



Annual Review 2022



WELCOME



CAROLINE ARTHUR



MAND HAMBLIN

As we write this, we are really looking forward to the first 'proper' ECHO AGM since 2019, with participants, staff and volunteers getting together for a party to look back on our year and celebrate our community. Not many charities have an AGM that is as much fun as ours!

The last two years have of course been very difficult for everyone. We are particularly proud of all the ECHO staff for their huge efforts in keeping imaginative, enjoyable, high-quality activities running in some very difficult circumstances. Not forgetting the volunteers who give up their time to help our participants get the most out of every day. Although we've been sad to see some much-loved staff members head off for pastures new, we are delighted to welcome several new recruits. We think it says a lot for the organisation that many of our staff start off as volunteers or relief staff and like it here so much that they apply for a permanent job.

As we've come out of the pandemic, we've started to see fundraising events taking off – literally in the case of Mike's skydive! He was possibly outdone, though, by the five participants who took part in an indoor skydive later in the year. There have been some great community events, such as the Leominster Colour Run, and we're excited to see what the fundraising team come up with for next year.

Building community is one of ECHO's core objectives, and one we're going to work really hard at in 2023. At the heart of our community are our participants, and we'd like to thank them for making it all worthwhile.

Chair of Trustees



Vice Chair

Chief Officers View

I can't believe that I have been with ECHO now for four years— time has flown by. After 2 years of COVID it has been great to see so many projects beginning to grow and develop again. Everyone has so many creative ideas and it is our job to help develop them and where possible make them a reality.

Money continues to be a big issue and although we have worked hard, we have not made as much as we hoped to. Good news is that we have the reserves to cover this while we make plans about what to do. Cost of living rises have meant big increases in pressure on everyone's finances and this is likely to continue for a while yet. ECHO will keep this in mind with any decisions we make.

We are currently working on our next three year plan, which will help guide the organisation to 2026. I look forward to hearing your thoughts on this and sharing our ideas of what ECHO might be like as we develop them.

As always, I can't talk about the year without thanking all of our staff, volunteers and supporters who help to make ECHO the wonderful place it is. We couldn't do it without you.

Thank you



Mike Cook

MIKE COOK

Chief Officer

What ECHO believes in

OUR VISION

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

OUR MISSION

We want to make a positive difference to the lives of people with disabilities in Herefordshire, supporting them to both feel and be valued members of the community.

OUR VALUES

In all our work, ECHO believes that people need:

- To be recognised and treated as individuals
- To be valued in their local community
- To have friendships and relationships
- To have meaningful choices which enhance quality of life
- To have expectations of achievement
- To have the opportunity to be heard on issues that affect their lives
- To have support from good quality trained staff
- To take an active part in planning and decisions that affect their lives



CHOICE: To support our participants to be happy & healthy with a variety of stimulating choices

SUPPORT: To give the right support and encouragement to build confidence and teach skills that enrich our participants' lives

COMMUNITY: To support people to have a good social life, to help them keep in touch with friends and get involved in the community

INVOLVEMENT: To give the time, respect and support needed for our participants to be involved in the planning, decision making and the running of ECHO

QUALITY: To provide high quality services that are integrated, visible and have value to the community

COLLABORATION: To build connections with other organisations and support our participants to join their activities, giving them more opportunities



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 the beginning of a new and exciting project to add to the variety that we already do. Radio ECHO is a weekly radio show that goes out every Tuesday at 1.30pm– but don't worry if you miss it as previous episodes can be found online. Participants learn how to put together a radio show and have the opportunity to be live DJs and read the news! Radio ECHO began as a project idea, based around the interests of a participant. We thought it was a good one and so secured some funding from Connexus for a 6 month trial. The trial was so successful that it has now become a full ECHO project.



Another key way we offer choice is that we run Social and Leisure activities as well as our days services. Social and Leisure activities are very flexible and affordable, meaning that participants can easily attend them around other things they do in the week. They are a great way of bringing people together to keep fit, socialise and have fun. We are also still running a number of online activities which means that people don't even have to travel to take part– if you can't come to ECHO then we will come to you!

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

This year they have investigated the Trojan wars and the complicated plot of Shakespeare's 12th Night. Not content with that they also took trips (with their imagination) to Blackpool and Venice!

Each session ends with an hour of singing, using song books, from which everyone in turn chooses a song. It's a great way of lifting the energy level after lunch and ensures all are involved, either in the singing, choosing or distribution and collection of song sheets.





Support

As ever, we could not provide the great quality projects we do without the support of our wonderful staff and volunteers.



From June we enter into the last year of our current lottery funded Inclusive Volunteering project. This project continues to help us support the 124 active volunteers we have and allows us to keep recruiting new ones. Volunteer support allows ECHO to deliver bigger and better activities than if we just did it with staff alone.



Volunteering isn't just about people supporting our participants. It is also about helping our participants and those with additional needs to develop the skills and confidence to volunteer themselves, either within ECHO or with other organisations.. At the moment we have 69 volunteers with additional support needs who are volunteering and having the opportunities to share their skills and experience with others



ECHO is very proud of the excellent and dedicated staff team that we have. There have been more staff changes this year than we have seen for a while and we wish all those moving on to new opportunities the best of luck. Although staff moving on can be sad, it is also an opportunity to recruit new members into the team. New staff will bring new ideas and enthusiasm to the projects and help ECHO to keep developing. We are also really pleased that many staff who join us permanently originally start as either volunteers or on the relief team– then want to join us permanently when the opportunity arises





Community

Eaton Barn has been developing its community involvement even further this year. They hosted a 'Save the Lugg' open day as part of Jackie Morris' Lugg Project. The sun shone and lots of people attended including the Mayor of Leominster, Trish Marsh. We ran a pop up café, hosted the Jenny Pipes Morris dancers and it was an excellent event with participants from other projects attending and socialising with each other and the public. Stoke Prior W.I had a 'walk and talk' and pressed flower craft session at Eaton Barn utilising the beautiful surroundings to inspire and learn a new skill.



The level of community support can be seen by the kind donations of 14 chickens, a grant for a new Greenhouse from the Freemasons and ongoing support from Haygrove with our polytunnels.



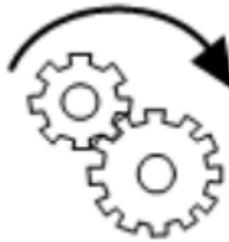
Lifelinks continue to work in the Herefordshire communities where they are based. Over the summer the group went on more trips out and came up with lots of good ideas for places to visit. The group also started to work on the outdoor area to make it nice for us to enjoy a coffee in the sun and as a group planned how they would like it to look. Wednesday Life Links enjoyed lots of different activities ranging from flower arranging to origami to experimenting with dot painting.

Working with the Herefordshire Community Recycling And Reuse Group, Lifelinks became the first out of town drop off point for donations of unwanted goods. Lifelinks as a local drop off helps to reduce journeys into the city centre and enable more people to access the service. The group had great fun sorting through the donations and seeing what treasures were inside!

In the first part of the year the Priory worked hard on making items for the Leominster in Bloom project. The theme for this year was 'A Country Lane' and saw the creation of a scarecrow, birds, wildlife, paintings and 3D models. This work went on display in The Butter cross Arcade.

They continued with sign along sessions on a weekly basis and other methods of communication, also encouraged inter participant conversation. Dancing, exercise and healthy eating have also been a focus and they are planning to include more movement and exercise into our working day.





Involvement

Involving our participants in making decisions is what helps to make ECHO special.

We are really pleased that we continue to have a strong group of participant Trustees who help to guide the organisation with other board members. The experience that they bring to the board is really important in helping make sure that ECHO continues to meet the needs of its members. Trustee support meets every week to help our participant Trustees carry out their roles on the board.



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 helped Leominster Town

Council with their consultation on the Grange resulting in accessible benches being agreed and talking with them about the surfacing of Aida's accessible amble. They also responded to the Leominster consortium questionnaire about improvements to Leominster and what will happen to Corn Square. The Group also sent a range of questions to Herefordshire Council about areas they were concerned about like finances, transport, social care, benefits, education and work opportunities.



Participants are also really important in all of our recruitment. As well as a staff panel, we also arrange a participant panel to interview for new staff. Both panels are separate of each other and design their own questions, focusing on what they think are important for the job. When we mark the interviewees, both panels' scores are treated the same and have the same importance meaning we get a balanced decision.

This system has worked really well for ECHO, most of the time the staff and participants agree on who to employ. However, if either group isn't happy to recruit someone, then we won't choose them. This is why ECHO has such a highly skilled and passionate staff team



Quality

ECHO prides itself on the quality of the projects we run and the items that our participants produce

Studio Mirai continues to develop as a project and has kept up the high quality work it is renowned

for. As part of National Learning Disability Week, staff, volunteers and participants

were in attendance to meet the forty visitors who responded to the online invitations. The quality of the project has also

been seen in the great response participants have when they

visit or have a taster day– most are inspired and want to join the activity when they can.

Plans are also being made about how Studio Mirai might expand in the future, to offer opportunities to even more people.



Weaving can be done on many scales and the ECHO weaving group seem able to master all of them! From book marks and key rings to bags and rugs every piece they complete looks professional. This year they also created a giant Leominsater Knot as part of the Leominster festival.



Clever Betsy have been making the most out of the space they have in their building to create all sorts of brilliant crafts this year. One of the great things about this group is that they are always trying something new, but whatever they make it is always of really high quality. This year has seen the creation of tie die bags, animal prints, cushions, cards, gnomes.



The group also helped to create a variety of creatures and items for the Leominster in Bloom display. This was a joint project with other ECHO projects such as the Priory and helped to make a stunning display in Buttercross arcade.





Collaboration

A grant from Arts Council England has enabled About Face Theatre Company to work with a variety of other artists and experts to help improve the skills and knowledge of participants, staff and volunteers. All the groups did wonderful dance workshops with Rachel Freeman and Tai Chi classes with Enid Gill. As a result, they are incorporating lots more movement into their work and start each day with a dance. The project is designed to help give everyone a boost after COVID to improve their skills and help take About Face to the next level.



Working with Aspire we have been able to introduce Yam Jams back into Hereford. It is great to see this project back in action after it was stopped by COVID. Working in partnership means that we can share costs and reach a wider audience than if we just did it ourselves.

We have also continued our relationship with HSBC who have been supporting the development of the ECHO shop. Earlier this year we re-launched the shop and those who came have been impressed with the new look and other developments such as becoming a Talk Community Hub.

2022 has also seen us developing a partnership with the solicitors Irwin Mitchell. They have been extremely helpful with advice, sponsorship and we are developing a series of workshops with the for carers and families in 2023.

Rose Tinted Rags, ECHO's partnership project with Green Eyed monster continued to explore how art and textiles can combine to inspire. The group did some playful work looking at the artist Lothar Gotz, thinking of coloured backgrounds and how they change by interacting and making body shapes in front of them.

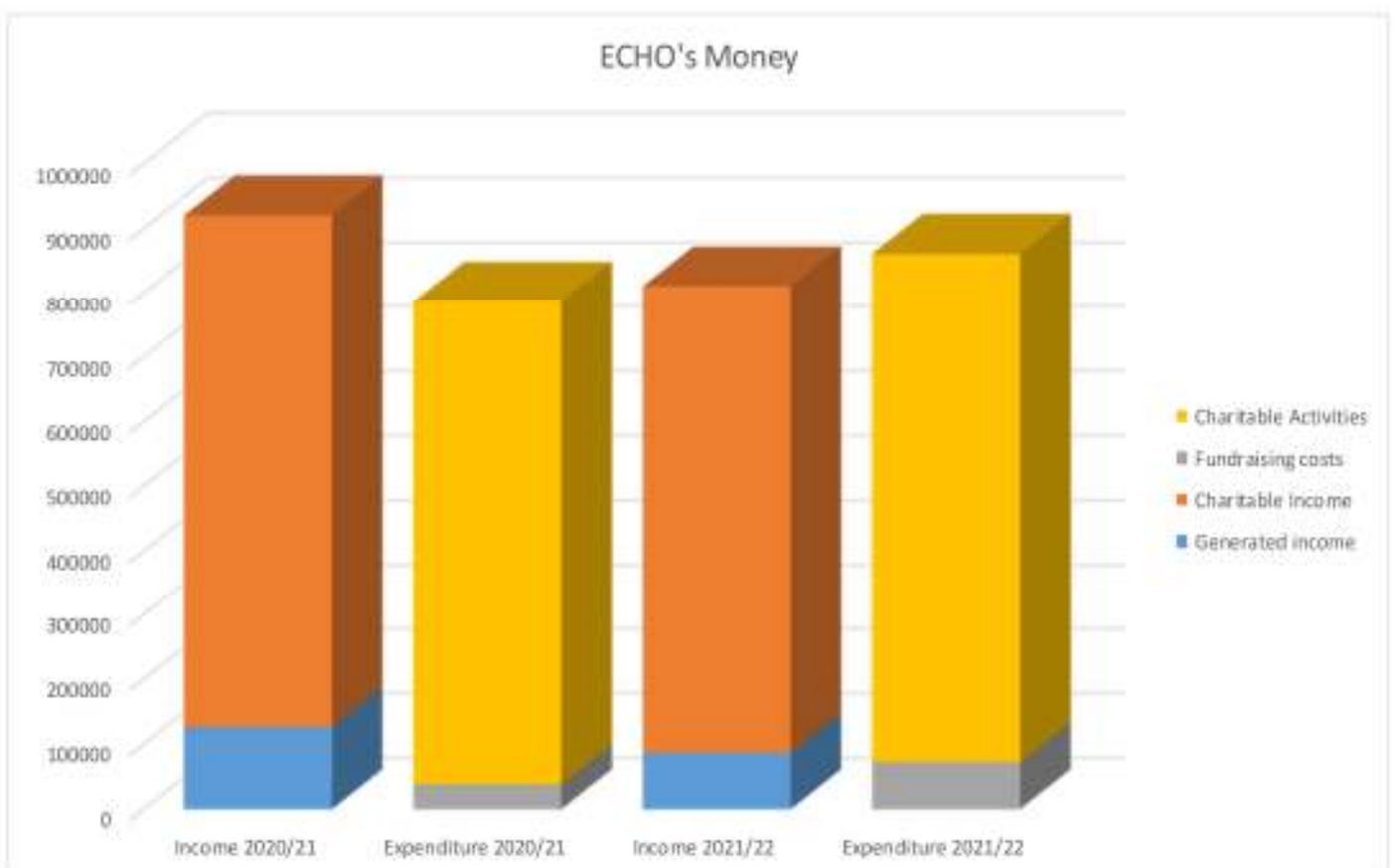


ECHO'S MONEY

During the financial year, from April 2021 to March 2022, ECHO managed its finances very carefully through great uncertainty. As we expected, the impacts of COVID were still being felt, but a lot of the financial support that was put in stopped. This meant it was a hard year for ECHO.

Though we carefully managed our money, ECHO ended the year with less than we did last year with £285,433. This is called our reserves.

Our target level of reserves is £294,446. This is the amount needed to meet 6 months' core salaries and running costs. Reserves are there to help the organisation weather financial hardships and this is why we used it this year.



STAFF

Senior Team

Mike Cook

Angela Ayliffe

Cath Baker (left)

Rob Simpkin

About Face

Jess Mackenzie

Nick Baker

Letty Flynn

Cheryl Hewitt

Juliet Strouken

Clever Betsy

Rebecca Tabram

Liz Evans

Lyndsay Maples

Terri Wilson

Cookery Club

Jacqueline Stewart (left)

Eaton Barn

Cath Warren

Gemma Chandler

Sue Palliser

Sarah Powell (left)

Bev Waterfield (left)

Leisure and Social

Nick Baker

Letty Flynn

Lucy Tisdale

Lifelinks

Claire Tolley

Jean Singleton

Juliette Stephenson

Radio Echo

Nick Baker

Relief Team

Lucy Tisdale

Kim Greig

Terri Miles

Irene Novadnieks

Eileen Quinn

Gina Towle

Studio Mirai

Nic Bullock

Dave Bordeway

Sue Parkinson

Storytelling

Denise Kerwood

Support Team

Mary-Jane Bayliss (left)

Kay Beeden

Jody Gorle

Jenny Holtom

Laura Marsh (left)

Claire Mee

Louise Millard

Penny Weir

The Priors

Tracy Morris

Amber Davies (left)

Gemma Chandler

Kelly Holland (left)

Mary Hughes

Ian Waterfield (left)

Terri Wilson

Volunteering

Roz Johnson

Denise Kerwood

Weaving

Maggie Percy

VOLUNTEERS

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

Aeowyn Johnson	Elaine Downs	Lama Choesang	Richard Pollard
Alex Preece	Elaine Willis	Lexi Ward	Richard Williams
Alison Jones	Emma Tustin	Liam Kemble-Young	Rob Lyon
Ann Tether	Florence Singleton	Lindsey Evans	Richard Smith
Andy Luff	Francesca Panter	Louisa Gloag	Robbyn McWright
Angela Jauncey	Gemma Chandler	Louise Ingram	Rose Hunt
Anne Bellamy	George Day	Maggie Qiu	Sarah Hefferman
Barbara Dowse	Gina Towle	Mand Hamblin	Sara Lewis
Bella Hesbrook	Godfrey Moss	Marianne Simpson	Sarah Jenkins
Bernie Warburton	Heather Hughes	Mark Wakeman	Simon Formby
Bethany Smith	Ian Banks	Maggie Percy	Simon Harris
Bev Davies	Ian Warburton	Mark Thomas	Steph Baines
Blaise White	Irene Novadnieks	Marleen de Kluizenaar	Steph Hooper
Caitlin Watters	James Doran	Marley Mantle	Stephen Millward
Carl Stuchbery	Jane Langridge	Martyn Upshaw	Stephen Turner
Caroline Arthur	Janet Arrowsmith	Matt Jones	Steven Manning
Caroline Wood	Janet Smith	Maureen Morton	Stewart Mayers
Calvin Jacks	Jason Stuchbery	Melanie Towler	Sue Hall
Ceri Morgan	Jean Singleton	Melvyn Gardner	Sue Jones
Cathy Howard	Jeanette Reid	Michelle Tilbury	Sue Lindsay
Carol Cross	Jeanette Washington	Nate Bayliss	Sue Palliser
Cheryl Hewitt	Jenna Measday	Nick Baker	Sue Robbins
Cheryl Howes	Jez Friswell	Nick Burt	Summer Blyth
Chris Blum	Jeremy Grey	Nicholas Haines	Susan Harvey
Claire Scott	Jill McLellan	Nicola Harwood	Su Pollard
Colette Sinclair	Jill Strawbridge	Nina Lutterer	Susie Bishop
Dan Wall	John Bradford	Owen Cowden	Sue Thomas
Darren Morgan	John Stuchbery	OI Davies	Sue Blake
David Cross	Jonathan Forsyth	Ollie Wood	Tim White
David Hughes	Jonathan Howe	Paul Weir	Vicki Davies
David Robbins	Joy House	Pete Turner	Viv Melia
Debbie Bailey	Karen Cheasley	Pete MacKenzie	Will May
Dee Gregory	Katherine Green	Phil Brown	Yvonne Mifflin
Della Ellison-Smith	Kathryn Smith	Pip Westwood	
Greg Howard	Kayleigh Carter	Rachel Exelby	
Debbie Harris	Kevin Stuchbery	Rhys Ellis	
Deryn Welch	Kim Grieg	Richard Crook	
Edmund Proctor	Kia Horner	Richard Hyde Smith	

FUNDERS

Arts Council England
Baily Thomas Charitable Fund
Big Lottery Fund
Boshier Hinton Foundation
Community Climate and Nature Grant
Connexus Community Investment Fund
Croft Trust
D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust
E F Bulmer Trust
Edward Gostling Foundation
Elmley Small Grants Arts Fund
Eveson Charitable Trust
Gail Harrison and Lloyds Bank
Good Things Foundation
Halo Leisure
Haygrove
Herefordshire Community Foundation -
Hereford and Worcester Chamber of
High Sheriff Fund
HSBC
Irwin Mitchell
Karen Gwynne
Lee Foundation
Leominster Rotary
National Lottery
Point to Point Services
Postcode Local Trust
Rotary Club of Leomin-
Rowlands Trust
Royal Edward Masonic
Lodge
Screwfix
Sir Jules Thorn Charita-
Ready Set Go
Richard Vernon
Rosie Harris and her
daughter
Specsavers Leominster
Sport England
SMS Connections
Tackling Inequalities
Talk Community

FUNDRAISING

What a year it has been for people undertaking challenges to raise money for ECHO! Mike Cook our Chief Officer took to the skies and jumped out of a an aeroplane. Inspired by this 5 of our participants, Bev, Jason, Jody, Lindsey and Mand bravely undertook an indoor skydive, flying inside a giant wind tunnel!

On the ground Simon, Richard and Jason undertook a bike ride from Leominster to Kington and back! Accompanied by Maggie and Blaise the trio made the trip in record time only briefly stopping off for lunch at the pub!

Someone who didn't stop at the pub was Karen, the first person to run the London Marathon on behalf of ECHO! Karen cuts the hair of one of our participant trustees and that inspired her to support us.

If you would like to undertake a challenge for ECHO in 2023, contact Penny at the office!

This year also saw ECHO undertake two bigger fundraising events to help raise our profile. In the summer we organised Colourfest– a fun run with paint literally thrown in! It was a great event and there were lots of people there who didn't know about us before. It was so successful we hope to repeat it next year.

In Autumn the hottest event in Leominster was definitely our fire walk! About 30 people built up their confidence to walk across hot charcoal. It is a real achievement and helps to show what can be achieved if you believe in yourself

There are many ways you can support ECHO. We are grateful for any donations that we receive, whether one off or a regular contribution. Every little helps to support our services and keep ECHO going.

Some people decide to leave a lasting legacy to charities that have supported them or those that they love, by adding a gift within their wills. If this is something you would like to consider for ECHO, please contact us at the office.

