dusty Forge acts as a base for a wide range of projects, groups and activities run by local volunteers and staff, many of which feature in this report. They help people to do things they didn't think they could do, to gain confidence, friendship and to find shared and collective solutions to community issues and concerns.

During 2019-20 ACE successfully appointed Willis construction who completed a significant refurbishment of the ground floor area, completed in April 2020. ACE raised £300,000 to complete ground floor (phase 1) works. Works updated and refurbished facilities; improving access, providing more capacity for contact with people

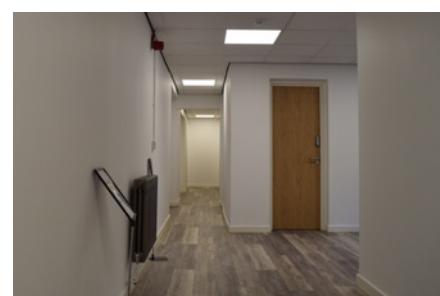
and services and for supporting volunteer led projects.

The Dusty now has:

- A new reception and entrance area,
- An improved community living room space,
- New toilets including a wet room changing space,
- Ground floor office space,
- New meeting rooms including a dedicated Art room,
- More storage,
- New efficient heating system,
- An outside craft courtyard,
- A 'Dusty Gallery', displaying local people's artwork.

It has been an incredible

transformation, and whilst Covid-19 has presented a significant challenge and change in how the Dusty Forge operates, the refurbishment has supported ACE to open the building safely, something which would have never been possible previously. ACE very much looks forward to seeing new artwork on the walls, community members meeting to enjoy each other's company, and the Dusty Forge regaining the buzz of a community living room where everyone's ideas matter and everyone belongs. If you are interested in finding out more about Our Place: Dusty Forge or would like to visit please do get in touch - we would love to show you around.



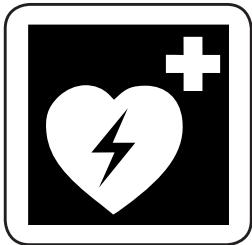
## 9. ACE Giving

ACE Giving is the new quick and easy way to make a donation to ACE through our local giving page. **Could you commit to a small monthly contribution to ACE?** Everything raised goes towards continuing and developing ACE's essential work, and every bit counts! It's easy to sign up here on our Local Giving page: (<https://localgiving.org/charity/ace-action-in-caerau-ely/>)



**Our first appeal raised £1700**

for a Defibrillator at Our Place Dusty Forge.



Our first fundraising appeal, to raise money for a defibrillator for Our Place Dusty Forge, raised **£1700** in June 2019. The defibrillator is now in place and staff and volunteers have been trained to use it. A big thanks to all those who donated – you might just save a life!

When the Coronavirus Pandemic hit the UK in March, we knew we would have to quickly adapt our services and be flexible to respond to the urgent needs of our community. We launched the **ACE Coronavirus Response Appeal** in April, and by the end of June, 65 of you raised more than **£3000** together. These funds were vital in enabling us to quickly mobilise a new

**ACE Coronavirus Response Appeal raised £3000**

to support crisis relief work.



delivery service for emergency food supplies and medical prescriptions and a phone line for support for people with financial worries, crisis or mental health concerns. Thank you.

In October, **15 ACE staff and volunteers took part in the 100 miles for ACE challenge** - running, walking or cycling 100 miles between the team - and they absolutely smashed it! The team covered 189 miles in a week. ACE Director John Hallett ran 100 miles himself - that's nearly 4 marathons in a week! Thanks to your generosity, **we raised £1525** to continue to support our neighbours through this tough year.

**ACE's 100 Miles Challenge raised**

**£1525**



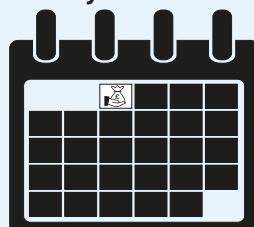
We couldn't do what we do without you! Most of ACE's funds come from grants and local authority contracts, but fundraising online gives us access to money that can be used quickly to respond to emergencies, and helps us plan ahead to make sure we can continue to serve our community into the future. We are so overwhelmed by your generosity throughout 2020 - it makes a real difference to the lives of real people in our community. **THANK YOU!**

You can make a **One Off Payment** - from as little as:



will support activities such as our mental health work, helping families manage money and benefits or helping to keep the award winning Dusty Forge centre open.

Better still, by choosing **'Give Monthly'**:



you can make a regular, monthly donation - this helps ACE plan ahead and work sustainably.



# 10. ACE Trustees

**Mel Witherden (Chair)** is a retired third sector/charity consultant.

**Marian Dixey** lives in Fairwater. She has worked for the NHS for over 30 years.

**Martin Hulland** is the head teacher of Cardiff West Community High School.

**Helen McCarthy** lives in Ely and is a lead volunteer on the CAER Heritage Project.

**Jean O'Keefe** lives in Caerau. She is an active local volunteer.

**Anne O'Regan** lives in Caerau. She is an active local volunteer.

**Onagh Scott** grew up in Ely. She is a local business owner.

**James Roach** lives in Ely. He is an active volunteer and contributes finance skills.

**Dr Dave Wyatt** is Reader in Early Medieval History, Community and Engagement in the School of History, Archaeology and Religion at Cardiff University. He is also co-director of the CAER Hidden Hillfort Project.

**Leyton Smith** lives in Caerau. He is an active volunteer with ACE.

**Chris Lannen** is a financial advisor and active volunteer.

**Dave King MBE (Treasurer)** is a qualified accountant and founder of Cardiff Rivers Group and the Dusty Shed.



The following people stood down from their role as ACE trustees during the year 2019-20. We would like to thank them for their efforts for the organisation.

**Taela Mae-Davies**

**Gloria Yates**

**Carl Meredith**

## ACE Staff

### **Aled Williams**

Youth Officer

### **Becci Booker**

Community Artist

### **Becki Miller**

Senior Development Officer – Working Well / Primary Mental Health Worker

### **Becky Matyus**

ACE Giving / ACE Arts Sustainability Officer

### **Carly Whelpley**

Mental Health Coordinator

### **Caroline Barr**

Health Development Worker / Pantry Officer / Community Food officer

### **Charlotte McCarthy**

CAER Development Officer / Youth Support Officer

### **Dale Ovenstone**

Estates Officer

### **Dave Horton**

ACE Development Manager

### **Denise Rahman**

Mental Health Assistant Practitioner / Your Local Pantry Officer

### **Esther Yeboah-Afari**

Youth Officer

### **Fiona McCormick**

Enterprise Support Officer

### **George Keane**

Communications & Marketing Officer/Dusty Shed

### **Hasan Roap**

ACE Finance Officer

### **Hazel Cryer**

Health and Wellbeing Coordinator

### **Helen Bull**

Volunteer Development Officer

### **Imogen Higgins**

Community Artist / Primary Mental Health Worker

### **James Thomas**

Primary Mental Health Worker/ Wellbeing Connector

### **Janine Campbell**

Wellbeing Connector

### **John Hallett**

ACE Director

### **Julie Evans**

ACE Administrator

### **Kimberley Jones**

Macmillan Development Officer

### **Lynette Hartman**

Wellbeing Connector

### **Mags Lyons**

Primary Mental Health Worker

### **Michelle Powell**

Business Development Manager

### **Nerys Sheehan**

Senior development Officer -Community Support / Working Well

### **Nicola Parsons**

Community Arts Coordinator

### **Poppy Hodgkinson**

Curiosity Youth Officer

### **Rachel Hart**

Wellbeing Connector

### **Sam Froud-Powell**

Community Support Coordinator

### **Sarah Griffiths**

Together Trust Community Development Officer (Cardiff East)

### **Sharon McGrath**

ACE Receptionist

### **Sheila Littleboy**

Primary Mental Health Worker

### **Stacie Leek**

Primary Mental Health Worker

### **Sulafa Abushal**

Senior CEAR Development Officer

### **Vaida Barzdaite**

Community Health Development Officer

The following people have left the staff team during 2019-2020. We will miss them and wish them well in their future endeavours:

### **Billy Mainprize**

### **Kathryn Hobbs**

### **Sophie Randall**

## ACE Volunteers

We would like to say a big thank you to the following volunteers who have all made a huge contribution to ACE's work.

### **Alice Clarke**

### **Alex Withey**

### **Andrew Williams**

### **Arthur Brown**

### **Candy Moss**

### **Catherine Oakley**

### **Doug Smith**

### **Doug Stowell**

### **Elizabeth Lewis (Liz)**

### **Esther Yeboah-Afari**

### **Ginnie Bateman**

### **Helen Green**

### **Helen McCarthy**

### **Jacqui Young**

### **Jamie Hayes**

### **Jeff Clarke**

### **Julie Chancellor**

### **Leyton Smith**

### **Lisa Twine**

### **Marian Dixey**

### **Mark Hughes**

### **Michaela Ward**

### **Mike Berry**

### **Natasha Hayes**

### **Onagh Scott**

### **Pat Stowell**

### **Penny Smith**

### **Sarah Evans**

### **Sarah Whitfield**

### **Sheree Richards**

### **Stacey Bedford**

### **Stella Attard**

### **Tania Clarke**

### **Terry Samuel**

### **Tony Wallace**

# 11. Finance Report

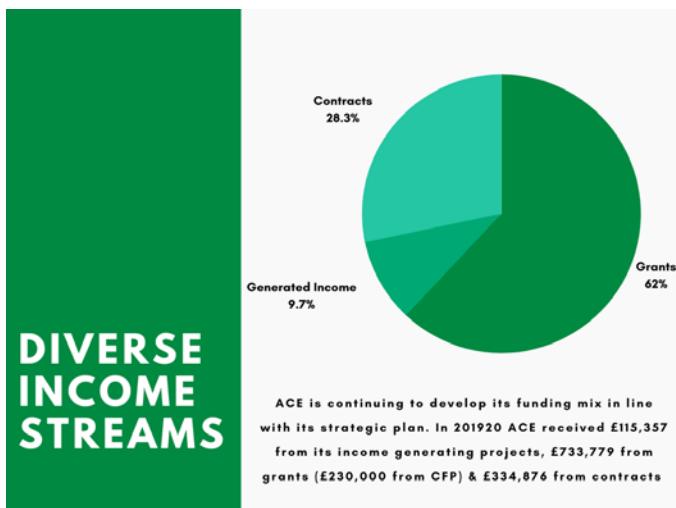
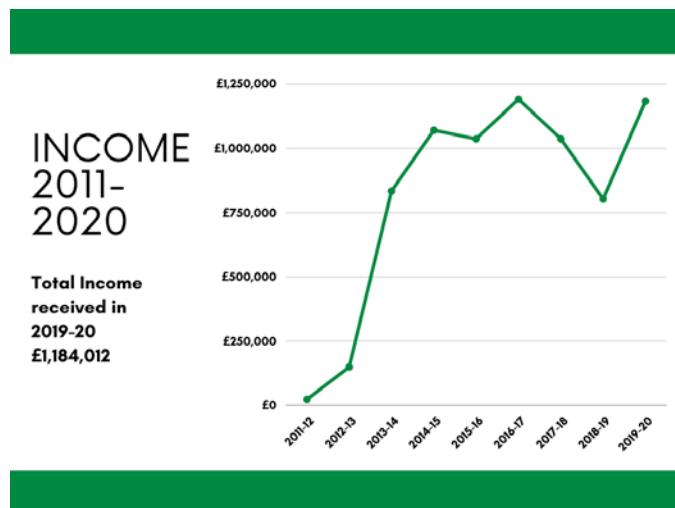
ACE received a total income of £1,184,012 in the 2019-20 financial year. This is an increase of £381,302 from the previous year. Of this, ACE spent £848,097 with £335,814 being carried forward as restricted project income.

The income was made up of service delivery contract income (28.3%), generated income (9.7%) and project grant income (62%).

Some of our biggest funders for the year included the Community Facilities Programme Capital fund (£261,647) which supported the refurbishment of the Dusty Forge, NHS Cardiff and Vale (Tier 0 Mental health service - £200,839), The National Lottery Community Fund (Working Well - £392,831), Cardiff and Vale University Health Board (Youspace - £134,087) and the National Lottery Heritage Fund (CAER Hidden Hillfort Project - £125,553).

The Income received in 2019-20 was spread across 24 projects. This income funded the delivery of projects in Ely and Caerau and other communities in Cardiff. The year 2019-20 has been another successful year where ACE has been implementing its strategic plan objectives to diversify income streams. ACE self-generated £115,357 via social enterprise such as rental, consultancy work and training. ACE also introduced service contract funding in its ever expanding funding mix (£334,876). This contributed towards 28.3% of ACE's total income.

ACE's income level has increased significantly year on year since becoming a charity in 2011. In 2011-12 ACE started with £22,864 and by 2014-15 and onwards, ACE's income exceeded £1m year on year. In 2018-19 however, there was a slight drop to £802,710 and then an increase to £1,184,012 in this current year. ACE is also projecting total income above £1m in the 2020-21 financial year.



# 12. Our Funders and Partners

## ACE Funders



## ACE Partners





Our Place: Dusty Forge,  
460 Cowbridge Road West, Ely  
Cardiff CF5 5BZ, Tel: 029 2000 3132

Email: [info@aceplace.org](mailto:info@aceplace.org)  
Website: [www.aceplace.org](http://www.aceplace.org)  
Facebook: ACE - Action in Caerau and Ely  
Twitter: [@elycaerau](https://twitter.com/elycaerau)