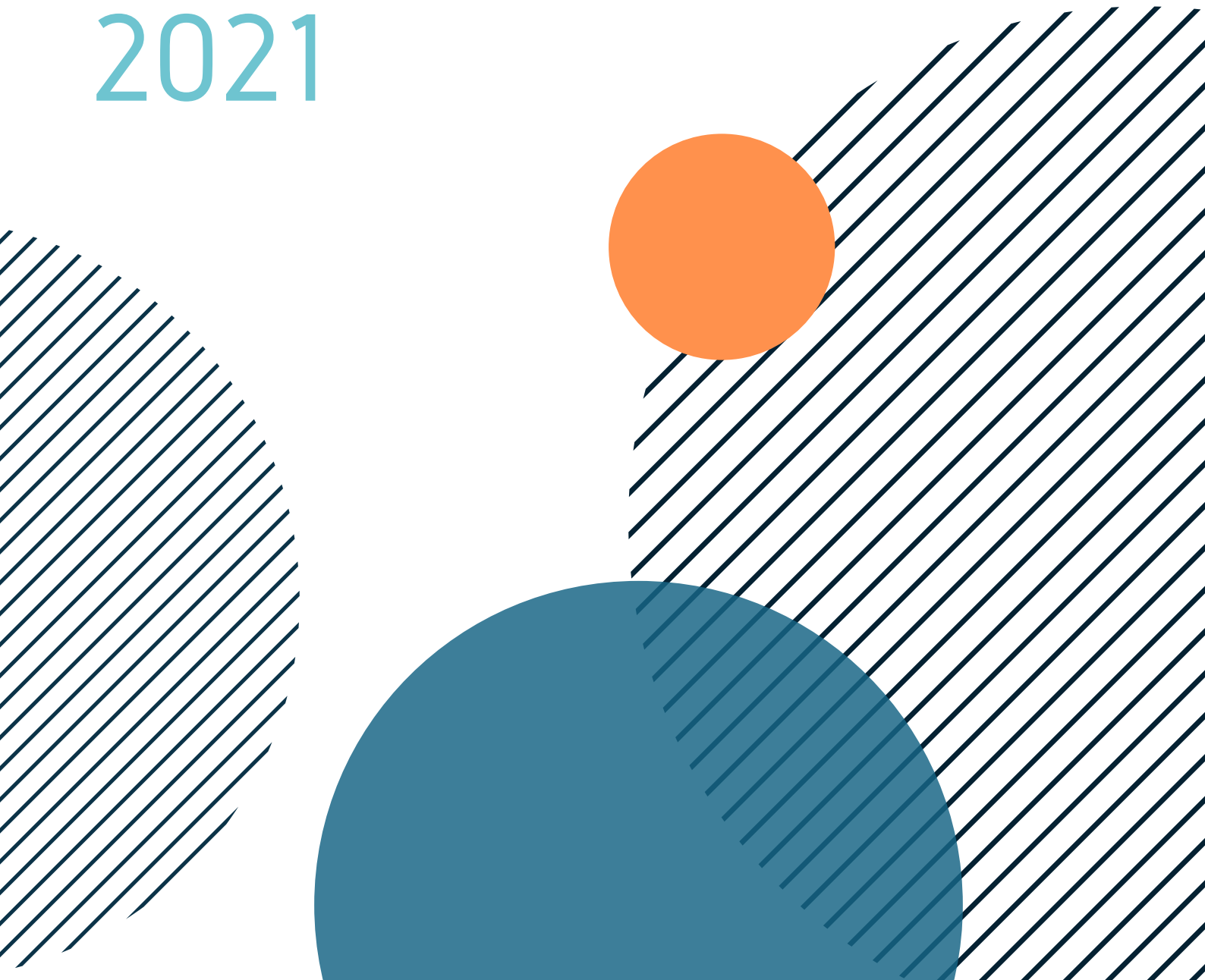




GATESHEAD
COMMUNITY
ORGANISATION

GATESHEAD COMMUNITY ORGANISATION

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



INTRODUCTION

An organisation with the people of Gateshead at its core.

This Annual report is designed to provide the reader with an insight into the work at Gateshead Community Organisation and how the efforts of staff and volunteers have changed the lives of those within the local community over the past three years since we were formed in 2018. This report is organised through the main aims of our enterprise and how we have achieved each of our goals. It closes with a look to the future and how we plan to expand our efforts even further.



Our organisation started as a limited company which rented a cafe within a local authority building The Elgin Centre, Deckham, with the aim of providing work placements for supported internships. After trading for a short time it became apparent that there was not enough footfall or trade in the cafe to give the learners a realistic experience of work. To create the realistic cafe environment we started to offer a hot meal delivery service to pensioners in the local area of Deckham/Felling and Windy Nook/Whitehills wards of Gateshead.

PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY THE
Lloyds Bank Social Entrepreneurs Programme



INTRODUCTION



At this point, we researched social enterprises and decided this would be the best model for us and the local community. Two further directors were recruited from the community in which we are based and all have lived experience of hardship and adverse childhood experiences. Since then, we have evolved to meet the need of the local people. The COVID-19 pandemic meant that we had to move out of the building as it became an emergency hub. We are planning to expand our offer to include further work placements and training, along with developing a supported apprenticeship programme.

We continue to work with original volunteers and now involve a more diverse section of the Deckham community. We worked closely with the Syrian resettled community throughout the crisis and one of the Syrian volunteers is now joining our board as we broaden from three to eight directors. Another new board member was our first intern from 2018 who has now been employed for nearly three years.

Our founding board members were all born within two miles of the area in which we serve, we are all passionate about improving the outcomes for people and families in this local area where we all grew up. As an area that is the 10% most deprived in England, Deckham is a close-knit community with a very proud outlook. Since we started, we have had a great rapport and relationship with the local residents and the staff, parents and pupils of the local primary School, Carr Hill. Our volunteers and customers have been from the community and our beneficiaries are mostly based in Deckham and Carr Hill with some in the neighbouring wards too.

We regularly consult the local community, asking for suggestions and ideas. Volunteers, staff and directors are encouraged to put forward projects which they would like to see happen. In expanding our board, we have invited three further local people to join us as directors, meaning that six of us will be from the local community. This newly formed board will be representative of the local community including BAME, LGBT plus, Neurodiversity and the local resettled community. It is our plan to recruit a youth council who will then be involved in an updated community consultation and strategic plan.

PROVIDE AFFORDABLE FOOD AND EDUCATIONAL FOOD BASED WORKSHOPS TO FAMILIES IN AN AREA OF GATESHEAD WHICH IS AFFECTED BY POVERTY



Elgin Community Kitchen Community Interest Company (CIC) was formed in October 2018.

As briefly mentioned, we managed the Cafe within the Elgin Centre, to prepare socially priced, well balanced meals which were delivered to residents across the local wards.

By using food sharing networks and local school referrals the cafe was able to reach families within the local area to engage parents and children in cooking workshops. These were named the Active Eat Workshops and are hosted during school holidays. These sessions are designed to help children learn basic cooking skills in an enjoyable way, which they can begin to use at home. This contributes towards sustaining them in the absence of free school meals, and the children learn planning and budgeting for nutritious, economical meals.

Our efforts so far have meant we have been able to provide:

- In excess of 2500 meals to local children in the holidays
- Over 1000 Syrian meals delivered to resettled families
- Healthy eating workshops for 80 children
- 70 weekly pay as you feel Fareshare markets
- 4 corporate buffets
- Fully inclusive volunteering opportunities for 15 people
- Work placements for 8 students
- Chargeable day services for one young person
- Employment for 6 people
- 2200 hot meal delivered and served to pensioners in their own homes
- 400 hot meals delivered to Age Concern for dementia cafe service users
- Partnership work with other social enterprises
- Low cost healthy food to the Children centre users

PROVIDE AFFORDABLE FOOD AND EDUCATIONAL FOOD BASED WORKSHOPS TO FAMILIES IN AN AREA OF GATESHEAD WHICH IS AFFECTED BY POVERTY



FareShare Food Market.

During the COVID-19 pandemic we extended our FareShare food distribution network and with the help of volunteers and have managed to deliver the food parcels across Gateshead. We subscribe to FareShare and receive a fresh delivery of chilled, ambient and frozen food along with more, sometimes unusual produce.

This food is then offered to the local community on a Pay As You Feel basis, meaning that we are saving 450kg of food from landfill each week and simultaneously providing low-cost food to families. We had amazing feedback from the beneficiaries who have all benefited in different ways from these weekly deliveries. One person explained how she has full care of her grandson and they never can agree on what to eat so they let the contents of the bag decide.



There are other service users who have been shielding throughout the pandemic and our contactless delivery system has been invaluable for them. Using social media we share ideas and recipes of how to best use the produce each week, beneficiaries also post pictures of meals which they have made.



PROVIDE AFFORDABLE FOOD AND EDUCATIONAL FOOD BASED WORKSHOPS TO FAMILIES IN AN AREA OF GATESHEAD WHICH IS AFFECTED BY POVERTY



Turnip and Go.

Through our growing connections and the need for affordable fresh produce in the local area, we started a delivery service of a fresh fruit and vegetables. This is delivered to the door of our customers the same day we receive it and is sourced from the NE Fruit Markets.

This is a chargeable service however we are hoping to use the profits from the full-price produce to subsidize fresh fruit and veg for those who would benefit. The vision for this project is to make the aim of 5 a day both realistic and achievable for low-income families. We achieve this by providing the produce at a low cost and providing information and guidance on how best to integrate more fresh produce into their eating routine.



ENGAGE THE LOCAL COMMUNITY THROUGH VOLUNTEERING AND ENHANCE THEIR LIFE AND WORK SKILLS



The work of our volunteers is something we find integral to our success as without their help we would not be able to work with as many people within our community as we do.

They are the founding aspect of many of the projects previously mentioned, and are such valued members of our team. At Gateshead Community Organisation we also pride ourselves on our ability to provide those who volunteer with skills transferable to the workplace and beyond. Below is a testimonial from one volunteer:



“I came into contact with Elgin Kitchen in June 2019 after seeing an advert in our local council free magazine. I had recently left the teaching profession. I had been working in a very toxic environment for the previous two years, my confidence was at an all-time low and I was suffering from anxiety and depression. Most days it was a struggle just to get out of bed! I knew that for me to get better, I had to do something with my time. I can honestly say that volunteering helped with my road to recovery.

The volunteer role was for two days a week and I worked one to one with young adults who had a range of difficulties / disabilities. This was a perfect role for me as I had enjoyed being a teacher and working with young people and I knew I was good at it - my confidence just needed reminding.

All the staff and trainees that I worked with were great. They trusted me and believed in me from day one. Their expectation was for me to get straight in and ‘get my hands dirty’ - I was part of the team. That meant a lot. Anything I didn’t know I asked and everyone was more than happy to help me.

ENGAGE THE LOCAL COMMUNITY THROUGH VOLUNTEERING AND ENHANCE THEIR LIFE AND WORK SKILLS



I now work in research for the NHS - a role that is very different from my last profession. It's been a massive learning curve, but I'm doing really well and I really enjoy it. I think a lot of that comes down to the skills I got from volunteering, thinking on my feet and working outside my comfort zone. As I valued my experience so much, I now volunteer for a Mental Health charity called PeerTalk, who are a national charity that provide weekly facilitated peer support groups for people living with depression, anxiety and related distress."

We are always looking for more volunteers in: Gardening, Support work, Admin and Marketing, Driving and Packing and Sorting.

If you would like to join us and hopefully learn some new skills as well as work with our amazing team, fill in this form through our website to find out more: <https://www.gatesheadcommunity.org/join>

As we are a social enterprise we do not rely on grants, and one way we generate income is through providing work placements and job coaching to supported interns from local colleges.

Our Aventurine Project is designed to help individuals reach their full potential; it is our belief that everybody has the ability to live a happy fulfilled life. Through our supported and structured work experience placements, we enable participants to gain new skills and a sense of pride in themselves.



ENGAGE THE LOCAL COMMUNITY THROUGH VOLUNTEERING AND ENHANCE THEIR LIFE AND WORK SKILLS



The programme includes tailored training sessions, exploring the individuals needs and what skills they want to gain in order to further develop themselves.

Through our supported structured work experience placements, we provide the opportunity for people to learn new skills, engage in the local community, gain a new-found independence, and increase their confidence. These day service sessions aim to build people's interpersonal skills as well as building their vocational profile.

The range of skills integrated into this programme are as follows:

- CV writing
- Independent living workshops
- Managing your finances
- Healthy eating
- Horticulture & Forest school
- Social Media
- Staying active
- Performing Arts
- Enterprise
- Social events
- Qualifications
- Supported Internships
- Volunteering roles/paid employment
- Mental and physical wellbeing

Case Study

A valued member of our team, Sam, is a product of one of our work placements and has now become a full time member of staff through his hard work and dedication to helping everyone he can.

"I joined the Project Choice supported internship and Corrina helped to find my placements. When she left the college to open a cafe in the Elgin I went as her first intern, even though catering was not my first choice I worked hard and always kept Corrina organised. I worked at Elgin cafe for 2 years, doing all jobs from washing dishes to helping make the meals for "Deals on Meals" while making sure the cafe ran smoothly. Sometimes I done walking deliveries for the pensioner meals. I was the main face at the cafe and all of the customers knew me. I was a key holder for the cafe and often ran the cafe on my own in the evenings for the clubs such as Ju Jitsu. In the holidays I also helped with preparing buffets for local school children and helped with the Cookery's Cool workshops. I am excited to start my new role now that we have moved out of the kitchen and I am going to help to manage the Fareshare markets and hopefully become a job coach. In the long term I would like to become an escort on the buses which transport children with disabilities to school and open my own Food bank in Deckham."

PROMOTE THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF LOCAL PEOPLE AND PROMOTE SOCIAL INCLUSION



Syrian Food Project.

During the COVID-19 pandemic we organised funding from Gateshead Housing Company, and with the help of volunteers, made and distributed over 500 meals to resettled Syrian families in the local area. We called this pop-up kitchen 'Altaeam Meana,' meaning 'food together' in Arabic. The benefits of this project have included introducing the local community to Syrian cooking and food which has helped to create a sense of connection with the resettled communities in our area.

Working with the Syrian community was never planned and happened organically out of community need. We have got to know one of the volunteers very well and have helped her apply for a number of jobs and helped her to enroll on a college course. We would like to employ her in the future on the Syrian food project which we are trying to make sustainable without funding by selling some meals to the non-resettled community. In the mean time we have invited her to become a director and will be supporting her through the process.

Once we started the food project it has been amazing how other initiatives have sprung into life. We had coverage in the local paper which was spotted by a trainee teacher in a primary school in Newcastle. She was working with her class on a project around a certain book and got in touch to ask if we would be interested in getting involved. The children from the school researched Syria and have written letters for us to circulate among the resettled children. We have visited the school with our volunteer for a Q & A and recipe sharing and to give replies to the letters.

Due to the success of this, and because the project aligns with the KS2 Geography curriculum, we are now in the process of writing a series of workshops which we can offer to other primary schools.

PROMOTE THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF LOCAL PEOPLE AND PROMOTE SOCIAL INCLUSION



The Wagon Way Wild Garden is a project valued by the local community for its positive impact on well-being.

The primary aim of this project is to create a space for various groups of individuals to enjoy the benefits of this shared outdoor space. It is not only designed to aid residents with a place of respite for everyday stresses but also provides an opportunity for those involved to gain skills and pride in creating this resource for the community. We are working together with a local training company to help people gain employability skills and qualifications in horticulture and personal development.



Wagon Way Wild has many designed benefits to support individual's mental health and wellbeing, for example the sensory garden to help those with distressing and promoting relaxation. As well as this, the memory garden will include a selection of raised beds with accessible surroundings, which will be themed around decades to help with reminiscence activities for our older groups. In planning this space, we have considered the protection of all living creatures that inhabit our community garden. This has allowed us to include aspects of a wildlife reserve using habitat piles, building bird and bat boxes and allocating parts of our land to remain untouched, giving a safe place for creatures to live.

PROMOTE THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF LOCAL PEOPLE AND PROMOTE SOCIAL INCLUSION



Three of the staff team have had forest school training and two of them are going on to complete the L3 Forest School leader. We would like to use these skills to engage with local children and schools to offer a safe space for them to learn more about local wildlife, being outside, and the rich history of the local area. Other planned activities include holding mindfulness classes for children to be delivered by a local practitioner and parent and child classes. Part of the garden is being prepared to be planted with lavender as another area of relaxation, a project which involves local disengaged young people.

The primary aim of this project is to create a space for various groups of individuals to enjoy the benefits of this shared outdoor space.

The general upkeep of the garden will be carried out by a team of volunteers from various backgrounds, to date we have had help from an individual who is recovering from a stroke with some visual impairment issues. We have staff that are on hand to support individuals who need adjustments to access these activities and our core values encompass an inclusive approach to this project.



OPERATE A HOT FOOD DELIVERY SERVICE AIMED AT OLDER/DISABLED INDIVIDUALS



Deals on Meals was our original project, where we provided a three-week rotating menu of hot home cooked nutritional meals delivery to pensioners in their own homes.

Although chargeable to the service user the project was popular and we regularly had ten to twelve pensioners relying on us for their lunch time meal.



Deals on Meals

Before the restrictions of the pandemic this service included our DBS cleared driver actually going into the homes of the service users and serving the meal to them. Once the COVID restrictions were in place it became necessary to protect our customer by doing contactless deliveries, some of our customer then had to enlist further care to help serve the meals. During this period demand increased to twenty-five meals per day and we extended our service to seven days a week.

This project was passed on to a commercial entity who were better equipped and more experienced to meet the increased demand. The service is still proudly running and we pass on any referrals from the public or Adult Social care to them.

LOOK TO THE FUTURE



The efforts of our food based social enterprise have helped many individuals and families

but now we are looking to broaden and diversify our activities. We would like to address many issues in the area and launch diverse projects to target specific social problems and issues. We have developed into a reactive, innovative organisation and hope to grow our projects around the needs of the local community. Projects starting in 2021 include: plans to regenerate Saltwell Park, expand our produce delivery corporately and further develop our neurodiverse education programme.

YOUR OPINION MATTERS TO US!

If you would like to see more of these activities or are interested in joining our team, you can find us at:



INSTAGRAM

<https://www.instagram.com/gatesheadcommunityorganisation/>



FACEBOOK

<https://www.facebook.com/gatesheadcommunityorganisation/>

Contact Info:



Gateshead Community Organisation
511 Durham Road, Gateshead NE9 5EY



07923259742 / 07912377228