



# Grace Eyre Impact Report 2020-2021





## Who we are and what we do

The Grace Eyre Foundation works with people with learning disabilities and/or autism to make our communities stronger and more equal. Together, we're elevating expectations so everyone can feel included, respected and valued.

Grace Eyre supports and campaigns with people who have learning disabilities and/or autism, for more independent lives and inclusive communities. We've been listening to and learning from the people we support for over 120 years.

## Our year in numbers



## Chair's Introduction - Liv Corbishley

Starting as a new Chair during the COVID-19 pandemic has been a very different experience than you would expect in normal times, however such a passionate organisation draws you in very quickly. As a Board, we have come together virtually and have stayed focused on the strategy the charity has in place, along with our vision and mission, not an easy task against the backdrop. This has only been made possible by the talent and expertise within the Executive Team and staff in responding professionally to the ongoing impact of the pandemic.

We have seen so much progress at Grace Eyre in the past 12 months, the highlights for me have been the success of online activities, improvements internally to finance and the return of services as soon as it's been possible. It is truly wonderful to see people returning to Montefiore Road again. The thread of Our Charter is visible at every level of the organisation, and I look forward to seeing additional progress internally with more roles taken up by the people we serve. I know I speak for all the Trustees when I say we cannot wait for the next stages of the building project to refurbish Montefiore Road.

I am very proud to be a part of Grace Eyre along with my Board colleagues, who represent a diverse range of skills to ensure we are a critical friend, supporter and advisor to the charity and the work it delivers. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who is involved with the charity. Grace Eyre is all about the people; therefore, this Impact Report is a wonderful reminder of what that really means.

## Chief Executive's Introduction - Eva Eriksson

Over the past year, we have continued to deliver 85% of all our services to over 600 people with learning disabilities and/or autism across Brighton & Hove, West Sussex and parts of London.

Our staff have stepped up far beyond expectations and have continued to provide quality services in very difficult circumstances. There has been some outstanding work done during this period in trying to ensure people with learning disabilities and/or autism can maintain social contact and to minimise loneliness. The use of technology has enabled projects, such as, Grace Eyre Friendship and Sharing Our Voices, as well as outreach services and day activities, to deliver activities, events and support online.

Our stakeholders have played important collaborative and supportive roles in providing PPE and guidance and financially the charity has continued to make improvements to our financial management. Our fundraising and marketing strategy almost achieved its targets benefitting particularly from COVID-related grants available during this period.

# Our Voices

Our Voices is Grace Eyre's team of Ambassadors. They talk to people from across our services to find out what they think. They share ideas and concerns that are discussed so we are always working on what is important.

34  
Ambassador  
meetings

91  
internal  
meetings

18  
external  
meetings

In addition to this, they supported over 26 outside organisations, including Learning Disability Voices Network, Department of Work and Pensions, Brighton & Hove City Council, Regional Stakeholder Network, Stay Up Late and Sky News.

The **Purple Clubhouse**, a monthly in-person club night run by Our Voices featuring DJs and dancing was moved online. 7 virtual club nights were streamed with 621 views - an average of 88 per club. The Clubhouse reached a wider audience with people tuning in from Brighton, London, Stratford and Harwich!

During the year, Our Voices supported the following campaigns:

- Learning Disability England's campaign for more accessible information about COVID-19
- Advocating for people with learning disabilities to be included in priority vaccination groups
- NHS support for people with learning disabilities and COVID-19.

They also helped conduct a piece of research in partnership with Brighton & Hove Speak Out and the NHS. It was to find out what people with learning disabilities experiences with healthcare have been throughout the pandemic. The team worked with the marketing department to send out a survey across Sussex and had 99 responses.



"Being an Ambassador has given me more life and getting to meet more people and to know more people on Zoom. It's been nice meeting each week and sharing the chairing of the meeting."  
- Carinder, Ambassador





## Vision, mission and focus of our work

**Grace Eyre's vision** is for a society where people with learning disabilities and/or autism are respected as equal citizens, are part of and contribute to their communities and where people can fulfil their dreams and wishes.

**Grace Eyre's mission** is to deliver Our Charter created by people with learning disabilities and/or autism who want: to be listened to; have access to housing; be part of their community; have strong and supported relationships; have jobs; travel around; try new things; and to be healthy.

We will achieve our vision and mission by:

- Supporting people to live in their homes and do things in their communities
- Working with people to have a home of their own where they are in control
- Operating our Shared Lives service where people share a home with paid carers
- Organising activities that people can do during the day
- Delivering support functions and employing people with learning disabilities.

**Our strategy** is to build a growing, financially strong and high-quality organisation that listens to and is led by people with learning disabilities and/or autism. Our services will focus on working with people, having enough money, delivering our plans and learning & development.

## Our achievements

Over the last year, these outcomes were reported by people who use our services: I feel listened to by the people in my life; I have access to housing and am able to make choices about where I live and who I live with; the support I receive has increased my independence; I have improved my well-being; I feel part of my community; I am supported to have relationships I want and need.

**Our Charter** created by people with learning disabilities and/or autism informs every aspect of our work:

## We want to be listened to:

Our Voices provides an **Easy Read Drop-in Group** where people can get help to make information more accessible. The group developed two stamps that can be applied to easy read information that has come through the Easy Read Drop-in Group. These stamps of approval are a new and easy way of seeing that information has been approved, or co-created, by people with lived experience.

Fran, one of the Ambassadors, said: "People can see the stamp. It's easier to understand."

The first recipient of our "Approved by people with learning disabilities and/or autism" stamp was a local organisation called Digital Brighton and Hove. The Ambassadors helped Digital Brighton and Hove improve the accessibility of their tablet loan scheme form.

Katie Knight, Project Coordinator at Digital Brighton & Hove said: **"It was a really easy process. I got great feedback from the Ambassadors and have recommended them to other people wanting to create easy read documents. It's great to have experts by experience that I can ask for advice."**







**372** members  
supported by  
Grace Eyre  
Friendship  
Group

## We want to be part of the community:

### Louisa's story

Grace Eyre Friendship's activity sessions on Zoom have been an absolute lifeline for the Jones family, according to mum Joanna Jones.

Joanna's 24 year-old daughter, Louisa, has severe learning disabilities and needs one-to-one care throughout the day. Since before Christmas, Louisa has been at home as all day centres, clubs and carers have been cancelled due to the risk of COVID-19. Joanna's husband and other daughters all work, so Joanna and Louisa are together all day, every day.

When Louisa is sat in front of the various Grace Eyre Friendship Zoom meetings, she is mesmerised by everyone's faces, listening to the chat and music and joining in in her own way (she is non verbal).

**"[During these times] I actually get a break, or manage to get jobs done around the house. She has learnt how to do a 'thumbs up' because of all these Zooms! The yoga sessions, gardening chats and disco nights are all compelling and entertaining. The only problem now is that Louisa sits in front of the computer as soon as she wakes up, expecting everyone to be there on demand!" - Joanna, Louisa's mum**

**The Friendship Group** provides a safe environment to meet new people, try new things and build your confidence.

# We want strong and supported relationships:

## Charlie's story in his own words

"I came to Grace Eyre last August and it has been a good experience for me. Over the past year the pandemic has made life very different. At first I found the lockdown hard and the changes a bit difficult because it was hard to go out and do the things that I was used to doing. I then realised there were new possible ways of doing things.

My support workers supported me to put a place in my diary for the important things that I love, like my song-writing and practising my guitar. This really helped a lot. This reminded me of the things I wanted to do and helped me stick to my goals. I also started to have my guitar lessons online from home which has been great.

I feel that I have managed to push through all the challenges and have had great success this year. I am loving playing the guitar and following my dream of setting up a band and busking in Brighton one day."

Our **Choices** service offers supported living and community outreach, providing unique support for each person's needs so they can really enjoy living independently.

**172**  
people  
supported by  
Choices





## We want good housing:

### Chloe's story

In April 2020, Chloe and her son moved into their first own home. Previously Chloe's housing background had been unsuitable and unstable.

After a few weeks in their home, both mother and child settled in very well. With regular support from her Grace Eyre Housing Officer and Choices Community Support Worker, mum and son are making great progress.

**"I feel very happy and grateful for my new home, we have settled in really well. I have my independence now and I feel safe. I have met my new neighbours and they have been very welcoming. I have found Grace Eyre Housing really helpful and I know that I have somebody there if I need further help with my home." - Chloe**

Grace Eyre Housing supports 116 people including three mothers and their babies.



## We want to try new things:

### Sarah's story

Sarah was previously homeless then lived in sheltered housing before joining our Shared Lives scheme. She had never made herself a meal before. Last year, with the guidance of her Shared Lives carer, she went to the shop, bought all the ingredients she needed to make a lasagne and prepared the meal for the people she lives with. They all said it was delicious! Sarah has come a long way since living with her Shared Lives carers.

Our **Shared Lives scheme** supports 113 people with learning disabilities and/or autism to live an independent life within their community.

They have been matched with paid carers who share their homes and give them the individual support they need.

**113**  
people living  
with Shared  
Lives carers



# We want jobs:

## Nathaniel's story

Nathaniel was referred to the Work Buddy Project by the Prince's Trust. He has a master's degree in Globalisation, Politics, Conflict and Human Rights. His autism and severe anxiety created a barrier to maintaining employment.

Nathaniel said: "My ability to relax in a work environment has increased to the point I feel comfortable, natural and feel excited about work. I wanted to gain training in the role of reception and training within an organisation which would care about their employees as much as their clients. Before [the training] I literally had no idea what a cover letter was. The mock interview practice was very valuable, this was helpful for boosting confidence. I have achieved my goals and built up a level of experience in terms of searching and applying for jobs in the future and understanding duties of a reception role. I have developed organisational skills, communication skills and confidence in a working environment."

**"It has improved my mental health. I know I have the skills and abilities to progress in my life." - Nathaniel**

Our **Employment Project** aims to increase the employment rate among people with learning disabilities and/or autism. We want to enable people to live as independently as possible and to enjoy their chosen lifestyles, supporting integration in the local community and in the world of work.

**9 people  
supported by  
Work Buddy  
Project**





# We want to be healthy:

## Walk and talk

Working within government guidelines, the well-being Walk and Talk in Grace Eyre Housing promotes healthy minds and healthy bodies.

Eleanor Button, a Grace Eyre Housing tenant, said:  
"Living by yourself can be isolating and lonely, and as home visits by support staff have become restricted this can increase levels of anxiety."

One way of improving mental health and physical well-being is taking a walk, which Eleanor did with Patrusha Dey, Grace Eyre Housing Officer. They kept to social distancing guidelines but enjoyed a stroll around St. Ann's Wells Gardens in Hove.

**"The Walk and Talk is a great way of keeping in touch with our tenants and supporting them to stay well in their home."  
- Patrusha, Housing Officer**

**Grace Eyre Housing** supports individuals, couples and friendship groups, matching people with quality accommodation that meets their needs.

**116 people  
live in  
Grace Eyre  
Housing**





## We want to travel around:

### Anya's story

Anya was referred to our Travel Buddy project in October 2020. She was about to begin a work placement and wanted to be an independent traveller before she started. Anya was already confident at crossing the quiet roads around her home and very quickly became confident at the busier roads around her place of work. She learnt the bus route with the help of flash cards for the stops and by recognising the landmarks she passed on the journey.

One time, Anya got on the bus going in the wrong direction when going home. Instead of this denting her confidence, however, Travel Buddy put problem-solving into action. They supported Anya to ask the bus driver if they were going to her stop. This experience gave her the confidence to be resilient and continue.

**"I really enjoyed the travel training and my travel buddy was really supportive and good to talk to. When I learnt the journey I felt really independent. It was the first time I used the bus by myself. It was a good thing to do and I would recommend it." - Anya**

**"I can't recommend the travel training scheme enough. My daughter's confidence in using the bus has grown week by week and we are so proud that she can now make her journey by herself. It is not something that we envisaged her being able to do six months ago. My daughter's travel training buddy was fantastic. She had loads of tips and strategies that would not have occurred to us." - Marie, Anya's mum**



People's attitude towards travelling on public transport changed dramatically under COVID restrictions. The Travel Buddy team came up with a plan to tackle the fear of COVID-19 and independent travel. They devised a series of workshops to inform attendees on how to stay safe in the community and on public transport. These workshops were booked up quickly and were very well received. Independent travel enriches the lives of both the learning disability community as well as all communities across the city.

**Travel Buddy project** can work with you and help you gain the confidence to travel around your local community.

**11 people**  
supported by  
Travel Buddy  
Project



## It's all about the people

Learning & development continued during the lockdowns, with most staff working from home. Two large training & development initiatives were started; REACH standards for supported living was rolled out across our supported living and outreach staff and our training initiative around Positive Behaviour Support was started during the second lockdown and has continued into the next financial year. This will give the charity a good platform to start delivering more complex services in the coming year under the transforming care agenda.

## Sharing Our Voices

Sharing Our Voices has been a 2-year project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and The Lawson Trust. Fifty-one volunteers and three Project Workers, Jackie, Emily and Bill, have delivered a fantastic project during lockdown that has seen people with learning disabilities exploring their own and other people with learning disabilities' history and life stories and the life and work of Grace Eyre Woodhead, the founder of the charity. This information has been made available on a dedicated website [www.sharingourvoices.org](http://www.sharingourvoices.org) and has been dramatised in a short film looking at the difference from then to now and exploring if there are still similarities in how people with learning disabilities are still marginalised and discriminated against.







## Marketing and fundraising

Our newly formed Marketing & Fundraising Team pulled together to achieve some big things for the organisation. We launched a new brand, a new tone of voice and a new website for the charity. We brought all design work in-house and were busy putting together staff and external newsletters, as well as providing teams with day to day marketing support. We were also active on social media where Grace Eyre's followers increased by 73% on Facebook alone. We marked awareness days and weeks, and loved learning about and sharing all of the brilliant things going on across the organisation. One particular highlight for us was seeing all the amazing entries to the Bake a Cake Competition, which celebrated Grace Eyre Woodhead's birthday in February.

The Big Build will move forward with submitting and receiving planning permission for the works and starting the fundraising needed for the project. The total cost for the works will be £3.5 million and the fundraising target is £1 million.





A grant of £9,225 from Active Sussex's Tackling Inequalities Fund was awarded to help us recover from the temporary suspension of our Active Lives service as a result of COVID-19 and support participants to reengage with sports activities, benefitting their mental and physical health and well-being.

A grant of £9,073 from Heart Research UK's Healthy Hearts programme will enable us to improve and promote the importance of heart health among adults with learning disabilities and/or autism through the provision of sports and engagement activities.

Brighton & Hove City Council continued to support our Friendship Group with a grant of £8,628. Their support enables us to employ a dedicated Friendship Group Team Leader, enabling and empowering people to make and meet new friends in a safe and supportive environment.

We were awarded a Coronavirus Community Support Grant of £41,145 from the National Lottery Community Fund towards the adaptation of the Grace Eyre Friendship Group to an online delivery model. This grant allowed us to expand the group, enabling people to stay connected and make new connections with friends throughout the pandemic.

The National Lottery Community Fund also continued to support our Travel Buddy project. Entering into its fourth year, the project supports people to develop the skills and confidence to travel independently.

With the support of Brighton District Nursing Association Trust (£7,450), Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust (£3,000) and Chalk Cliff Trust (£5,000) we were able to reimagine our Active Lives programme to deliver a blend of indoor, outdoor and online activities beyond the traditional day centre model so to continue to support people throughout the pandemic.

A grant from the European Social Fund supported our Work Buddy programme which provided employment support, workplace skills training and work experience for people to increase their employability and progression to employment, volunteering or further training.

Brighton & Hove City Council continued to support our Open Market Art Studio with a grant of £9,231. The studio provides a professional space for the people we support to exhibit and sell pieces of their artwork. The Studio also provides a unique training space for people to gain customer facing work experience, helping them progress into either paid work, training, or volunteering.



## Grants

Active Sussex  
Brighton & Hove City Council  
West Sussex County Council  
Brighton District Nursing Association Trust  
Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust  
National Lottery Community Fund  
National Lottery Heritage Fund  
European Social Fund  
Lawson Trust  
Tennis Sussex

**Raising £184,643**

**A big thank you to our**  
staff, trustees, patrons, ambassadors,  
volunteers, contractors, corporates,  
community and supporters.

**You make our  
work happen.**



## Going forward

We are conscious of the fact that the COVID Pandemic is continuing and will likely be a feature of the charity's work for the next 1-2 years. A 'new normal' is being developed with a strong emphasis on safety and in protecting our staff and people who use our services. Vaccinations are high amongst both staff and people who use our services and we see this as our most effective tool in mitigating against the pandemic. However, we are continuing to follow all best practice in social distancing, washing hands regularly and wearing face coverings.

Our key priorities around user leadership still holds true and we will recruit for a third Trustee and an Executive Director post with lived experience. At the same time, our employment project will continue to support the organisation in ensuring all our teams are employing people with lived experience of learning disability and/or autism.

Our journey of improving technology will be continued with a large survey taking place to gain a baseline measure of use of technology, internet and devices carried out amongst people who use our services. This will enable us to develop a strategy in 2022 to increase the use of data capturing, communication, and assistive technologies to improve people's lives.

Our growth strategy will be developed to encompass both geographical spread and developing more supported living services, transforming care services, high-quality housing options for people and meaningful and community-based activities and projects that enable the charity to meet its Charter. A new post of Director of Income Generation will be recruited to meet our expectations around growth and profitability.

Grace Eyre is developing our campaigning and the first campaign we will launch in 2021 will be around health and people with learning disabilities and/or autism.

The Board of Trustees are mindful of future development needed in areas of digital and marketing to enable greater community engagement, investment, and funding of the charity, especially with the aims of our strategic plan.

Grace Eyre staff remain our most valued asset and in recognition of this we intend to ensure our frontline staff will continue to receive a decent salary and terms and conditions. After our salary increase of 6-7% to our support workers in April 2021, we are conducting a review of all salaries within the charity for decision by the Board of Trustees in March 2022.



# Grace Eyre Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities for year ended 31 March 2021

## Income Resources

Donations and Gifts	£131,128
Furlough and COVID related Grants	£896,330
Investment Income	£1,713
Active Lives Income	£925,176
Shared Lives Income	£1,935,479
Choices Income	£4,444,335
Resources for Generating Funds	£15,094
Grace Eyre Housing	£1,247,121
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£9,596,376</b>

## Expenditures

Cost of Charitable Activities	£8,824,173
Cost of Generating Funds	£119,410
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£8,943,583</b>



## GET INFORMED

Twitter/GraceEyreF  
Facebook/GraceEyreF  
Instagram/grace.eyre

[grace-eyre.org](http://grace-eyre.org)

## GET INVOLVED

Make a donation or  
fundraise.

See how to have fun with  
friends and family by raising  
life-changing funds.

[grace-eyre.org/  
how-you-can-help/](http://grace-eyre.org/how-you-can-help/)

## GET IN TOUCH

01273 201900  
[enquiries@grace-eyre.org](mailto:enquiries@grace-eyre.org)

You can send letters or  
donations to:

**Grace Eyre**  
**36 Montefiore Road,**  
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**BN3 6EP**

Registered charity number: 1020192

