

Annual  
Report  
2023 - 2024



**ace**  
Action in Caerau & Ely  
Gweithredu yng Nghaerau a Threlái

# Action in Caerau and Ely



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# Action in Caerau



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# erau and Ely

**“Our Ambitions For Our Community  
Through Our Own Efforts”**



# Message from the Chair



Once again it's been another busy year for ACE, with increasing pressures on funding for charities. Staff are working hard to secure funding throughout the year, meaning we have a diverse mix of funding streams that support ACE's work. Some projects have ended due to lack of funding, sadly including the ACE Pantry, whilst new projects and partnerships are in development.

Welsh Government, the South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner and Cardiff Council commissioned ACE to facilitate a community listening exercise which had a huge response and identified six broad themes. This led to a Community Plan with 40 actions funded by a variety of organisations. This has enabled ACE to spend more time out in the community, nurturing long-standing relationships and establishing new connections.

In addition to this, a stronger partnership with Cardiff University was established with the funding of two posts for three years at the CAER Heritage and Learning Centre to increase learning opportunities and links between the community and the university. The 2023 summer dig in Trelai was featured in the TV programme "Digging for Britain" presented by Professor Alice Roberts. Some of the finds are exhibited in the Museum of Cardiff and have great significance in local history. A heritage garden has been developed by

dedicated volunteers who are growing produce for use by the community and ACE projects.

After several months of uncertainty, ACE was awarded the contract to run the Yourspace social prescribing project in the Cardiff South West, Cardiff West, and Cardiff North GP clusters by Cardiff and Vale University Health Board. Patients in these areas can be referred or self-refer to the project and receive help and advice from the Wellbeing team.

The Grand Avenues project, which is a partnership with His Majesty's Prison & Probation Service (HMPPS), has led to the reopening of the café, initially one day a week. It has given an opportunity for clients of the project to use and further develop skills which could lead to paid employment. A number of those who have accessed the Grand Avenues project have become mentors for newly released inmates.

Developing partnerships with other organisations has been crucial in continuing to ensure ACE's ongoing work in an increasingly difficult funding climate. ACE is increasingly exploring multi-agency approaches, and we're excited to see what will come of these new partnerships.

Marian Dixey - Chair

# Equal



# About ACE

## 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'.

## At ACE, we believe

- 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.

We work with communities to achieve lasting positive change for an equal and just Cardiff by:

- Mobilising local people behind a shared vision.
- Co-producing projects and services that make use of assets and meet needs.
- Driving positive social change, making our communities fairer and more inclusive.
- Securing income and maximising community assets for sustainability and community resilience.
- Working closely with private, public and third sector organisations to secure the benefits of their resources for our communities.

## 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.



At ACE, the way we work is just as important as the things we do. Watch 'The ACE Way' to get a feel for how we work with and alongside people in our community.



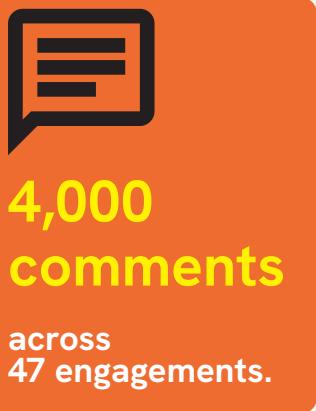
*In April 2024 we launched our Strategic Plan 2024 - 27. The plan sets out a clear direction for project focus and activities supporting ACE's vision to work with communities to achieve lasting and positive change.*

# Resilient





# Ely and Caerau Community Plan



People of all ages across the community, 1200 of us, have contributed to a Community Plan for Ely and Caerau. The plan was launched in May 2024 after 9 months of conversations. We asked 3 simple questions: What do we have? What do we need? What do we want to change?

Through these conversations, and reflecting on the 4000 comments gathered, we decided on 6 themes that were felt to be most important to residents:

- Children and young people
- Community safety and safeguarding
- Spaces and the environment
- Health and wellbeing
- Employment, living standards and the cost of living
- Communication and community building

In the spring of 2024, we brought together around 150 people in 7 workshops to design actions to bring about positive changes within each of these themes. The actions were developed by small groups of people including residents and people who work in our communities in the public sector (e.g. schools, the council) and third sector (e.g. charities and support services).



Together, we designed 40 positive, tangible actions across each of the six themes.





Many of the issues impacting people in Ely and Caerau have their roots in problems we don't have much control over - we can't sort out the cost of living or complex crime issues. But we have focused on what we CAN change, and brought people together to make a positive difference at a local level. Each of the 40 actions in the Community Plan directly responds to the needs and ideas shared by the community. Thank you so much to everyone who got involved!

The plan was agreed by the Community Steering Group, which includes representatives from residents, schools, churches, community groups, charities, South Wales Police, and Cardiff Youth Service. They met every month while the plan was being developed, and will continue to meet 4 times before March 2025 to make sure that the actions are making a difference. They said:

"At every step, this community plan has been co-created with residents of all ages, people who work here, public services and Cardiff Council. Many of the actions are for the council or public services (including local schools and the police) to undertake; some are for local groups and charities to lead on. All of them respond to the needs and ideas shared by the community. Together we have produced a plan that we believe can make a significant positive difference."

The Welsh Government, Cardiff Council, and the South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner jointly funded ACE's Community Engagement team to support the community in developing the plan. The 40 actions outlined in the plan will direct approximately £2 million of grant funding, secured from various sources including the Welsh Government, the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund, and Cardiff Council, into the area over the next year.

Local groups are already coming together to make plans for the future, creating a legacy of collaboration that will continue far beyond the completion of the community plan in March 2025.



In spring 2024, we convened 96 residents and 52 public and third-sector partners across 7 community workshops to delve deeper into these issues and design actions for the plan.



"This is a close - knit community, full of nice and kind people. We need to focus on the strengths of local residents and invest in them."



"We need more activities for young people, older people and to bring everyone together."

Copies of the Community Plan can be found at most community centres and GP surgeries across Ely and Caerau, and it's available for anyone to read using the QR code or at: [www.aceplace.org/community-plan/](http://www.aceplace.org/community-plan/)





Photo: Vivian Thomas

# CAER Heritage

## Archaeological dig in Trelai Park reveals new secrets

CAER Heritage returned to Trelai Park this summer to continue the community archaeology dig exploring a 3,500-year-old Bronze Age settlement. Back in 2022, the CAER team, along with hundreds of local people, discovered a fantastically well-preserved roundhouse buried under a football pitch on the south side of the park – currently the oldest known house in Cardiff! Excavations continued in 2023 and were featured on the BBC's 'Digging for Britain' TV show.

This year, over 1,500 people visited the dig including 272 pupils from seven local schools and 271 volunteers who all got their hands dirty actively participating in the archaeological discovery. A big community open day brought hundreds of people together to find out more about the heritage of the park, have fun with creative activities, games and even to taste some real Roman food!

The dig produced lots of exciting finds including flint tools, pottery and other objects that were used by the family that lived in the roundhouse. All of the finds have been taken to the CAER Heritage Centre where a team of volunteers are helping to clean and analyse them. Working with CAER artist Nic Parsons, they put on an exhibition at the Museum of Cardiff to show off the findings to thousands of people. Volunteer Sian Davies, a retired care worker, who found an arrowhead at the site said: "To be given the chance to come down here and dig and delve into history means an awful lot. Finding something like an arrowhead is a joy."

CAER has been running for over 10 years now. It's brought together archaeologists from Cardiff University with ACE members, local schools, residents, community groups and many more. This year's dig has been the most successful yet and we're so grateful for the ongoing support from Cardiff Council, who gave us permission to dig in the park, but above all the local community without whom nothing that CAER has done would have been possible.

If you like your local history, we're at the CAER Centre every Wednesday from 10am-12pm and everyone is welcome to come and get involved.



Photo: Vivian Thomas



# CAER Heritage & Learning Centre

In 2024 a new team was recruited at the CAER Centre with two full time posts funded in partnership with Cardiff University. Lois Atkinson as CAER Centre Development Officer and Tom Hicks as CAER Community Partnership Co-ordinator have successfully established the Centre as a space for learning and opportunity in Caerau and Ely. The CAER Centre is now a hub of activity, hosting regular groups and training courses and exploring our community's fascinating heritage.

Weekly groups include ACE Cares, Love Our Hillfort, Caer Gardening group and ACE's Umbrella (neurodiversity) group. These run alongside our community courses, activities and events and a weekly Flying Start toddler group. We hosted several family fun days for the community in partnership with The Literacy Trust, Greggs and Cardiff Metropolitan University.

In partnership with 'Live Local Learn Local', Cardiff University's outreach programme, we have hosted accredited training courses including the popular 'Starting Your Own Business' course and 'Careers in Childcare' course, with many more planned for Autumn, based on local people's interest. The NHS has brought their Dietary Requirements cooking course and their Mental Health Wellbeing Recovery College to the CAER Centre. In addition to this we have delivered other courses relating to cooking on a budget, how to use an air fryer and making healthy meals where attendees took home with them the healthy food they had made that day.

The dedicated volunteers at CAER Heritage Love our Hillfort group have facilitated Archaeology themed Open Days at the Centre. They have



shared their archaeological research and knowledge with the community through an exhibition at The Museum of Cardiff and with school group visits to the centre. They also showcased the flourishing heritage garden at the CAER Centre Garden Open Day and co-produced several garden projects, including planning a Roman medicinal garden that will be an educational resource and will support wellbeing through outdoor activities.

CAER Heritage was chosen as one of four heritage organisations across the UK to take part in the Council for British Archaeology's Reconnecting Archaeology project - sharing learning to help make archaeology more accessible to the public.



# Community Support

## ACE Advice and Support

The ACE Community Support team provides a friendly and welcoming drop in and casework service, helping people in financial crisis to access foodbank vouchers, fuel support, manage debt, support benefit claims and challenge unfair benefit decisions.

We supported 411 households in 2023-24, focusing our efforts on increasing household income through accessing unclaimed benefits and grant support, building resilience and reducing the likelihood of further financial crisis. Our support has enabled households in Ely and Caerau to receive a total of £614,553 in additional income, making a huge impact on wellbeing.

## Restore - Community Shop

The ACE Community Shop at the Dusty Forge had to close in October 2023. We are still running a Community Fridge and pet food bank, and low cost toiletries and cleaning products are available for community members at the ReStore Space. Following feedback from community consultation on food support available in our community, we are planning to set up a new Food Hub project, building on our Community Fridge project. This will bring together a number of community food initiatives including cooking courses, community food events and local growing projects. We would like to thank all the shop volunteer team for all their hard work helping people in our community.



*"I can't thank you enough for all you have done, I couldn't have done this by myself, it was so stressful."*

"I have been awarded Personal Independence Payment for 10 years. This is life-changing and I can't thank you enough for what you have done." Mrs L had her benefit claim declined despite chronic and progressive illness that impacted her mobility and her ability to perform daily living activities. We challenged this decision and an award was made to the total value of £89,440.

## Café Barr

After a period of being closed due to lack of available staff to support, Café Barr reopened in November 2023 as a new partnership project between ACE and His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). The café is open on Wednesdays serving community members, volunteers and staff at the Dusty Forge. This project gives people in our community the opportunity to learn cooking skills and gain qualifications, while providing affordable and tasty meals.

## Umbrella Group

The Umbrella Group supports families through peer support and developing understanding of neurodiversity. 15 people in the group were also supported to access Disability Living Allowance, and 4 people were successful in claiming Personal Independence Payment with help from ACE.



## ACE Benthyg

ACE Benthyg has gone from strength to strength this year, and we've seen a huge leap in the number of people registered to borrow items to 400 active memberships and over 50 borrows per month. The carpet cleaner and hedge trimmer remain the most popular items, but our library continues to grow, and now includes a range of new items supporting health and wellbeing. ACE Benthyg has been



ACE Benthyg website

opening alongside the Repair Café each month, giving borrowers increased opportunities to visit, and pop up events have happened throughout the year, to show communities what the library has to offer.



One very happy borrower told us: "without borrowing these items, I could not have been able to afford to have

better surroundings in my home. I am beginning to feel I can invite my family and friends over now."

## Your Local Pantry

From 2019, Your Local Pantry at the Dusty Forge served over 150 members each week with a low cost food shop, making an important contribution to supporting our community members

struggling with ever increasing food prices. Sadly, the Pantry had to close in April 2024, due to lack of funding and challenges to sourcing sufficient healthy and diverse food. We would like to thank

Sarah Whitfield and her team of hard working volunteers for all they have done over 5 years of successfully running the Pantry!



"Very friendly people here, the food tops up my cupboard for the week. I look forward to my weekly visit for a chat."

Anonymous member



## Grand Avenues



"I've never had this help before. It's always been in and out (of prison). I hope that with this help that I can keep myself straight and focus on changing things for the better."

The Grand Avenues project is an innovative partnership between His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and ACE that embeds the Probation Service in the community. Grand

Avenues supports men involved in the Criminal Justice System and their families to instill a sense of belonging and ensure that their immediate needs are met upon release. We ensure that they have access to a GP and support with health, employment, and volunteering opportunities. We seek to stabilise their income through benefit support where there are physical or mental health needs identified and work with services to ensure that underlying health needs are addressed. Many of the men on the project are neurodiverse, and it is important that we work with appropriate services to ensure the men are supported correctly as often their conditions have been contributing factors in their offending behaviors. Evidence shows that financial stability can directly reduce re-offending through ensuring men and their families have access to support needed. Over the last year, 49 men were supported to claim health-related benefits they were entitled to, a total of £234,892 into the community. By breaking the cycle of offending, closing the revolving door that so many men find themselves trapped in, we hope to help make Ely and Caerau safer communities.



## The Dusty Shed

The Dusty Shed is an independent charity, run by its members, with a mission to combat the issue of loneliness and social isolation among our community's older residents.

In our ongoing commitment to safety and well-being, several of our members completed training in First Aid and Mental Health Awareness.

Furthermore, we enhanced outdoor security of our premises by installing a sliding door and an additional lockable door at the rear.

ACE's open day showcased our work to our local community. Alongside community projects, we aid ACE's Repair Café, Library of Things, and undertake minor maintenance tasks at the Dusty Forge.

## Repair Café

Our Dusty repair cafe launched five years ago and over this time our team of volunteer fixers have checked out 500+ broken items and mended three-quarters of them! Our monthly free service has saved many items from landfill and electrical items beyond repair have been recycled via Cardiff Council's e-waste collection service. Our friendly fixers have tackled portable electrical

items, gardening tools, woodwork and ceramics, basic bike repairs, and textile repairs (including reviving elderly soft toys). We also have specialist fixers offering advice on laptops, phones and tablets, who can 'speak human', helping people with a wide range of IT issues. We look forward to welcoming customers for many more years!



## “I want to say a big thank you.” - Anne’s story

Moving to this new place, my son suggested I hop on the bus to find stuff. One day, the bus passed by, and there was something about painting that caught my eye. That's how I stumbled into the Dusty Forge. I hadn't touched crafts since school - hairdressing took over my life until I moved here about seven years ago.

Slowly, I eased into the knit and natter sessions on Thursdays. I saw crafts I hadn't touched since school, and it was like rediscovering an old friend. Mum used to knit and do embroidery, but life took me down a different path. Mostly, I've been into this printing thing during the Monday class. It's mostly been printing; different styles of it. I've learned new skills, definitely. The class just pulls something out of you. You can forget the tension at home, dive into what the tutor shows us, and I've tried my hand at everything she throws at us.

The best part is it takes your mind off things. My husband has dementia, and one day, I walked in upset. One of the girls took me aside, talked me through it - made me realize this was a place to escape, no matter how I felt. There's something about this place, I can't put my finger on it. People say I'll find another hub when I move, but it won't be the same. I've got to try, though.

It's amazing completing something and having someone say, 'Wow, you're clever!' I'm not, though.



“ACE Arts revived my passion and became a lifeline during tough times.”

It's the people here who taught me. The Monday sessions help bring out that creativity. I never got the chance to go to art college; my dad couldn't afford it. But now, I'm learning here. The class works as a team, and never

leaves you alone. They show you different ways if you're struggling. It makes me feel like I can tackle anything.

I'm happy to come here. It's a good morning, a chance to learn and keep my brain going. They welcome you no matter what you're going through. It's a real community - different characters, different disabilities. The hub is like a honeycomb with lots of channels feeding into you.

I'm going to miss the girls themselves the most. They treated me like I was the same age, never as an 83-year-old. They encourage you to try things and don't force you into anything. I want to say a big thank you. My whole week revolves around the Dusty. They've been my lifeline. It's not just about the art; it's about the community and the support. ACE Arts revived my passion and became a lifeline during tough times. I'm incredibly thankful for that.



## Diana Garden

Diana Garden, off Hiles Road in Ely, was originally a playground opened by Princess Diana in 1992 but was vandalised and closed, becoming overgrown and derelict for many years. Since 2016, ACE has been working with local residents and partners to transform the space into an amazing 'green oasis' for our community. Diana Garden now inspires people of all ages to enjoy nature and gardening, while growing their skills and knowledge around healthier eating, exercising and looking after our environment.

Volunteers from all walks of life now regularly work in the garden. Gardening is increasingly recognised as an effective way to improve physical and mental health, reduce social isolation and develop self confidence. The project has received fantastic support from:

- HMPPS, whose Unpaid Work teams have worked tirelessly to clear overgrown areas,
- Cardiff Council, who have provided grant funding to expand food production, and
- Keep Wales Tidy, supplying planters for growing, compost bins, plants and trees.

This has enabled our volunteer team to expand food production at the garden and in the coming year we will be able to use our new polytunnel for all-year growing and to grow plants from seed. Food grown in the garden is now increasingly used in our community café. We will also support other community green spaces, by supplying plants to the Caer Heritage Garden and to our developing memorial garden at the Dusty Forge.

Alongside community growing, we are developing Diana Garden as a venue for a wide range of activities for all ages. We host regular 'booknics' (picnics with books supplied by the National Literacy Trust), and family open days where local residents can enjoy activities or just relax in green spaces beneath the tree canopy.



## Dan y Coed - outdoor play

Through our Dan y Coed (Under the Trees) project, supported by Save the Children Fund Cymru, we've created a dedicated all-weather area for early years play activities including planters, muddy kitchen and a green willow dome for story-telling. We have developed a programme of outdoor play sessions in Diana Garden, in partnership with Ely & Caerau Children's Centre, which have brought families together to experience nature through play.



Dan y Coed (initially called 'Ehangu') delivered 24 play sessions at 3 community gardens, attended by 233 children and 152 adults. Parents and children gave great feedback:

"Fantastic Place! Safe and supportive environment for little ones! Would love to come along regularly!"

"Beautiful garden and loads of fun and engaging activities."



This collaborative project has highlighted the huge potential for developing a wider range of environmental initiatives, education and wellbeing activities at the site, for example, to develop an environmental action programme with children and young people. We also plan to use the garden as an additional pick up point for borrowing gardening equipment from ACE Benthys (library of things). These developments will be vital to secure this unique community garden for future generations.





# Health and Wellbeing

## ACE Cares

In June 2024 we completed a two-year project, in partnership with Cwmpas, to work with the local community to explore community-led care in Ely and Caerau. Our local communities have explored with us how we can strengthen a caring community in Ely and Caerau, identifying local assets and the role that service-providers and decision-makers need to play.

During 2023-24 the project helped to develop a local carers group, established in the previous year. The group continues to grow, and it is now constituted. They have been successful in a second funding application for 'short break' activities for unpaid carers. A dementia café was set up with a local care provider, Bluebird Care; and developing partnerships with our local care home, Forge Care Centre, has helped to encourage residents to access activities at the Dusty Forge.



*"It's a great space to meet. It's open. I can talk and unload about things about me."*

- A member of Caer Carers Club





"I feel like I have made some real friends here in ACE; I love coming to the coffee morning, chatting with the members. I was so lonely before, I never used to leave the house."



## Yourspace Wellbeing Support

Yourspace is a social prescribing and community development service, providing 1:1 wellbeing support and developing new community-led wellbeing activities. We work closely with local GP's and health services to support people with a range of health, social and wellbeing needs. Referrals are seen promptly and wellbeing connectors offer a range of signposting options with an engaging person-centred approach.

The service started in South West Cardiff in 2019 and has supported 409 people in this area during 2023-24 to improve their wellbeing. Our development workers have been adept at developing a range of activities to meet needs, including events, outings and activities such as walking and Tai Chi. A sample of people completed a wellbeing scale, which showed 89% had improved their wellbeing.

In 2023-24 we piloted a smaller scale service in North Cardiff, alongside wider developments with health services in this area. During this pilot year we have worked with 112 people and delivered a number of community pop-up events in partnership with fellow community organisations and groups, using these opportunities to get to know the area and build relationships with both patients and partners.

During 2024-25 the service will be expanding into West Cardiff, with a much smaller service delivered by one part-time wellbeing connector and a part-time development worker. We have already discovered a host of community organisations and partners in this new area. We are now working in these three areas of Cardiff, commissioned by Cardiff and Vale UHB, with funding secured until February 2026. As of October 2024, we have 7 Wellbeing Connectors and 3 Community Health Development Workers and the team will continue to grow.

## Bereavement Support

ACE leads on a partnership project, funded by Welsh Government, to enhance local bereavement support for people from ethnic minority communities and those with a learning disability, both groups that are less likely to access existing support. Our partners at Community Care and Wellbeing Services provide bereavement counselling, courses and support groups which are sensitive to people's culture and faith and available in a range of languages. Our partners Cardiff People First have been active in setting up peer support groups and activities for people with a learning disability.

In 2023-24 the project trained 14 additional volunteer counsellors and interpreters with different language skills; developed new peer support groups in partnership with religious and cultural centres and worked to develop

peer leaders with a learning disability who could facilitate groups and support for others. In total 113 people accessed faith and culture-sensitive bereavement counselling; 68 people attended a faith-informed bereavement course; 72 people accessed peer support groups; and 38 community leaders were upskilled to feel confident talking to people about bereavement.





# Together for St. Mellons and Trowbridge

Together for Trowbridge and St. Mellons (T4TSM) is one of 13 Invest Local Programmes in Wales funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. It is a 10 year programme that builds on the strengths, skills and talents in the community to create positive and long-lasting change. This year we have continued to support Hope St. Mellons with core and capital funding. As a result community activity at the Beacon Centre has increased creating more opportunities for local people in a building

that has benefited from essential repairs and maintenance. We have supported some new groups including The Bike Hut, In It Together and Conservation Volunteers of St. Mellons and Trowbridge and collaborated with Hope St. Mellons and Trowbridge Pantry to run a popular coach trip to Weston-Super-Mare. We also hosted an Introduction to Community Organising with Citizens Cardiff and contributed to an evaluation report on the Invest Local Program.

# ACE Volunteers

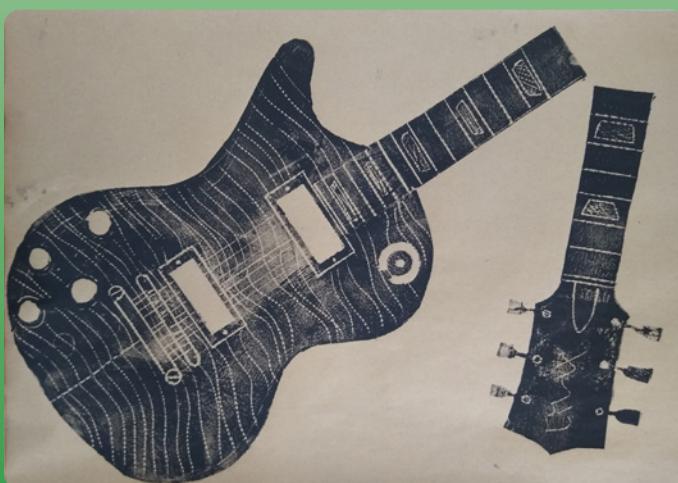
ACE has approximately 50 volunteers, spread across 12 different areas of work at the Dusty Forge, CAER Heritage Centre and Diana Gardens. The volunteers are dedicated, supportive, passionate and determined to help improve the lives of people living in Caerau & Ely. THANK YOU to all our volunteers for another year of incredible commitment, compassion and hard work. We currently have five Lead Volunteers who provide extra support to staff in the running of the volunteer projects. These are Penny Smith: Repair Cafe, Diane Katy: Retreat, Kathy Wolfe: Walking Group, Frankie Curtis: Caer Gardening Group and Janice Refalo: Coffee Morning.

Volunteers have gained numerous qualifications to develop and improve their skills and to

help support the community more effectively. These include: Food Hygiene, Safeguarding, First Aid and Mental Health First Aid, Equality and Diversity, Communication Skills, GDPR, Managing Conflict, Manual Handling and Health and Safety.

Several of our amazing volunteers were nominated in various categories at the Cardiff Volunteer Awards organised by C3SC. The nominees were invited along to enjoy the ceremony supported by staff from ACE. Many of the volunteers attended a fun Christmas party at Dusty Forge, with games, a quiz, a buffet and a raffle. It was a fantastic opportunity to show our gratitude to the volunteers for their efforts through the year.

# Vibrant





## ACE Arts

During the past 2 years ACE Arts, in partnership with Valleys Kids, has collectively delivered over 300 creative workshops and regularly engaged with 132 participants, supporting day-to-day well-being, mental and physical health and providing the opportunity to learn new skills and re-engage with art.

We are proud to report on the success of our core 'Explore Collective' project, funded by an Arts Council Wales 'Connect and Flourish' grant. Our project brought together a thriving partnership between ACE, Valleys Kids, Disability Arts Cymru, Straeon Research and an incredible team of freelance creatives. Through the funding we were able to support a variety of trips, mentor University of South Wales Therapeutic Arts Students, install five collaborative art exhibitions throughout the year at a variety of venues and run an exciting programme of weekly art workshops



Watch this video of our trip to view our artwork in the 'Art in the Attic' gallery in Porth.



with Artists Anne Culverhouse-Evans, Nic Parsons and Becci Booker, along with pop-up workshops and guest artist talks with photographer Suzie Larke and Poet Rachel Carney.



"The exhibition was exciting. It's nice to show our work and get feedback from visitors. I enjoyed seeing my art on display and explaining our art to the people who came. We're really grateful for the teachers. It's not just about helping us get creative; it's about helping us be ourselves."

Read Anne's story on page 15.



"I think I just come in and drink up the session. It's just really nice to be doing something... this is a space for pure enjoyment. I think the good thing about this is no matter how you do it, you're not made to feel inadequate, you're made to feel very adequate. You do go out feeling like an artist, don't you?"



Listen to the collaborative poem by Rachel Carney: What Is Art?



Visit the Explore Collective website to see photos and artwork.



The project finale was celebrated with an impressive launch event and a public exhibition, showcasing a wide selection of work from participants who had attended workshops in both Porth and the Dusty Forge during the 24-month project. The exhibition named 'Freedom to Create' ran for almost 3 months at Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff Bay and included a variety of poetry, photography, painting and print, exploring themes such as self-identity, pocket treasure and nature.

We are delighted to announce that we've received Arts, Health and Wellbeing funding from Arts Council Wales, working in partnership with South West Primary Care Cluster, which will help us deliver creative interventions at the Dusty Forge, Chapter Arts Centre and other venues across Cardiff beginning in October 2024. With this funding ACE Arts will continue to inspire and support participants and creatively respond to a variety of health challenges within our communities.



You can visit the Dusty Forge and ask to view our 'Explore Collective' project book or contact [nicolap@aceplace.org](mailto:nicolap@aceplace.org) to find out about our future plans.





Shape your Future provides flexible 1:1 support and mentoring, offering employment advancement for people living in Ely and Caerau, making a key contribution to tackling in-work poverty. It offers bespoke training opportunities and financial support, enabling individuals to progress into better paid, more fulfilling employment.

The demand for support has increased as we develop stronger relationships with partners and in the community. Many people locally struggle with the lack of sustainable employment/training opportunities. This has had an impact on their health, wellbeing and future prospects.

Between April 2023 and April 2024, 177 individuals have been supported through the programme, including:

- 81 people gained a qualification
- 27 people attended non-accredited training



- 11 people gained new employment
- 31 people progressed within existing role
- 9 started their own business
- 42 people increased income / work through self-employment as a result of support provided.



"Donna and the Shape Your Future project has had a huge impact on people on probation in the Ely and Caerau area. Her warm approach, prompt action and ability to adapt her approach to the person breaks down barriers and keeps people engaged. She is brilliant at feeding back to the Probation Practitioners and the people she supports have tangible outcomes - they are in work, and they are happy in work. From a probation perspective, this support has a significant impact on the likelihood of re-offending."

- Probation team, Grand Avenues.



# 'Cooking for the community' - Tyrell's story

Tyrell was originally volunteering for a local charity, supporting a community kitchen to produce quality food for local residents on a budget. He has shown a passion for cooking and enjoyed supporting others.

Through a Shape Your Future bursary, Tyrell has gained all the basic qualifications in Food Safety, Health & Safety and First Aid needed to work in catering and now works part time for a local Community Food Van project, supporting local sports and community groups by providing affordable snacks and drinks. We also provided work clothing to help boost his confidence. Tyrell is also keen to gain further qualifications in Hospitality which will support him to progress further in his career.



"I'm really grateful for all these opportunities. I've been able to do some training and learn essential kitchen skills, and I've learned loads of practical skills. I'm passionate about working in the catering industry and all this support is helping me along the way. One day I want to start my own business and be my own boss.

I love giving back to the community. I've had experience now cooking for my community at the Dusty Forge Cafe, at St. Vincents and in the Caerau Cabin at the rugby matches with Caerau Ely RFC. I've also been able to teach other people cooking skills at the Dusty Forge. I love engaging with people, connecting with people... I find it fulfilling. One step at a time and I'll reach my goals."

- Tyrell.



The Grow Cardiff Team working on an organisational  
'Theory of Change'.

# ACE Way

## Community Development Training and Mentoring

At ACE we have 13 years' experience at the heart of our community. We know the theories, but we also understand the challenges of putting them into practice. The ACE Way project seeks to share this learning with communities throughout Wales (and beyond!).

Since launching the project in April 2023, we have worked with over 40 organisations. Highlights have included:

- Development of an organisational Theory of Change with a local charity.

- One day online training exploring Asset Based Community Development, Co-production and Community Organising, and how we can use them to make change in communities.
- Training for Cardiff Council's Public Services Group, helping them plan co-design sessions to support local engagement in the Ely and Caerau Community Plan.
- Mentoring with community organisations in North Wales, helping them develop aims, objectives, strategic and funding plans, evaluation and governance.
- Creation of an influencing strategy supporting a community organisation in Leeds to improve housing services for refugees.



The ACE staff team explore community development approaches together during internal training.



'Community Anchor' organisations from Cardiff gather to plan future collaboration, led by ACE and C3SC.

The project is opening up new and exciting opportunities for collaboration with other communities. ACE and C3SC have been funded by Building Communities Trust (BCT) to develop a 'Cardiff Anchor Organisations' network that will see over 20 organisations work together, and with other networks in Wales, to share skills, build evidence of impact, and influence government policy for the good of our communities.



'We were delighted to spend a day with ACE. The vision, people and spaces at the Dusty have inspired us to think more deeply about our role in Rhondda. We were given space to re-evaluate our own approaches, to challenge assumptions and to explore a wide range of approaches to community development. We came away feeling excited about the emerging possibilities of being a locally owned and run charity which is at the start of its community journey in Rhondda.' – James Hall (People and Work).

## ACE Training



ACE Training is a local enterprise training company that also serves as a CITB ITC (Internet Test Centre). We provide different training options for the QNUK Level 1 Health and Safety in a Construction Environment certification, as well as the online Health, Safety and Environment (HS&E) test.

This helps individuals obtain a CSCS card, allowing them to work on construction sites throughout the UK. 188 CSCS cards were ordered during this period.

From April 2023 to March 2024, we trained 224 learners in collaboration with 6 employment support organisations, 8 businesses, and 12 individuals.

*Unfortunately, due to financial pressures, ACE ceased operating ACE Training in August 2024.*

# Our impact in numbers

ACE has a huge impact in our communities. Our work includes over **25 projects, community groups and services** that support over **2,500 community members** each year. The numbers below highlight the difference we make in some of our main areas of work.

## Advice and Support

ACE has supported **411 households** through our drop in and casework service. This resulted in a total of **£61,455** additional income being received by community members through benefits advice, grants, and crisis support.



That's an average of **£1,495 per household**

## YourSpace Wellbeing Service



521 people accessed 1:1 support to connect with local resources to meet their social, emotional and practical needs.



From our survey of 109 respondents, 89% saw an improvement in their wellbeing.

## CAER Heritage



**1500 people**

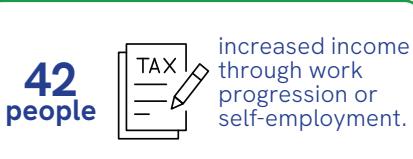
1500 people visited the archaeological dig in Trelai park last summer. 271 volunteers got their hands dirty at the dig, helping discover our unique heritage.



## Shape Your Future - in work progression



have received mentoring and bursary support to overcome barriers, moving forward in work.



increased income through work progression or self-employment.



progressed within their existing role.



attended non-accredited training.



their own business.



gained a qualification.



gained new employment.

## ACE Benthyg - Library of Things

Number of times items borrowed in 2023/24

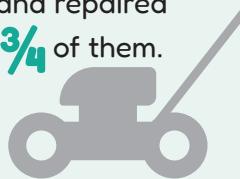
**249**



ACE Benthyg has seen a big increase in people borrowing items from our library - saving members money and helping the environment.



Since our monthly repair cafe opened 5 years ago, we have checked out **500+** broken items, and repaired  $\frac{3}{4}$  of them.



## ACE Volunteers



ACE worked with over **50** regular volunteers making a huge impact on our community.

## ACE Arts



**132 participants** took part in creative activities supporting wellbeing and mental health.

## Bereavement Support

No. of people engaged in Bereavement Support

**291**

Across three project partners ACE, CCAWS and Cardiff People First, 291 people accessed bereavement support activities.

**113**  
people

accessed faith and culture-sensitive bereavement counselling.

**72**  
people

accessed peer support groups or other types of peer support around bereavement.

**68**  
people

attended a faith-informed bereavement course.

**38**  
community leaders

were up-skilled to feel confident talking to people about bereavement.

## Dan y Coed (Under the Trees) - creative outdoor play



**233 children** and **152 adults** attended **24 creative outdoor play sessions** for under 5s and their parents in 3 community gardens.

# Communities





# ACE Trustees

As of October 2024

**Marian Dixey (Chair)** lives in Fairwater. She is an active volunteer.

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

**Oonagh Scott** grew up in Ely. She is a successful business woman.

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

**Chris Lannen** is a qualified Financial Advisor.

**Leyton Smith** lives in Caerau. He is an active volunteer on ACE community health projects.

**Eva Elliot** is an Honorary Research Fellow at Cardiff University School of Social Sciences.

**Janice Refalo** lives in Caerau. She is an active local volunteer.

**Omobonike Atobatele** lives in Ely. She is an active volunteer and student.

We would like to thank Dave King, Natasha Hayes and Penny Smith who stood down from the ACE board of trustees in the last year.

**In Loving Memory of Anne O'Regan.**

# ACE Volunteers

A big thank you to all our current volunteers

Afia Ali  
Alexis Gayle  
Alice Clarke  
Andrew Way  
Auriol Miller  
Carol Coyle  
Catherine Naamani  
Charlotte Ross  
Chez Allen  
Christina Dunn  
Clive Ward  
Danny Westcott

Derek Cleaver  
Diane Katy  
Doug Smith  
Doug Stowell  
Elaine Harris  
Frances McCarthy  
Frankie Curtis  
Gareth Howells  
Gillian Pugh  
Helen Hunt  
Irene Jones  
Jack Wyatt

Jacquie Young  
Janice Refalo  
Jeff Clarke  
John Naylor  
Kathy Wolfe  
Kyle Webb  
Kyle Thompson  
Liubov Yurtsuniak  
Mari Dunphy  
Mary Cleaton  
Matthew Cunnah  
Michael Hack

Natasha Woodland  
Nicholas Bodsworth  
Patrick Barry  
Penny Smith  
Sian Davies  
Steven Elliott  
Suzanne McEwan  
Tang (Wai Keung)  
Tania Clarke  
Victoria Misell

# ACE Staff

As of October 2024

## Core

### **Michelle Powell**

ACE Director

### **Dave Horton**

ACE Learning and Training Director

### **Hazel Cryer**

Operational and Development Manager – Health Portfolio

### **Sam Froud-Powell**

Operational and Development Manager – Community Support Portfolio

### **Julie Evans**

ACE Senior HR Administrator

### **Hasan Roap**

ACE Finance Officer

### **George Keane**

Communications and Web Content Officer / Dusty Shed Officer

### **Dale Ovenstone**

Estates Officer

### **Sharon McGrath**

ACE Receptionist

### **Julie McDowell**

ACE Receptionist

### **Maria Ross**

Assistant Administrator

## Health

### **Taela-Mae Davies**

Yourspace Project Coordinator

### **Clare Westcott**

Wellbeing Connector

### **Danielle Afferion**

Young People's Wellbeing Connector

### **Hannah Bees**

Community Health Development Worker

## Community Plan

### **Becky Matyus**

Community Engagement Coordinator

### **Hywel Squires**

Community Engagement Officer

## Community Development

### **Sarah Griffiths**

Together for Trowbridge and St. Mellons Development Officer

## Caer Heritage and Learning Centre

### **Lois Atkinson**

Caer Centre Development Officer

## Thanks to the former ACE Staff who have moved on in the last year:

Fiona McCormick

Helen Bull

Becci Booker

Sarah Griffith

Vaida Barzdaite

Sarah Whitfield

Beth Leek

Samirah Phillips

Jackie Dix

Catherine Boult

## Community Support

### **Nerys Sheehan**

Project Coordinator / Grand Avenues Coordinator

### **Ruth Mumford**

Benthyg Development Officer

### **Stacie Leek**

Hafan Project Development Officer

### **Steve Lyons**

Diana Garden Development Officer

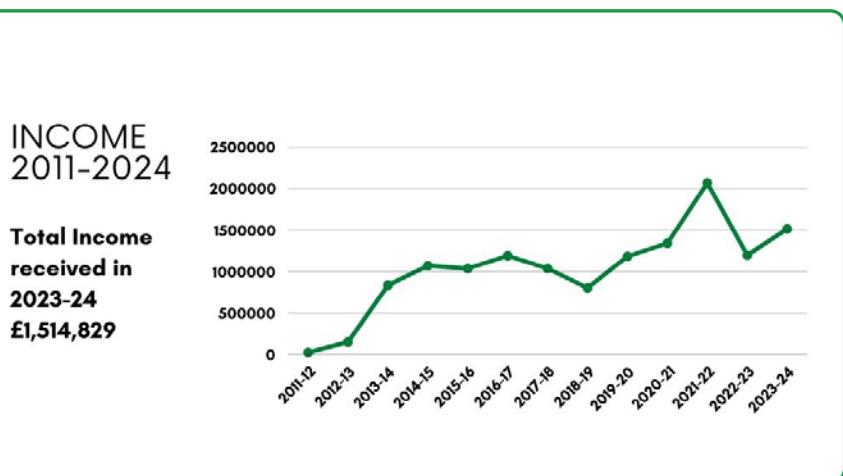
## Arts

### **Nicola Parsons**

Community Arts Coordinator

# Financial Report

ACE received a total income of £1,514,829 in the 2023–24 financial year, an increase of £316,481 (26%) from the previous year. This growth was primarily driven by a rise in grants, contracts, and income generated through enterprise activities. Of this total income, £1,365,052 (90%) was spent on charitable activities, ensuring a significant portion of resources directly supported our mission.



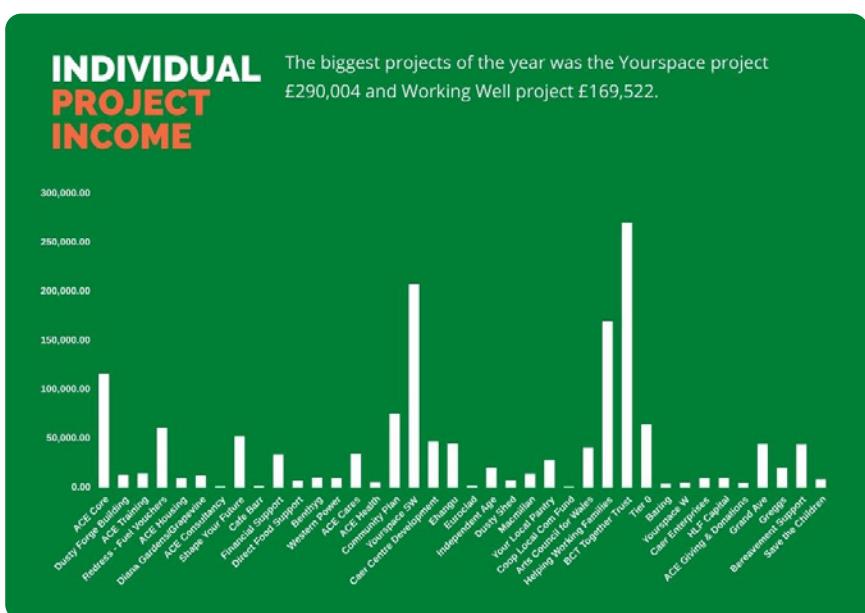
Some of our most significant funders for the year included:

- Cardiff and Vale University Health Board Community Development (YourSpace) project: £290,004 (19% of total income)
- National Lottery Community Fund Working Families project: £169,552 (11% of total income)

The income for 2023–24 was distributed across 57 projects, a 12% increase compared to the previous year.



Over the past 12 years, ACE has contributed more than £13 million to the local economy in Cardiff West. From 2018 to 2024, income generated through ACE's direct activities - such as social enterprises, grant applications, contracts, fundraising, donations, and legacies - amounted to approximately £8.1 million, representing 62% of ACE's total historical income.



# Funders and partners

ACE Funders



ACE Partners





# ace

Action in Caerau & Ely  
Gweithredu yng Nghaerau a Threlai

## Action in Caerau and Ely

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

✉ [info@aceplace.org](mailto:info@aceplace.org)

🌐 [www.aceplace.org](http://www.aceplace.org)

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TWITTER @elycaerau\_ACE

INSTAGRAM actionincaerauandely

