

Annual Report 2020 - 2021



Working Together Ludlow

To include people with learning difficulties and disabilities

Charity No: 1147358

About us

Working Together is a charity supporting adults and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities.

We offer supportive opportunities and promote the positive role people with learning disabilities can play in the local community.

We are based in the market town of Ludlow, Shropshire.

Our dedicated team of staff, volunteers and Trustees work collaboratively and inclusively with our members, their families and carers to create a positive environment for all.

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Our aims are to foster a welcoming, loving and supporting environment to:

- promote happiness, good health & wellbeing
- encourage a strong sense of belonging
- develop a stimulating and creative work and social environment
- encourage all to develop their own skills and talents
- do what we can as well as we can
- create an environment where all are valued, appreciated and included
- encourage the inclusion of people with learning disabilities in all aspects of community life.

Welcome to the Working Together Annual Report, covering the year 1st July 2020 to 30th June 2021.

Moving out of Lockdown and a return to a 'New Normal' are terms we have come to use to describe the period that this report covers. However, these words don't capture the significance of this period, of the pandemic and the challenges, changes and uncertainty we have faced during this time.

At the end of June 2020 the country was still in lockdown. The government had announced an easing of Covid restrictions and significant planning was underway to welcome members back at Rockspring before the end of July.

Our daily pastoral and support calls continued, as did our online activities, such as yoga and well being sessions, Writers Club, virtual Youth Club and Diversity sessions, Zoom discos, bingo and virtual scavenger hunts.

Robust and complex risk assessments and Covid Safe procedures and practices were developed in consultation with Shropshire Council's Adult Services and Public Health teams - much of which remain in operation today. Our members, staff and volunteers safety remains upper most in everything we do.

We welcomed the first small numbers of members back for face to face services at Rockspring on 21 July 2020. Youth Club created a rota system where members were able to attend in person once a fortnight to keep numbers manageable and social distancing achievable. Diversity remained online.

We have all practiced our 'Hands, Face, Space'. Hand sanitising, face masks and social distancing have all become a normal part of our services. As we entered 2021 a further government lockdown meant we closed briefly in January before again completing risk assessments and making the decision to re-open to members. 2021 has brought Covid vaccinations, Lateral Flow and PCR testing, enabling us to all stay well and keep as safe as possible.

With our cafe being closed to the public we developed a wider range of new activities. Our partnership supporting the Ludlow Food Bank provided members with a real sense of purpose and community involvement.

Writers Club has offered a mix of online and face to face sessions - we even published our own collaborative story book. Sewing Bee also re-started and we attracted a wider group of members by introducing a broader range of crafting and making opportunities.

The cafe has been re-imagined - members have enjoyed cooking food to take home for their families and carers. We've explored cooking new types of food, travelling virtually around the world, enjoying new tastes, planning menus and developing new skills.

Volunteers wrestled with the jungle the community garden had become and slowly but surely the garden has come back into shape, enabling us to enjoy the crops and share any surplus with local people when possible. As custodians of the community garden, we've started to grow more of our own food to cook and to share whilst developing our gardening skills.

This year has certainly tested our resilience, but as an organisation we are proud to report that we have come through this time as a stronger and even more focused organisation. We have all learned new skills and activities, which we will build on going forward - blending these together with what we've always done well before, to provide more supportive and fulfilling opportunities for our members and the Working Together family.

21st July 2020

****WE'VE RE-OPENED OUR DOORS****



We are super, super pleased to have welcomed some of our members back to Rockspring this week.

"I've really enjoyed coming back to Rockspring and meeting my friends"

Rockspring Daytime

We reopened our doors for daytime activities at Rockspring at the end of July 2020.

At first this was only for a few members at a time, but numbers slowly increased as shielding rules have been relaxed.

We continue with reduced daily numbers and use more space than we did before the pandemic - so we can still social distance and keep everyone safe.

We focus on creating a welcoming and friendly space, having fun, building confidence and supporting independent living skills.

Cooking remains a core activity, with members making and baking for each other and to take home for their families and carers. We've tried new dishes and developed new skills and have really enjoyed menu planning from around the world.

We've also enjoyed spending more time outdoors, relaxing and chatting as well as working in the community garden and growing plants and flowers.



"We missed Working Together, every single part of it"

Sewing Bee... by Louise

We were Buzzing to be back!

Like for so many, last year was a difficult time for the Sewing Bee – and boy did we miss it.

Restrictions necessitated a temporary metamorphosis to us becoming a Makers Club when we reopened after the first Covid lockdown in August 2020.

We launched into a series of craft activities including making bunting, lollipop stick models, mini tapestries, badges and, the piece de resistance, Working Together Christmas Cards - all with Fee's mad cap inspiration! Although it worked well, it was not the real thing.

Monday afternoons are always filled with fun, laughter and creativity – not to mention the occasional sing along! The Sewing Bee girls love it – as we do.

Christmas 2020 saw another Covid closure, but in April 2021 Rockspring hummed to the noise of sewing machines at full tilt again. Our first creation was fully lined mini tote bags which can now be seen around Ludlow as Rachael and Chloe brandish them with pride! Next up were cosmetic purses which double up as pencil cases – another big hit.



"I am very proud of the lavender bag and I love the little bag I made. I used it when I went out for tea at the castle."



*We made bunting for the Ludlow Festival Fringe and
for volunteer Neil's Everest Fundraising Challenge*

*"Sewing Bee is great fun, making a mouse doorstep,
lavender bags, clothes, a bag and a wrist pin cushion"*



Community Garden

When we returned to Rockspring in the summer of 2020 the Community Garden was very overgrown.

In discussion with the Furniture Scheme we took on a custodianship role of the garden - as we want to enjoy the space and be able to grow our own vegetables.

We had the garden cutback in the spring 2021 and have been tackling the ongoing battle to reclaim the garden from some of the hardcore weeds that have taken hold.

Ever so slowly, the garden has begun to emerge thanks to the efforts of our dedicated volunteers. We grew some vegetables - including potatoes and beetroot - which we cooked. We also held a garden tidy on a Saturday.

We shared our bumper crop of rhubarb with Hands Together Ludlow and with the local community.

Members have enjoyed gardening and we look forward to having more opportunities to develop the community garden in 2022.

Writers Club... *by Sarah*

We developed a way of working online in short, focused sessions and surprised ourselves at how much we *were* able to do.

The lockdowns influenced some of our work as we wrote lists and poems about things that make us cheerful. That helped us to think of new ways to keep ourselves occupied and happy.

We passed around a joint story and that was great fun! James and Nigel joined in too.

Undoubtedly, we would always choose live sessions over Zoom meet-ups. However, there was an unexpected benefit, in that the level of focus was outstanding and because you don't really have to worry about social distancing when working together through screens, we felt like we were in a close little, highly focused huddle.

We were pleased with our non-fiction focus, writing about topics that interest our members, finding out new things and clarifying the difference between real-life events, drama and fiction writing.

Winter Time *by Julian*

At winter some snow comes and ice and cold and wind over the hills.

People get Christmas trees and put them in their houses and people go to shops, buy turkeys and drinks and buy Christmas puddings and Christmas presents and sing Christmas songs. And watching movies. #

Father Christmas comes, brings presents.

And people playing games and the end of Christmas, New Year, people have a party. Fireworks.

Jane Austen *by Chloe*

Jane Austen was born on 16th December 1775. She is a famous novelist and has written seven books including Emma, Persuasion and Pride and Prejudice.

She went to boarding school where she was trained in needlework, dancing and French. She wrote her first book, Love and Friendship when she was 14 years old.

She had six brothers and one sister, Cassandra. She died on 18th July 1817, aged 41 and was buried in Winchester Cathedral.

I really love her books to read, all about women in power. She never married but the characters in her novels got married.

What Have You Been Doing? *by Rachael*

I am singing and impersonating and doing Yogi Bear and Boo-Boo

I am keeping the faith for Paul O'Grady

I am wheelchair-walking with Ben and Sarah

I am drinking my cup of tea

I am birdwatching from my bedroom window in bed

I am keeping fit

I am cutting up Christmas magazines with the greatest of pleasure

I am emptying the washing machine and all my thoughts whirring about

I am word searching with my cup of tea

And now I am ending this poem with a Zoom meeting.



Christmas Poem *by Daniel*

This is the Advent
And Christmas carols
We sing Silent Night
We have the Christmas Spirit
Carrots and reindeers
The mistletoe
Good King Wenceslas Last Looked Out
Away in a Manger
Venison stew and roast pork
Christmas crackers
In the Bleak Midwinter
Ice and snow and cold winds
We wish you a Merry Christmas!

Bonfire Night *by Steph*

As I sit, I can hear,
The bonfire, crackling,
With flames, jumping and
leaping
With flying embers of love,
With the taste of,
Toasted marshmallows,
In my mouth,
In the far off distance,
I can hear,
The bangs of fireworks,
And even the rockets,
In the night sky,
They give off bright lights,
That you can dance under,
That is what Bonfire Night is
all about.

Out of the Dragon's Lair...



A Writers Club story...

I was escaping from the dragon's lair and the dragon is breathing fire from the lair and I was trying to escape from my imprisonment and I was captured and trying to run away. I was fighting against the breezy wind and the breezy wind is amongst my wildest dreams.

...later in the story...

"Our village is being attacked by a dragon!" screamed Colette.
As the others spun around to face the village, they too saw the giant flapping wings. Their jaws hit the floor and their eyes were wide with fear.
"We've got to do something!" yelled Claire.

~Visit our website to read the complete, thrilling story!~



*"It was good and interesting while
it lasted but I prefer to be in
Rockspring with other people"*

Youth Club... (11 to 18 yrs)

by Sammy, Jan & and Di

As a team we quickly upskilled to offer youth club via a remote platform throughout the pandemic. We are pleased to have remained connected to members and their families throughout the lockdowns.

We have all rather enjoyed returning to weekly face-to-face sessions and have managed this safely by splitting our group in half, with no more than six members attending each week as well as the additional measures that are in place. We ran the same session on consecutive weeks so that everyone had the chance to participate in the activities.

We regularly mixed the groups so that our members were able to see each other as the social aspect of youth club is hugely important.

We built strong links with Diversity and this will help youth club members to continue to see their friends and feel comfortable moving on to other Working Together activities when they are older. We are fortunate to have a well rounded team delivering youth club and each team member brings their own specialist area of expertise.



Our first face to face Youth Club session in August 2020



Members are involved in bringing ideas to the youth club programme. There are some regular themes that feature; food, creative activities, music, getting active and pets!

We have been involved in fishfinger making challenges and pizza-making on the outdoor pizza oven. We love hearing about everyone's pets, sharing stories and enjoying guest visitors (dogs and cats). We have so much fun and new things to try like baking dog biscuits and cat bingo! By special request, a new session this year was called 'Under the Bonnet' – not so popular with the girls who chose a craft session instead!

Our members have commented that they enjoy seeing their old friends and making new friends at youth club. This was especially important when school and college attendance was restricted. We also provide a safe space, free from challenges such as bullying which our members have encountered elsewhere.



Diversity & Sports

A combination of Covid restrictions and local authority guidelines on members only attending one day service setting, made restarting Diversity and Sports Club as face to face activities more challenging than for some of our other offers.

Diversity continued with a combination of pastoral support calls and online activities, such as Zoom discos and online bingo nights.

Restrictions prevented Sports Club from resuming in any form since it closed in March 2020.

We are working on plans for both of these social activity groups, to get them back up and running as face to face events as soon as Covid restrictions permit, hopefully in 2022.

Some of our Diversity members who have been able to come to face to face sessions at Rockspring, have become volunteers at Youth Club, helping and supporting the team which is great news. Thank you!

Our Trustees:

Nicola North (Chair)

Mike Beazley (Treasurer)

Emily Moseley (Safeguarding)

Simon Lambourne

Alison Holman

Julian Crombleholme

Louise Anton

Sarah Jones

Chief Officer:

Nigel Bishop

Thank You to all our supporters

Coronavirus and the Covid-19 restrictions have made the last 18 months a challenging time for everyone.

Here at Working Together we've had to change the way we operate but have continued to support our members throughout.

We are starting to see the beginning of a return to more usual ways of working - as government restrictions have begun to relax, but we still err on the side of caution - continuing with face coverings (where, if and when appropriate), social distancing and hand sanitising in order to keep everyone safe.

We wouldn't have made it through these challenging times, in the way we have, without the generosity and kindness of those who have supported us and we would like to say thank you to all who have helped us through this journey.

Thanks go to our 2020/2021 funders, Reaching Communities; Children in Need; Wrekin Housing Group; Millichope Foundation; Ludlow Town Council and Shropshire Council and all of our supporters for their donations, both financial and in kind.

Thanks also to our staff and volunteers, who have done an amazing job, working hard to keep everyone safe and happy.

Thank you on behalf of everyone at Working Together.



Our 'almost weekly' Newsletters...

Not only have our newsletters been a great way to keep in touch with everyone, they have been a great way of hearing about what our members have been up to - particularly those who weren't initially able to attend face to face service. They have also been an effective way of passing on important Covid Safe messages and saying thank you to all those who have funded and supported us during this period. All our newsletters can be found on our website: www.workingtogetherludlow.co.uk



Annual Report 2020/2021



We hope you've enjoyed reading this year's annual report.

www.workingtogetherludlow.co.uk



Download your copy of this year's Annual Report:

www.workingtogetherludlow.co.uk/book/annual-report-2021

Paper copies are available on request