



Working to make a vibrant, self-sustaining and multicultural community

Impact 20 Report 21

Our Organisation

Welcome to Halifax Opportunities Trust. We are a regeneration charity working to make vibrant, self-sustaining and multicultural communities across Calderdale.

In each of the areas that we work: children and families, community and wellbeing, enterprise, employment, inclusive integration and learning, we take a holistic, whole-person approach to working with our local community.

We are driven by 4 core values: **we are enterprising, we are committed, we collaborate and we care.**

children & families

community & wellbeing

employment

enterprise

inclusive integration

learning

we are enterprising

we collaborate

we care

we are committed

As the Trust emerges from the pandemic now feels like a good time to both take stock and set goals.

In this Impact Report you'll find, as always, statistics and stories from the past twelve months across the Trust, and importantly this year we're introducing more of a strategic view on where we see ourselves in the future and how we view the changing role of our place within the communities we work with. We hope you'll join us for the journey.

Alison, our community organiser, gives a cooking demonstration using surplus food from Fareshare as part of our summer open day at The Outback Garden & Kitchen.





Welcome

Welcome to our Impact Report for 2021.

As you read on you'll see it's brimming with stories and learning from across the Trust and I can't help but feel both proud and inspired by the work that has gone on this year. In many ways, this year was far tougher on our staff teams than during 2020 when the height of the pandemic had many colleagues running on adrenaline, focused on triaging the immediate needs of the people we work with and responding with care and compassion.

This year has taken a toll on those reserves and felt almost gruelling at times but day after day, week after week our amazing colleagues have turned up to work and given their all to contribute to positive change in the lives of so many here in Calderdale and beyond. When I think about the balance sheets and asset lists that you normally find in financial data produced by so many companies, I can't help but think our greatest asset is our people and it is to them I would like to say a heartfelt thank you.

I'm also pleased to reveal at the end of this report some of the strategic thinking behind where I hope to see Halifax Opportunities Trust move in the future. The needs of communities are ever-changing and I'm proud to say that the board of trustees at HOT are actively planning for a very exciting few years ahead as we continue our commitment to making vibrant, multi-cultural and self-sustaining communities across Calderdale.

The Revd Canon Hilary Barber,
Chair of Trustees

enterprise



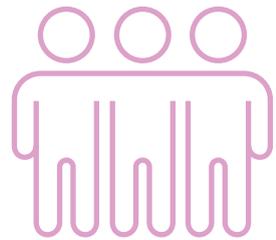
Halifax Opportunities Trust supports enterprise through our activities at Hanson Lane Enterprise Centre and Elsie Whiteley Innovation Centre. Both facilities offer business accommodation and meeting room hire along with access to a range of advice and events such as HOT Networking.

Whilst many of our activities at both centres during the pandemic were restricted we took a pause from 'business as usual' to invest and look forward, preparing for the time when we could once again welcome back visitors and members of the public to the centre.

The investment, that started in 2020, saw a complete refurbishment of the meeting rooms and communal ground floor space at Elsie Whiteley Innovation Centre. The aim being to update and modernise the facilities making them fit for purpose post-pandemic.

77

Businesses are based across our two centres in Park Ward.



294

Jobs have been enabled by Elsie Whiteley Innovation Centre and Hanson Lane Enterprise Centre.



£16,276

Value of grants given to businesses by HOT during 2020/21.



"A very valuable event, it was my first time attending today but I will definitely come again"

HOT Networking attendee



Rebuilding our network after lockdown

HOT Networking is a monthly networking meeting aimed at giving local small and medium-sized business owners the opportunity to come together, make new contacts and learn fundamental business skills from our ever-changing roster of co-hosts and industry experts. The events play an important part of our charitable commitments to building a sustainable economy in Park Ward and the wider area. During the pandemic we were unable to host any events and rather than move the network online, we concentrated efforts on the refurbishment of Elsie Whiteley Innovation Centre and also on supporting our existing business centre tenants through the various lockdowns.

In September 2021 we re-launched the network with an autumn programme of speakers and soon found out that there was huge demand for a return to in-person networking. Our events regularly attract over 30 businesses to the Centre and continue to go from strength to strength with a mix of regular attendees, new-comers and Elsie Whiteley Innovation Centre tenants.



"The networking aspect is excellent with a good mix of companies represented and very well organised"

HOT Networking attendee

children & families

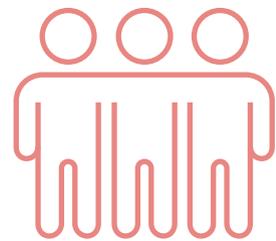
Children and Families are the heart of thriving communities because when we create an environment that people want to raise their family in, we boost the local economy, attract inward investment and raise the aspirations of the next generation.

As the national lockdown rolled into its second year during spring of 2021, our Children's and Families teams refused to let the pandemic hamper delivery of much needed training and support opportunities for families, and although our outputs are not yet back to pre-pandemic levels we're immensely proud of the hardwork and resilience that has gone into our work with children and families throughout Calderdale during 2021.

Furthermore, this autumn sees a full re-opening of all our centres and the restarting of much missed face-to-face parent and family groups in the community. Here are some of our highlights of the past 12 months:

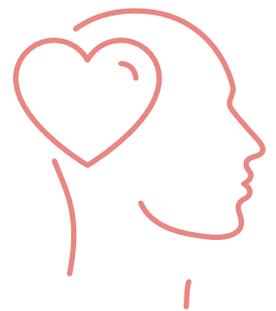
280

People were involved with our social groups during 2021.



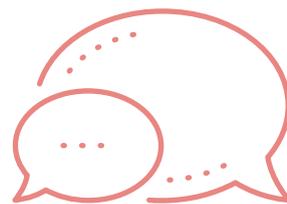
96%

of families believe Children's Centre activities have had a positive impact on health and wellbeing



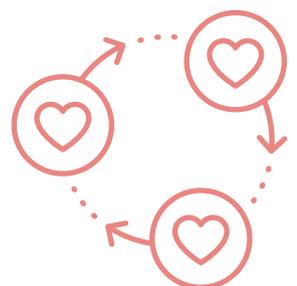
51

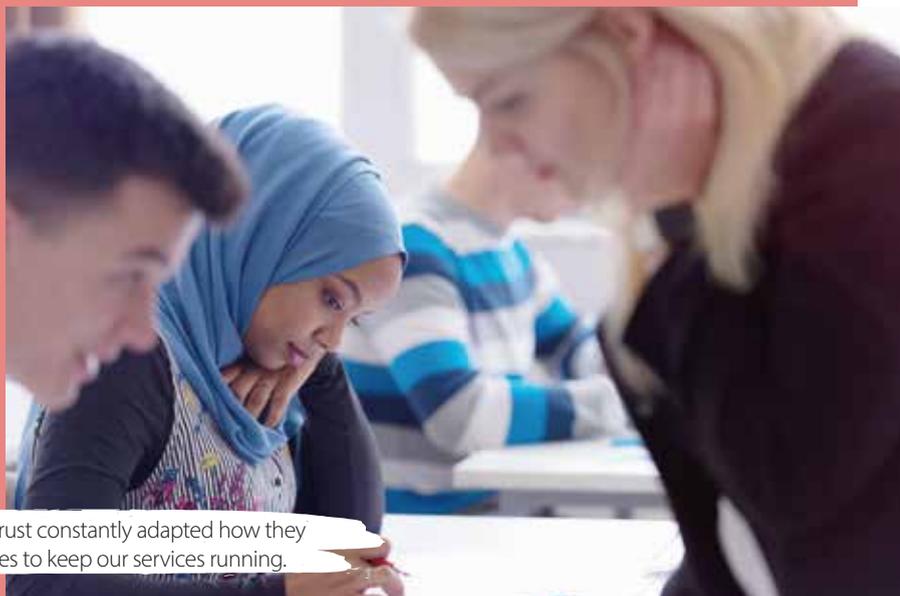
Number of languages spoken in our Children's Centres.



129

Number of partner organisations worked with by our Children's Centres in 2021.





Teams across the Trust constantly adapted how they worked with families to keep our services running.

Delivering During A Pandemic

The ability of our service to train staff and organise delivery of the Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities (SFSC) parent course is a prime example of how resilient we are as a service. It is a great demonstration of taking an attitude of “How can we still deliver this?” rather than an approach of “We can’t do this because of COVID”. The Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities course is an 8-week programme aimed at giving parents the skills they need to raise happy, confident children and to improve outcomes for the entire family and ultimately the community.

Our approach began with training nine staff members to become facilitators in September 2020. We used a space within Elsie Whiteley Innovation Centre for the training. The size of the room allowed for sufficient space for the learners and the trainer to maintain a recommended distance from each other. Time was spent on a risk assessment and ensuring that processes were in place for cleanliness etc.

Having succeeded with the training, this gave us the template for a similar approach to the delivery of the course as part of a large-scale research project that was being funded by the NHS and led by University College London. We boldly planned delivery to start in the January of 2021! Preparation required intensive work to recruit two cohorts of parents willing to take part. The decision to lockdown again at the start of January 2021 was a huge disappointment but we dusted ourselves off and got back to re-organising the delivery, picking mid-March as the new start date.

Happily, we managed to get going in March with a group of 11 parents and three fantastic staff members who were well organised to reduce risks of infection for the whole group. In June, 10 of those parents graduated from the course.

Of course, we still had our nine new staff members to begin their delivery so that they could gain their accreditation. To manage this, we delivered to small groups of parents, making a total of five groups running simultaneously, from mid-April. This was no mean feat and yet we managed to support another 9 parents to graduate the course making a total of 19 parents who had graduated by the school summer holidays.

Currently, there are three groups running for SFSC, one in Todmorden, one in Central Halifax and another for the research project running in Hebden Bridge. We are immensely proud of our strong and resilient team to achieve as much as we have over this last, very challenging, year and are looking forward to another group of parents graduating the course by the end of 2021.

employment

Our Employment Services Team is based at Hanson Lane Enterprise Centre. Helping people to find employment is an important part of the Trust's commitment to the local community. Our team of experienced Employment Advisors work with job seekers to help them move forward, overcome their barriers and get good quality jobs. The onset of the pandemic and subsequent lockdown changed the way this service works overnight and our adaptation continues to this day.

Our Experience - Lisa Connelly, Programme Lead

Over the past year, we have kept our essential service open for face to face support to ensure we are meeting the diverse & often complex needs of our participants.

Our delivery model takes a holistic approach to helping people overcome barriers to employment and working closely with trusted specialist partners across Calderdale is an important part of our service. Over the past year, we have continued to provide intensive support for unemployed people in our communities which has involved linking people with specialist provision in mental health, wellbeing, debt & confidence building; to name but a few. Our Outback Community Kitchen & Garden has played a prominent role in the delivery of our service this year as a venue for us to meet participants, hold engagement events and develop wellbeing projects for local people to get involved in.

In addition to supporting local job seekers we have also developed further our support for employers across Calderdale. Our Employer Engagement Officer continues to build relationships and we are a Gateway for employers taking part in the Kickstart scheme - the Government's flagship program for young people which is part of Covid economic recovery. Supporting young job seekers in our community is a priority for us and being able to introduce them to employers through this scheme has proven a great success.

Although our service covers the entirety of Calderdale it is another priority of ours to engage with people living within our base in Park Ward. As such, we invest time in promoting our services by going out into the community, talking to people about the opportunities on offer and encouraging engagement. Currently, around half of our participants are from the Park & Warley wards.

We invest time in promoting our services by going out into the community, talking to people about the opportunities on offer and encouraging engagement. Currently, around half of our participants are from the Park & Warley wards.

Looking forward, we are committed to building on our successful delivery model and reconnecting with our participants, specialist partners & employer contacts to further support our aims of bringing good quality opportunities to people in the local community & across Calderdale.

46

Number of people helped to find jobs through our Employment team in 2021.



community & wellbeing

The Outback Community Garden & Kitchen

The Outback Community Kitchen and Garden is situated behind Jubilee Children's Centre on Lightowler Road in the Park ward area of central Halifax. Developed with the local community, The Outback provides opportunities for people to get involved with gardening, growing and cooking food, and to spend time outdoors connecting with nature.

Although the challenges and restrictions of 2020 continued into 2021, as we moved out of lockdown improving wellbeing and reducing social isolation became a priority and the open space and outdoor opportunities in The Outback proved to be a valuable resource for the local community, our own HOT teams and other local groups/organisations. As a result, this year we have had a wide range of people of all ages coming to The Outback garden and benefitting from all it has to offer. We have seen an increase in interest in gardening and growing food, and through joint activities and projects we have strengthened partnerships across HOT teams and developed new and stronger relationships with other local community groups.

The Outback 'Takeaway Tuesday's' weekly meal service (set up by the Employment Team, and funded via Hopeful Families) was an emergency response to the pandemic that has continued throughout 2021. Alison our Community Organiser and her dedicated kitchen volunteers transform surplus supermarket food and fresh Outback garden produce into healthy and delicious hot meals, providing on average 40 meals a week to the local community. The team distribute the meals from the garden, using the opportunity to engage with local people, find out more about the issues they are experiencing and provide help where possible.

At the start of the year, The Outback teamed up with a local school, Halifax Academy, to provide a weekend meal-bag scheme for a group of local families, providing a recipe and ingredients for a healthy and nutritious weekend meal. Following this, we have developed strong links with the Academy, and The Outback has hosted cooking and gardening activities for their high school transition programme, provided fresh produce for their community cooking activities and their reception class children now spend one morning a week in The Outback.

Recognising the positive impact that being in The Outback has on wellbeing, colleagues from the Employment Team have supported their participants to access the garden, leading to the development of a successful weekly men's gardening group and the expansion of our garden volunteering sessions from once to twice weekly. For so many people the pandemic had a negative impact on both physical and mental health, and many of our volunteers have told us that the garden has played a really important role in improving their wellbeing.

The addition of a beehive to the garden - the Hopeful Families Park Ward Pollinators project - has helped us to bring people together engaging with the wider community further, and we have had visits from groups of local school children, St Augustine's Centre and our own Jubilee nursery keen to learn more about our bees. One of The Hopeful Families participants and Outback volunteer told us 'the beekeeping and gardening at The Outback has been absolutely brilliant for my health. The beekeeping is especially therapeutic and I have learned so much about the process and feel proud to be part of it. I have met new people and I would absolutely recommend The Outback for anyone who is wanting to improve their health & wellbeing.'

inclusive integration

As the most culturally diverse neighbourhood in Calderdale, Park Ward has a long history as a welcome hub for migrant communities from across the globe to arrive, settle and flourish in Halifax and the surrounding areas.

This is as true today as it was when the first generation of South Asian migrants began arriving in the post-war era of the 1950's and 60's. To enable migrant families and individuals to make the most of their new lives in the UK, Halifax Opportunities Trust is proud to deliver a number of Inclusive Integration programmes, including ESOL (English as a Second or Other Language) from our base at Hanson Lane Enterprise Centre.

Rajiyah's Story

After moving to the UK, initially to study, Rajiyah* found herself escaping an abusive marriage and claiming asylum here. It was around this time that she referred herself to the Connecting Opportunities programme delivered by Halifax Opportunities Trust. The programme assigns key-workers to migrants and refugees to work with them to settle into their new lives here in the UK. A first priority for Bary, Rajiyah's key-worker, was to assist her in finding a new place to live. He helped her apply to Calderdale Council for housing and she was rehomed along with her two sons within a month. Bary then began the work of helping Rajiyah think about her goals and hopes for her life here in the UK. Her past experiences had left her traumatised and low in self-confidence so Bary worked with Rajiyah to find courses that would give her the skills to stand on her own two feet.

Over the next twelve months Rajiyah began to apply for and complete several courses and took up volunteering opportunities to build her experience. Slowly, day-by-day her confidence began to come back and her self-esteem began to increase. She was starting to see it was possible to move on from her bad past experiences and build a new positive life here with her children.

In December 2020 Rajiyah contracted COVID-19 so Bary arranged for food parcels and Christmas presents for her children to be delivered to her home whilst she was recovering and isolating, he also made daily telephone calls to check on her wellbeing. Looking back, Rajiyah had this to say of her time on the Connecting Opportunities programme with us:

"My support worker Bary helped me a lot after getting refugee status. This centre [HOTs base at Hanson Lane] and its people were the only hope in my dark times. They treated me well, like I am their family member. They helped me in converting my qualification [from university in Pakistan] via NARIC and I been granted Level 6 qualification. As a result of all this support I been offered a job as a Volunteer Administrator."

*Name changed to protect individual's identity.

118

Number of people who successfully completed an ESOL course in 2020/21



26

Number of languages spoken by students on our ESOL courses



learning

Halifax Opportunities Trust directly delivers a range of accredited, work based training programmes specialising in delivering for those working in the childcare profession with a focus on Special Educational Needs and Inclusion. Our apprenticeships delivery also includes professional development support.

In the past year the provision has modernised its service to adapt to the needs of local businesses and partnership organisations to deliver apprenticeships even more flexibly and remotely than before. Despite the fact of a very challenging 2020 our apprenticeships provision has expanded further to meet the needs of the SEND demographic in Kirklees and provided further support and expertise in SEND throughout its delivery in 2020. The new and improved methods of delivery had a positive impact on enrichment activities which enhance apprentices experience and their development and also provided learners with access to relevant up to date quality materials that support the programme content and delivery.

The use of new technologies and innovative approaches provided learners with brand new and more detailed induction onto the programme including areas of further support and guidance. Last year we also dedicated our focus on delivery and support to include social, emotional and mental health needs of our learners. In addition, our apprenticeship delivery also supported and assisted apprentices further to be able to demonstrate the ability to implement strategies to meet these needs, both within the classroom, in small group settings and in the wider school environment.

Both our Employment and Learning areas secured Matrix accreditation in 2021. The annual Matrix Continuous Improvement Check measures our impact to demonstrate how, on an ongoing basis, we develop as an organisation to support individuals. The key feedback highlight and identified impact from the assessment was:

- People delivering the service feel well-managed and supported.

- The Trust is particularly well integrated into the community and described by one partner as “a trusted brand”.

49

Number of
apprentices in 2021



89%

% of apprentices
who complete



80%

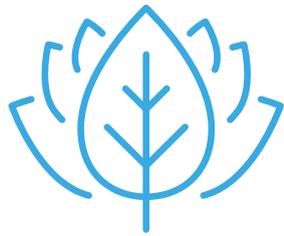
% who rate our
provision as excellent



sustainability

11,245

Number of sq m of community green space provided by our Children's Centres.



3500

Number of plastic disposable cups saved from landfill and recycled in our premises.



and finally ...

In 2020/21 we recycled 5 tons of confidential waste which equates to the following:



the future

A model for working with communities

In the 21 years HOT have been working in Calderdale, we've continually reviewed and updated our approach and the scope of work we do to best fit the community in which we work. It's meant that we are in a position to understand and respond to what our communities tells us they need to prosper. As we look ahead to the future, several subjects loom on the horizon that we plan to confront.

Firstly, housing. It is our aim to acquire and refurbish homes within Park Ward in order to provide genuine high quality affordable homes for community use. We strongly believe that a warm, safe home should be a right for all and through investing in quality homes in our community we can provide that all important foundation for a healthy, prosperous life.

Secondly, community and business spaces. It is our intention to acquire and remodel properties within Park ward for both community and business use. We already have a strong background in regenerating heritage property, as evidenced at Elsie Whiteley Innovation Centre, and we plan to expand on this work with new locations in Park ward.

Finally, wellbeing. As we already have a well-established wellbeing model in Park, we plan to expand on this model in two ways. Firstly by creating a Wellbeing and Opportunities Hub at the heart of Park Ward which will bring together our staff teams allowing for closer collaboration and working and to create more space for the community to come together. And secondly, by expanding our wellbeing offer to include targeted work at prevention and management of long term conditions such as diabetes, obesity and heart disease.

Crucially, it is our intention as we emerge from almost two years of a pandemic to renew our commitments to the environment which is why we have already taken steps towards reducing our carbon-footprint with measures such as flexible working remaining in place and the upgrading of services in our properties to low-carbon options. Small steps on a long journey, but an important start nonetheless.

Alison Haskins, CEO

