



Positive about disabilities

Annual Review 2023



Real
Choice

Involvement

Joining Communities

Valuing People

Support to Grow



Caroline Arthur



Mand Hamblin

Introduction from our Chair and Vice Chair

Looking back at the past year at ECHO, it's hard to pick out just one or two highlights. Everyone in the organisation seems to have been busy! Participants have enjoyed exciting events such as a trip to Barry Island, a camping weekend, walking with alpacas, taking part in the Coronation celebrations, and there have been two participant weddings to celebrate.

We've had several great fundraising events – the Colour Run around Leominster, the Firewalk at the Grange and several 'All the Threes' events, involving staff, volunteers and participants, for ECHO's 33rd birthday. It's wonderful to see the effort that goes into these events, but also the enjoyment that results. We were also very touched and proud to receive a very generous legacy from faithful supporter Janet Smart, which has significantly boosted our finances.

It's not all about the highlights, though. Every day, our fantastic staff and volunteers have been working tirelessly to provide fun, friendship and opportunity for our participants and to raise money via our social enterprises. Behind the scenes, the management and office teams have been keeping the whole organisation running smoothly.

There have also been some goodbyes. We were very sad that two of our participants and one recent member of staff passed away during the year. A few staff members and participants left us for new adventures and will be very much missed, but we were also very pleased to welcome new faces to the ECHO family.

As the year draws to a close, we would like to thank everyone involved in ECHO for their dedication and hard work, and our donors and supporters for their help with making it happen. We're looking forward to seeing what next year brings!

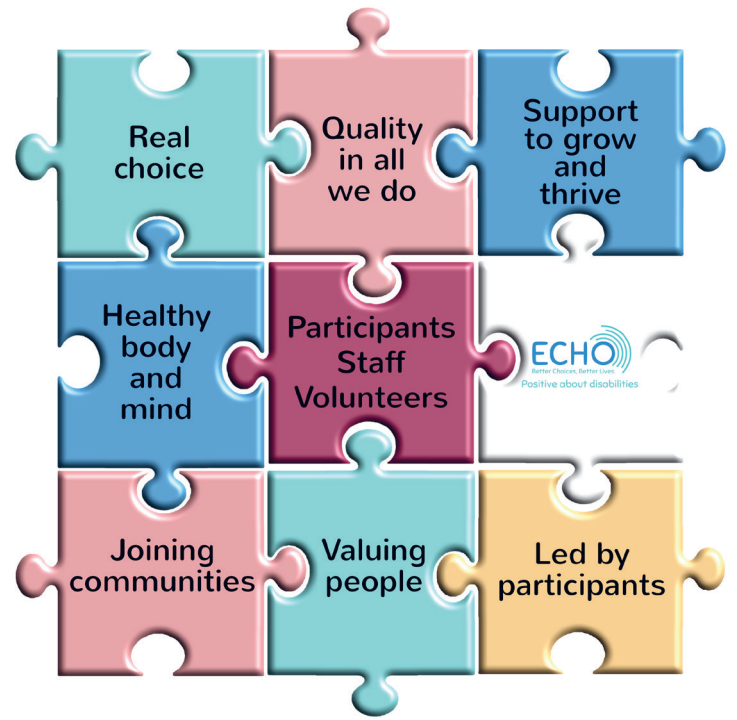
Chair of Trustees



Vice Chair



Mike Cook



Chief Officer's View

A new year has seen ECHO launch its new plan for 2023 to 2026. This plan will help us to shape what we do and guide us going forwards. Two new important areas we have added are 'Joining Communities' and 'Healthy Body and Healthy Mind'. Joining Communities is about bringing people into ECHO and taking ECHO out into the community to show off all the amazing things you do. After recent years we also think that Healthy Body and Healthy Mind work is really important too, in ensuring that everyone can make the most of their lives.

Cost of living rises have meant big increases in what ECHO has to spend and so we have been looking at what we can do to reduce this. One thing is looking for the right places for our projects to work out of. This has been quite hard as we try to find a balance between size of the building, where it is, what facilities it has and the cost. We continue to search for the best places we can.

The end of the year is finishing with some really exciting developments. Firstly, Nic Bullock is starting as a new Deputy Chief Officer, having successfully developed Studio Mirai. We were also successful with our lottery bid and so have just started the Steps to Employment Project (StEP) that will run for four years and help people to volunteer and support those that want to into improving their work skills.

Thank you to all of our staff, volunteers and supporters who help to make ECHO the wonderful place it is. We and I couldn't do it without you.

Thank you

Chief Officer

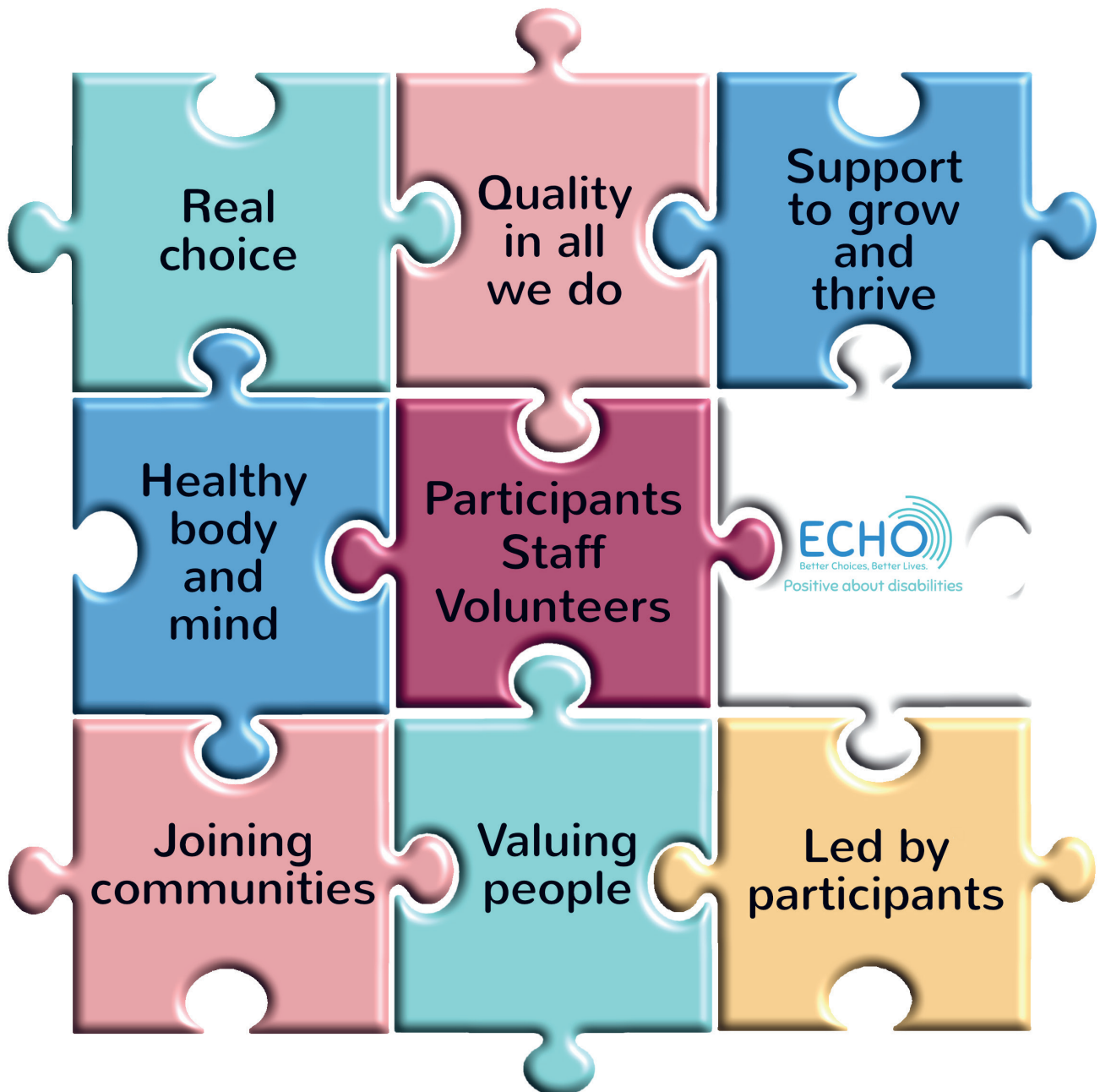
ECHO's Mission

"We want to make a positive difference to the lives of people with disabilities in Herefordshire, supporting them to know they are valued members of the community".

ECHO's Vision

"A society where all people with disabilities are heard, valued, respected and supported to make choices and flourish".

AIMS

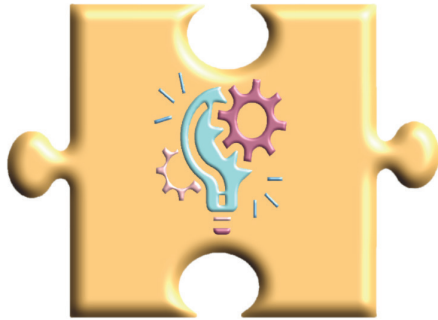


ECHO By Numbers

(December 22 - December 23)

A selection of ECHO statistics for the year...

30 projects
across the
County



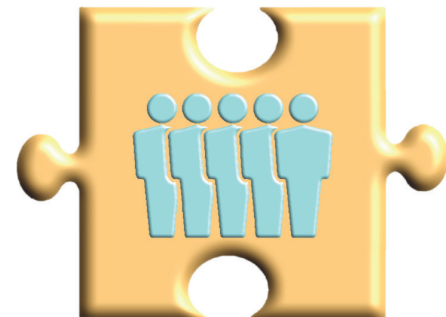
8,080
participant
places
attended
(48,480
hours of
provision)

200
Participants
have attended
day services,
89 male and
111 female



169 are ECHO
members and
can vote at
the AGM

Number of
staff = 53
(including
relief)



159
volunteers.
20 are also
participants.
9,174 hours
given

10 tonnes
of waste
diverted from
landfill by
Studio Mirai



Radio ECHO
made 44
broadcasts
and had 5
training days



Having real meaningful choices is really important to our participants and ECHO works hard to make sure that we support

this in how we run and what we do in projects. Many of the most exciting projects come from or are developed from ideas our participants bring to us.

This year saw a number of new activities as part of our Social and Leisure programme. Groups meet up for regular darts sessions, as well as life skills days, learning how to be independent in a fun environment. We also saw two events, with some intrepid camping at Eaton Barn and a big trip to Barry Island. Feedback was great and participants are keen to do more like this in the future.

Every project offers choice and the ECHO weavers are no different. Participants can choose what they make and this year have created fabulous cushions, purses, 'phone cases and rag rugs. One member of the group also started a new line in small shoulder bags using fancy yarns, cottons and rag.

Most weavers also have an 'inkle' and circular loom project on the go.



Social & Leisure

Storytelling participants not only help choose their topics, but then use their imagination to take them in all sorts of directions.

Storytelling revisited the story of King Agamemnon's return from Troy. There has been an increase in focus and concentration and people have remembered their part in the story. The group had plenty of opportunities to improve their communications skills and were encouraged, where appropriate, to develop their own dialogue.

The group also explored the theme of friendship and developed a story about the five animals who saved each other from perils.



Weaving



Clever Betsy has continued to work incredibly hard to engage with the community even though they are on the outskirts

of Leominster. They made a Venetian Carnival display at the Buttercross Arcade for Leominster in Bloom, whilst a Coffee and Cake morning gave the opportunity to display the wonderful products produced by the project.

ECHO works closely with other providers through Herefordshire Activities Together to improve services for participants in the County. We are also working closely with Herefordshire Council in helping them design and transform their services. By working in partnership, we are stronger and can reach more people than if we tried to do things on our own.



The Priory Centre

It is important that everyone in ECHO is helped to be the best they can. The Priory Centre continued to develop communication as a group by learning new signing skills. The group learned the colour signs, transport signs and a few signs for the Coronation. This has been practiced while singing and having fun with board games. The Priory also started using Bag Books stories (multi-sensory stories), enjoyed by participants, including those who can sometimes struggle to communicate.

Radio ECHO has been running for over a year now and they have been learning and developing with each show. The amazing thing is that the group starts each week from scratch with a whole show to create. They investigate the stories they will cover, choose the music and decide on who will do each role. Everyone takes part, reading the news, playing songs and jingles or producing the show. The group has learned new skills and created their own jingles. Everyone who attends the show is amazed at what is achieved in such a short time.



Studio Mirai

Studio Mirai has made a great effort to build links with Herefordshire Council and the Waste Department, which has helped both organisations. ECHO now has access to furniture left at the Leominster Household Recycling Centre and has the figures to measure the amount of furniture we stop being scrapped, helping the environment.



Radio ECHO

ECHO in Pictures

Some highlights from the year



ECHO Alien Colourfest, May 27th, with our tame alien, Ziggy



ECHO's volunteers are vital to the running of the charity. Here they are helping at Eaton Barn, the ECHO shop and Open Court Tennis



There's always fun to be had at Friday Club, such as an afternoon's bowling at The Grove



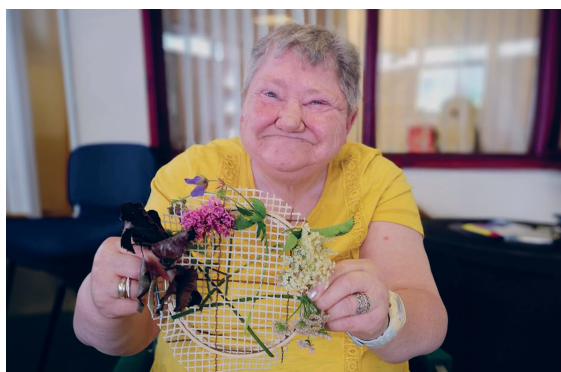
Community Games returned after the pandemic on Friday 21st April



Rose Tinted Rags: Sue Preece makes a rug to be exhibited at The Courtyard in December. The three wise monkeys, Chelsey, Kirsty and Rebecca!



Hamlet, one of many Storytelling projects: Here's the happy couple, Claudius and Gertrude but Horatio says 'Look out Hamlet, it's a ghost!'



Clever Betsy is our studio workshop, where people with disabilities can learn arts and crafts skills in a social and friendly environment...



Letty had her hair dyed rainbow colours to raise funds for a Social & Leisure trip to Barry Island. She also organised several Social Skills Days at weekends...



ECHO does not just involve its participants, it is actually led by them. About a third of our Board of Trustees are people with disabilities. This is really important in helping make sure that ECHO serves the needs of its members and participants. Do you have disability and want to help ECHO by joining the Board? If so, we would love to talk to you!

We are proud of the work that ECHO does and are keen that the things we create are of high quality.



Once again, Eaton Barn has proved what an amazing project this is by securing 'outstanding' in the West Midlands Community Garden of the Year awards. It is great to see the hard work of the team recognised by people outside of the organisation.



Rep Group helps ECHO by giving their views and ideas on ideas we want to develop and questioning us on our plans. They also answer questions from other organisations.

This year Rep Group has met with ECHO staff to talk about project development, completed surveys for other organisations and even made a video with Karen from Herefordshire Healthwatch about who Rep Group is and what they do.

Rep Group also speaks up on issues they feel is important and so they wrote to all the train companies in the UK to tell them what a bad idea it is to shut down ticket offices that many people with a disability rely on.

All Reps stood down this year and then put themselves up for re-election and we now have a full and active group.

Rose Tinted Rags has secured an exhibition space at the Courtyard Hereford starting in November, continuing through to the end of December and will be exhibiting work made by all participants and also textiles and pieces from the shop.





At About Face, this year saw the Arts Council funded 'Seeds of Change' project come to an end. The project allowed About Face groups to learn new skills and to work with a variety of artists to broaden their experience.

The project was a great success and the groups have used these skills to develop further work like the Hate Crime play, 'Someone Else's Train' and 'The Doll Maker' as well as learning improvisation skills.



Our five year 'Inclusive Volunteering' lottery project came to end in June but was a great success with ECHO recruiting over 300 volunteers during the project, 80 of whom have additional needs. ECHO can't run as we would like without volunteers and their commitment, so we make sure we support them as best we can. Volunteers with ECHO reported that they had improved confidence and mental health and felt a reduction in isolation and loneliness.

The good news is that we have been successful with a new lottery bid called the 'Steps to Employment Project' or StEP for short. As well as continuing our volunteer support, we will be helping people to volunteer outside of ECHO and for those who want to, arranging work experience opportunities and support.

LifeLinks continues to work in the Herefordshire communities where they are based. Over the summer the group went on more trips out including bowling and a trip to an ice cream maker. The group has also been working on health and wellbeing with volunteers offering massage, reflexology and Tai Chi.



The cookery group also joined LifeLinks at the Belmont centre and continued to cook healthy meals. The group had a think and decided to rename itself 'Cooking with Company' to show it is as much about friends coming together as it is the food they make.

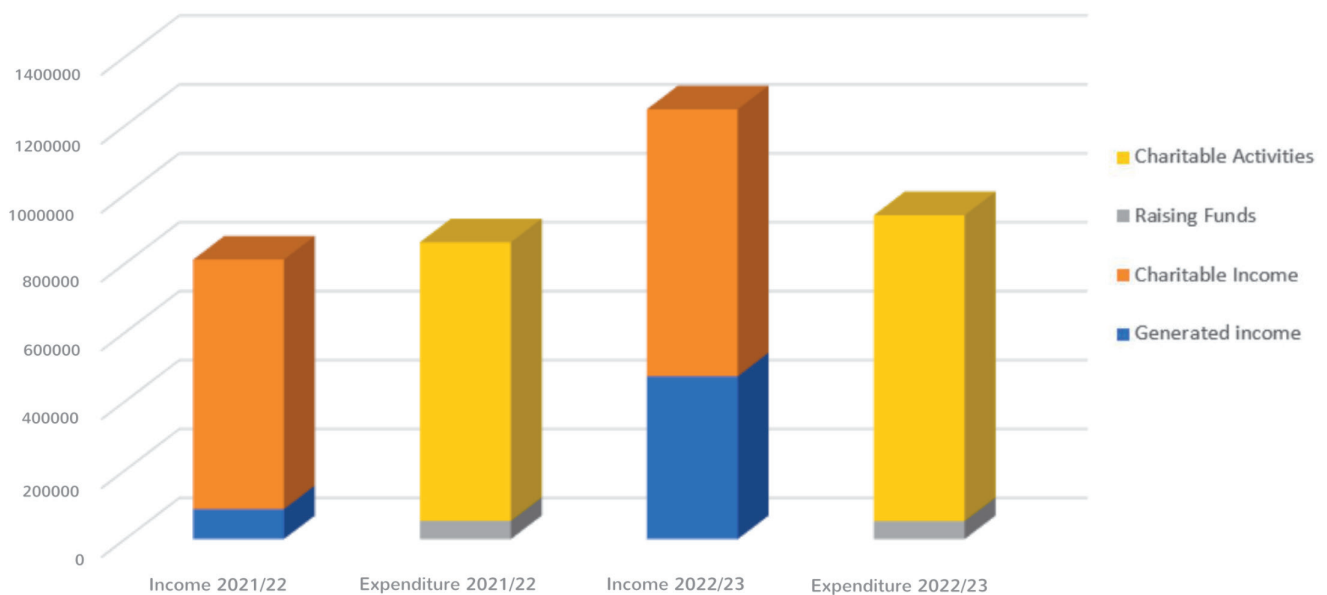


ECHO's Money

During the financial year, from April 2022 to March 2023, ECHO managed its finances carefully.

A big difference this year is that we received a legacy from Janet Smart and this generous gift in her Will meant that we were able to increase our reserves. Reserves are there to help the organisation weather financial hardships and help develop the organisation.

Whilst we finished the year with more money than we started with, the costs we have are still high and we need to look at how we can run our services and break even.



Supporters and Donors

Arts Council England

Barbara Dowse

Co-op Local

Community Fund

Connexus Community Development Fund

Croft Trust

Doreen Stockton

D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust

Edward Cadbury Trust

Edward Gostling Foundation

E T L Systems

Eveson Trust

Finnis Scott Foundation

Four Acre Trust

Geoffrey Crofts

Herefordshire Community Foundation

High Sheriff Fund

Inchrye Trust

Irwin Mitchell Solicitors

Leominster Cultural Consortium

Leominster Osteopaths

Leominster Quilters

Leominster Rotary

Leominster Town Council

Lloyds Bank Foundation

Lloyds Bank Quiz Masters, Ian Monk and Richard King

Mayors Community Weekend Fund (Lottery)

National Lottery

Rowlands Trust

Royal Edward Lodge Freemasons

Sir Jules Thorn Charitable Trust

Specsavers Leominster

Weekend Fund (Lottery) National Lottery

William A Cadbury Trust

Legacy and Fundraising

In 2022 Janet Smart sadly passed away. She was a great supporter of the arts and had strong links with both the About Face Theatre Company and Clever Betsy. We will miss the joy and support that she showed to our participants and projects. Janet had a love of the arts throughout her life, including her time as a model, as can be seen from the glamorous picture here. That enthusiasm stayed with her until the end.

Janet very kindly left ECHO a significant amount of money in her Will, which has helped us through a tough year and allowed us to plan for the future.



Janet Smart

Compared with many charities ECHO receives very little in legacy gifts. Those who do leave us a gift are very special to us. A gift of any size in your Will can make a real difference today and into the future.

If you would like to find out more about how you could support ECHO through a gift in memoriam or through a provision in your Will, please contact Penny Weir on 01568 620 307 or penny.weir@echoherefordshire.co.uk

33 for 33

All the Threes



ECHO turned 33 years old this year and a number of people took up the challenge to fundraise for us, based on this milestone.

Nick Baker went international and cycled 3 x 33 1/3 miles in Greece, Spain, and in the UK with his son Louis on their tandem, with volunteer Chris Blum. They raised over £800!



Peter Beresford and his partner Kirsty decided to go by foot and ran 3 Kilometres 33 times for ECHO, raising over £200!

About Face also embraced our All the Threes challenge by performing 33 songs and raising over £1000 to support ECHO. Amazing!

What brilliant support and effort from everyone involved.

We are thinking about a challenge for next year– so think about what you might do to support us!

Staff

Senior Team

Mike Cook
Angela Ayliffe
Nic Bullock
Rob Simpkin (left)

About Face

Jess Mackenzie
Nick Baker
Martha Palmer-Fosberry
Kate Green
Cheryl Hewitt
Jenna Measday (left)
Juliet Stroucken

Clever Betsy

Rebecca Tabram
Liz Evans
Lyndsay Maples
Terri Wilson (left)

Eaton Barn

Cath Warren
Sue Palliser
Joyce Parr

Leisure and Social

Letty Flynn
Lucy Tisdale

LifeLinks

Claire Tolley
Jean Singleton
Juliette Stephenson (left)
Elaine Willis

Radio ECHO

Nick Baker

Relief Team

Lucy Tisdale
Susan Clarke
Simon Formby
Kim Greig
John Newman
Irene Novadnieks
Eileen Quinn
Alison Rushgrove
Mark Wakeman

Rose Tinted Rags

Karen Meiklejohn
Tina Walton

Storytelling

Denise Kerwood

Studio Mirai

Nic Bullock
Chris Jones
Dave Bordeway
Sue Parkinson

The Priory Centre

Tracy Morris
Gill Burchell
Gemma Chandler
Kate Green
Kim Greig
Mary Hughes
Eileen Quinn
Terri Wilson (left)

Volunteering

Roz Johnson

Weaving

Maggie Percy

Support Team

Nick Baker
Kay Beeden
Jody Gorle
Jenny Holtom (left)
Claire Mee
Louise Millard
Jodie Thompson
Claire Tolley
Penny Weir

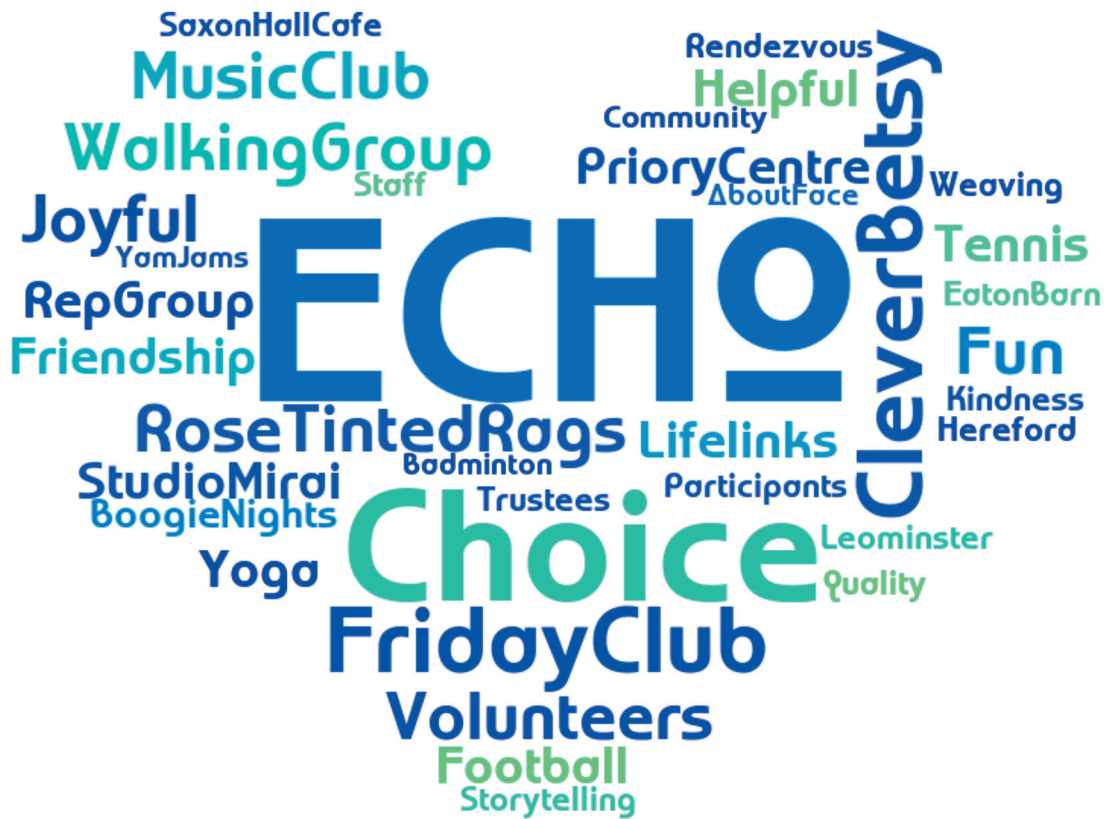


Everyone at ECHO was deeply saddened to hear that Ian Waterfield passed away this year after a short illness. He was a popular and dedicated member of staff at The Priory Centre and will be missed by many. Our sincerest wishes go to his family from all at ECHO.

Volunteers

ECHO couldn't do the quality of work it does without the kind support of our volunteers. Thank you!

Alex Preece	Florence Singleton	Layla Lewis	Rhys Ellis
Alison Jones	Francesca Panter	Levi Robinson	Richard Crook
Allan Davies	Gavin Levett	Lexi Rock	Richard Hyde Smith
Angela Jauncey	Gemma Chandler	Lexi Ward	Richard Pollard
Ann Tether	George Day	Lindsey Evans	Richard Smith
Anne Bellamy	Grace Swift	Louisa Gloag	Richard Williams
Anne Grace	Hanna Woodall	Louise Ingram	Rob Knight
Barbara Dowse	Hannah Bull	Maggie Percy	Rob Lyon
Bella Hesbrook	Heather Hughes	Maggie Qiu	Robbyn McWright
Bernice Townson	Hily Clarke	Mand Hamblin	Ruth Elphick
Bethan Carter	Ian Banks	Marianne Simpson	Sara Lewis
Bethany Smith	Irene Novadnieks	Mark Palliser	Sarah Hefferman
Bev Davies	James Doran	Mark Thomas	Sarah Jenkins
Blaise White	James Howard	Mark Wakeman	Shamira Skidmore
Brenda Hazel	James Tolley	Marleen de	Simon Formby
Caitlin Watters	Jane Langridge	Kluzenaar	Simon Harris
Calvin Jacks	Janet Arrowsmith	Marley Mantle	Stefan Edmead
Carl Stuchbery	Janet Smith	Martin Rushgrove	Steph Baines
Carol Cross	Jason Stuchbery	Matt Jones	Steph Hooper
Carole Millin	Jean Singleton	Maureen Morton	Stephen Millward
Caroline Arthur	Jeanette Reid	Melanie Towler	Stephen Turner
Caroline Wood	Jeanette Washington	Melvyn Gardner	Steven Manning
Cheryl Hewitt	Jenna Measday	Michelle Tilbury	Stewart Mayers
Cheryl Howes	Jenny Bartlett	Monica Gillespie	Su Pollard
Chris Blum	Jeremy Grey	Nate Bayliss	Sue Blake
Chris Clements	Jess Carter	Nicholas Haines	Sue Hall
Claire Scott	Jez Friswell	Nick Baker	Sue Jones
Clare Cathcart	Jill McLellan	Nick Burt	Sue Lindsay
Dan Wall	Jill Strawbridge	Nick Clarke	Sue Palliser
Darren Morgan	John Bradford	Nicola Harwood	Sue Robbins
David Cross	John Stuchbery	Nina Lutterer	Sue Thomas
David Robbins	Jon Hampson	Ol Davies	Summer Blyth
Debbie Bailey	Jonathan Forsyth	Ollie Wood	Susan Harvey
Debbie Baker	Jonathan Howe	Owen Cowden	Susie Bishop
Dee Gregory	Joy House	Paul Weir	Tim White
Della Ellison-Smith	Judith Haines	Pete MacKenzie	Toke Morell
Deryn Welch	Karen Cheasley	Pete Turner	Vicki Davies
Edmund Proctor	Kathryn Smith	Phil Birch	Viv Melia
Elaine Downs	Kay Walton	Phil Brown	Wendy Pridie
Elaine Willis	Kayleigh Carter	Phoebe Morgan	Will May
Ellie Roberts	Kevin Stuchbery	Pip Westwood	Winfried Plappert
Ellie Usher	Kim Grieg	Rachel Exelby	Yvonne Mifflin
Emma Tustin	Lama Choesang	Rebecca Antink	



ECHO is not just an organisation, we are a community who work together to support people with disabilities in Herefordshire to develop and grow.

We strongly believe everyone can achieve with the right support.

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 Leominster,
 Herefordshire,
 HR6 8ES

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www.echoherefordshire.org.uk
 Charity No: 1096449 Company No: 4475254



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