



# **Annual Impact Report 2022**

## Ashton United in the Community

### Objectives and activities

The purposes of the charity are:

1. The promotion of community participation in healthy recreation in particular by the provision of facilities for the playing of football and other sports.
  
2. To act as a resource for young people up to the age of 25 living in Tameside, Greater Manchester, and the surrounding areas by providing advice and assistance and organising programmes of physical, educational and other activities as a means of:
  - (a) advancing in life and helping young people by developing their skills, capacities and capabilities to enable them to participate in society as independent, mature and responsible individuals;
  - (b) advancing education;
  - (c) relieving unemployment.
  
3. Providing recreational and leisure time activity in the interests of social welfare for people living in the area of benefit who have need by reason of their youth, age, infirmity or disability, poverty or social and economic circumstances, with a view to improving the conditions of life of such persons.

### Structure, governance and management

Ashton United in the Community is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation governed by its constitution dated 3rd March 2015 and registration as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (Foundation) number 1166483 with the Charity Commission on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2016.

The charity currently has 7 trustees. During the year two trustees, Chris (16.07.22) and Vic Tomlisson (15.07.22), resigned from their position and two trustees, Jill Tichborne (18.06.2022) and Pete O'Brien (13.10.22), were newly appointed.

### Smallshaw Hurst Profile – A United Community

Smallshaw Hurst and District, where Hurst Cross and AUITC is located, and all of our events and activities take place, is a neighbourhood in the top 2% most deprived in England. The events and activities we have provided are aimed at the people from the local community with most if not all reflecting the fact that those taking part have little or no disposable income. Where children are involved, most are children who are living in poverty, many with parents not in employment, education or training, from single parent families, or in the care system. The future, for people across our community, looks to be challenging with, amongst other things, increases in inflation and in fuel costs on the horizon, together with reductions in benefits and, for those in work, increased national insurance costs.

AUITC, together with our primary partners AUFC and Smallshaw Hurst Children's Community SSHCC is a founder member of Smallshaw Hurst Community Action Group, and a member of Growing Well in Tameside Partnership, working to support a number of providers across our community. The SSHCC is made up from a collaboration of statutory, voluntary, private organisations, local stakeholders, local communities, children, young people and families seeking to effect systems change in support of local people.

This includes:

Tameside MBC – population health, early years, children and young people's partnership forum, education, Integrated Care Foundation Trust, CCG, GP's, Healthy Young Minds, TOG Mind, local schools,

## **Ashton United in the Community**

Ashton 6th Form College, JIGSAW Housing Group, voluntary groups, Broadoak and Smallshaw Community Centre, Greater Manchester Police, Action Together, Active Tameside, Ashton United in the Community, Ashton United FC, local faith groups, local early years providers and local parents. This collaboration is not exhaustive and continues to link into stakeholders - groups, services and people who have a role to play in ensuring a positive impact on children's lives. The work delivered is closely linked to the outcomes of the partnership with shared monitoring and evaluation of activities. SSHCC has a full-time analyst to manage monitoring and evaluation of joint projects.

AUITC has worked throughout the year with these partners to deliver joined up working to the benefit of local people striving to achieve systemic change to the benefit of the whole community. Particular thanks must go to Smallshaw Hurst Children's Community with whom we work particularly closely with on shared events and activities.

It is this strong and effective partnership structure which has enabled joint consultation that identifies need, common issues, and a skills and specialist knowledge resource bank from which the partnership benefits from the likes of:

- economies of scale
- shared learning
- staff resource sharing
- joint initiatives
- consistent and compatible monitoring & evaluation systems and processes
- impact measurement.

The partnership has thrived over the past 4 years and continues to develop as joint initiatives come on stream and partners gain the confidence, trust and understanding in each other's ability and willingness to contribute.

## **A review of achievements and performance**

### ***By Project Manager Steve Hobson***

2022 has been an exciting year, one during which Ashton United in the Community has established itself as a catalyst for good serving the communities of Smallshaw, Hurst, Hazelhurst and Broadoak, some of the poorest communities in England, let alone Tameside. Over the past 12 months we have faced many challenges not least responding to the increased demands brought about through successful service delivery in previous years. Throughout the year the trustees, staff and volunteers have worked tirelessly to provide the resources, both financially and in kind, to ensure the charity thrives. Partnership remains the key component of our performance and achievements. Standing alone against the onslaught of complex difficulties people face we would achieve very little by way of support for them; working together to maximise resources and share best practice we are able to achieve so much more. The counsel, financial and in-kind support we receive from a plethora of sources restores faith in the ability of local stakeholders to collectively resolve the avalanche of issues people in deprived communities face through no fault of their own.

Metaphorically, it has been said many times that we are in the midst of a storm; that we are all in the same boat. Try asking some of the people we support what their boat looks like, considerably different no doubt to the sleek yachts some people cruise the current storm in. Ashton United in the Community will work determinedly to champion the cause of the underdog, a mantra that has evolved over the 142 year

## Ashton United in the Community

history of the charitable engagement of our football partner Ashton United FC, a mantle picked up with gusto by the current trustees of the charity.



At the start of the year the charity welcomed a new volunteer, Alison Clayton, to the role of Training and Development Coordinator. Alison's role involved speaking to each of the volunteers across our charity and discussing ways in which we could support and/or train them to deliver their role as efficiently as possible. Furthermore, any continuous professional development (CPD) they might want in order to gain additional skills and knowledge to benefit not only the organisation, but their own personal life journey.

The appointment has proven to be a real success with Alison swiftly settling into her role and organising a programme of training and support throughout the year. 10 internal courses have been held – Training such as Hate Crime Awareness, Dementia awareness, First Aid at work, Food Safety Level 2, Introduction to Bid writing, Manual handling, Risk Assessment training for VCSE Sector, FA Safeguarding awareness, NVCO understanding the numbers & Volunteer rights & responsibilities. There will be more training recognised as we grow our volunteer network and further understanding of their needs. 18 different volunteers have attended the courses on offer with more than 50 certificates presented to people on completion of their course. Trustee Jill Tichborne is seen here presenting successful trainees with their certificates.



As well as providing our own training for our volunteers and local people we have also been able to facilitate training courses at Hurst Cross and are experiencing a rising demand in agencies and trainers approaching us to utilise the excellent training venue.

Between September and December we joined with PCrefurb Digital Wellbeing Project Tameside and Glossop to facilitate 12 sessions to improve digital skills with the help of volunteer Digital Champions for local people to drop in to Hurst Cross and get support with IT. The sessions were free and open to all to attend. Expert trainers were on hand to show visitors the ropes whatever level of understanding they may or may not have. All are made very welcome and benefit from free refreshments too! The sessions proved to be successful with a steady stream of people calling in for support – some just for a brew and a chat! We will be repeating the sessions in 2023.

In December we were also able to facilitate the opportunity for the Richmond Fellowship to deliver training for local service providers surrounding suicide prevention and dealing with ligatures.

## Ashton United in the Community

### Cedar Park Pantry



Our support for Cedar Park Pantry through our membership of Smallshaw Hurst Community Action Group, has continued unabated with Ashton United in the Community providing the staff, through our CDO, needed to ensure the smooth running of the service. The

volunteers have, yet again, been remarkable supporting steadily increasing numbers attending the pantry month on month. In January/February alone 266 families accessed the pantry services; this has grown steadily throughout the year particularly so towards the end of the year as more and more families began to feel the pressure of winter fuel poverty and rising prices in the shops.



A new innovation was the introduction of Full-time Recipes to the pantry, a move proven to have been very popular, certainly evidenced by the response received on all social media platforms: AUITC, SSHCC, SSHCAG, AUFC.

Monday evenings has seen us offer support to families, within the Tameside Youth Service Youth Club, to cook nutritious food on a budget. The pantry team supplied the ingredients and recipes for families, costing around £3.50 per family of four, and were encouraged to see children getting actively involved with cooking the recipes. Numbers increased quickly where we were giving out 25 units per session. This project enabled the pantry volunteers to reach out to the families of the children involved, encouraging them to become pantry members and benefit from low cost nutritional food.



The Food Pantry has received donations of food from a cross section of the community. From local individuals through to businesses, schools, faith groups and uniform organisations. Pictured here is volunteer Lewis at Ashton United FC where the home game v Marine FC was designated as one where supporters of both teams could bring with them tinned food items for the pantry. We are grateful to both teams for support on the day and

## Ashton United in the Community

to the Directors of Ashton United FC for their continuing and unwavering support for all elements of AUITC work.

An outcome of AUITC becoming better known across the community as a doing organisation is that local people and organisations turn to us for support; a one stop shop in times of need. Sure, we have core activities, but thankfully the trustees and our funding partners are happy for the charity to meet changing needs, where possible, as diverse as they might seem. Our ability to network and signpost people to a solution to their problems leads to an increasing portfolio of services we are able to either deliver or influence.

Some examples of alternative needs were:

The Community Safety Partnership funded AUITC community van was put in action one week. One of the SSHCAG pantry volunteers, who's partner has his own bed company, responded to a family desperately in need of a bed by donating one. AUITC CDO and volunteers delivered a brand-new bed, the response from the recipient being ***"This is wonderful, I have never had a new bed before. Thank you so much you are all wonderful."***



The reaction from the partners to respond so quickly to the emerging need was fantastic.

In a similar vein our team were approached by a woman who had found herself in urgent need due to a complex domestic situation. She had to move her children and herself away from her partner immediately, had secured accommodation for them but literally had no furniture, bed, bedding, cooking utensils, etc. An appeal was made via AUITC and AUFC and partner social media channels and within hours we had secured all the goods needed to set the woman up in her new home. Her words: ***'I can't thank Ashton United in the Community enough for the help, advice and referrals. I don't know where I would be without the help & support of such a wonderful group of people'***



In May we received the following appeal from one of our partners' team members: ***'I am currently working with a family who are very disadvantaged, very low income, reliant on food banks weekly and really struggling just to make ends meet. The family has had to re-locate to another part of Ashton as they were unable to heat their previous home and got in a lot of arrears with energy companies. The young boy I am working with is in year 7, he is sleeping with his mum and dad in a 1 bedroom flat no bigger than most standard living rooms. One of the main things that has come out of our sessions***

## Ashton United in the Community

*is that he is very cut off from his friends outside of school, because he has moved to a different area he is unable to afford to travel to see them. He is also much further away from school meaning he must get two buses to get there thus adding another financial burden to the family. His attendance at school has dropped dramatically as they cannot afford to get him here. School have supported as much as we can so far, providing him with meals, breakfast, bus fare etc.*

*One of the things that came out of our sessions was his love for riding his bike, he actually identified this as just one of the things he most enjoyed. Unfortunately, his bike is broken....*

*So my plea is- can you help?'*

Our fantastic staff team and volunteers sprang into action and within a week or so the bike was repaired. The young person was so thrilled he took the trouble to draw a picture and say thank you for the help provided.

Another 'out of the blue' request was a chance conversation with a mum whose story about fleeing



conflict in another country touched our volunteers. In the context of football she was explaining about how disappointed she was she couldn't support her son, a promising footballer, to pursue his interest in the sport; since buying football boots was not high on the list of priorities for the family budget.

Cue our network of contacts within the game and within 24hrs a new pair of football boots were made available to her son courtesy of contacts within Ashton United FC.

Pictured here is Community Development Officer Andy Finnigan (left) delivering the boots to Walleed who said, ***"I cannot Thank Ashton United in the Community enough, these boots will help me so much. Not only to play the game I love but to give me such a lift and respect on a personal level with mates of mine, who previously I didn't fit in with. My Mum could never afford such a great pair of footy boots"***

## Gardening Projects

Our gardening group has been busy this year with an outstanding result at one of the sites where they operated. Whilst tidying up the grounds in preparation for fixing a planter and seating the volunteers



came across a hard surface just below the grass. Further investigation revealed a piece of long forgotten artwork that had overgrown. The team worked hard to restore the piece (pictured) which now holds

## Ashton United in the Community

pride of place in Cedar Park, in a seated area with planters where local people can come and reflect, meet friends and benefit on pantry days from the food pantry, and from information, advice and guidance from the team.



With the site completed ongoing maintenance through the winter months, is undertaken by a local volunteer, with support from AUITC when required.

The team has also been working on a site at St John's Church placing seating and planters in the garden near to the entrance. It has been a particularly challenging area to maintain due to its size, as it is a weekly task which we just don't have the capacity to maintain. Fortunately, a program of ongoing maintenance by a representative of St John's has kept

the site looking good and AUITC gardening group offer support as and when available.

In terms of supporting our volunteers with their mental and physical health and wellbeing the gardening project has proven to be a huge success with volunteers telling us they have thoroughly enjoyed the experience; although listening to some of them complain about blisters, aches and pains one might wonder if they were so sure!



## Hurst Village Band Contest



Friday 10th June 2022 saw the return of the Annual Hurst Village Brass Band Contest after the COVID restrictions. The contest was run by Ashton United

in the Community in partnership with Ashton United Football Club, Save the Children and various other sponsors. The weather was very kind to us and a crowd of over 300 people watched in glorious evening sunshine as 31 bands competed for a total prize fund of over £2000. Around 20 volunteers were involved in providing food & drink, marshalling and announcing the bands, parking coaches and generally ensuring that the night ran smoothly.



## Ashton United in the Community

Thanks must also go to our Adjudicator, Ritchie Howard, who gave his services for free judging and ranking the bands performances on the night.

The first band to play at 4pm were local band, St Johns, Mossley (pictured) and the overall winners on the night were Rothwell Band from Leeds.

Spectator testimonial: ***“Great to have the contest back, it was bigger and better than ever, we have missed it for 2 years and are looking forward to coming back next year. Thank you to all the volunteers at Ashton United for your efforts”***

## HurstFest



Following the huge success of the 2021 HurstFest moving to Cedar Park, and taking place midweek rather than at a weekend, local people expressed a desire for the event to be repeated. With financial support secured from Bvlgari via partners Smallshaw Hurst Children’s Community (SSHCC) and their sponsors Save the Children fund, we were able to work with our community partners to plan and deliver another fantastic family event with a

host of activities food and drinks, free to local participants (largely OL6 postcode area). This year – bigger and better with more ice-cream – more face painters, circus skills, samba band, festival make-up, inflatables, football skills & drills, crafts, food, stage and performers, and much more. A huge thanks to Lydia Wright from SSHCC for undertaking the anchor role in coordinating the event. A wonderful free summers day was enjoyed by some 600 children together with around 200 of their parents/carers.



AUITC were grateful to the Hate Crime Awareness team from Tameside Community Safety Partnership who supported the Skillz & Drillz sessions at HurstFest.

### Ashton United in the Community

Here are some images from 2022 HurstFest



Ashton United in the Community

Councillor Dan Costello tweeted: *'Hurst-fest-ival was a great success today. So good to see so many families from the local community enjoying the good weather and the activities.'*

Summer Activities Summary

Whilst the highlight of the summer activities was HurstFest there were other events running that engaged with the community. The following two infographics highlight those activities:

**Ashton United In The Community - Summer Activity Highlights**

**75** children in need - received essential back to school equipment including pencil cases & geometry sets

**30** volunteers helped us run our events

**300** Ice Creams enjoyed by young & old!

**600** children & 200 adults joined the fun at HurstFest-ival

Smallshaw-Hurst Children's Community | Smallshaw Hurst Community Action Group

**Ashton United In The Community - Summer Activity Highlights**

**828** children took part in our summer activity programme

**800** smiles at HurstFest-ival

**560** free lunches given our local community

Smallshaw-Hurst Children's Community | Smallshaw Hurst Community Action Group

## Ashton United in the Community

### Women's 'Moving On' Packs

With support from several funders including DEFRA, Big Lottery and Tameside Community Safety

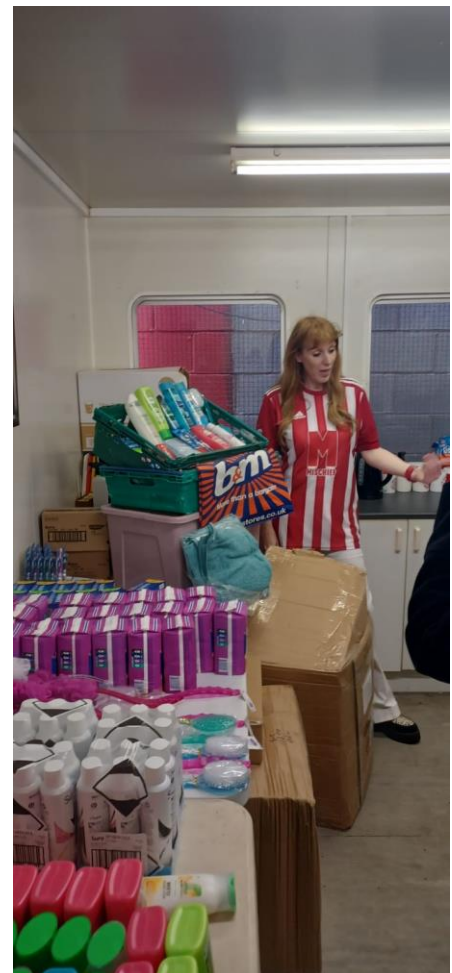


Partnership we have again been able to offer some support to our local women's refuge.

We have provided 50 'Moving On' packs worth approximately £30 per pack, in support of those women leaving the hostel for pastures new, and in need of items to help them set up in their new home environment. The packs included items such as: towel sets, toothpaste, toothbrush,

shampoo, conditioner, deodorant, sanitary products, back scrubbers, nail brushes, and face cloths. Initially we had 25 families in the women's refuge who will benefit first of all, then following that we were able to support 25 other beneficiaries, people in our immediate area, making a total of 50 packs. Links have been forged with B&M Bargains stores offering us a staff discount of 10% enabling the charity to access a broader range of products.

Thanks so much to our volunteer helpers in shopping and pulling together the packs for distribution including Ashton United General Manager and AUITC Trustee, Andy Clayton (pictured at the refuge), and AUITC Patron, Angela Rayner MP, Labour Party Deputy Leader pictured helping with the sorting of products.



Mr Vijay Patel (store Manager, B&M Heywood) said *"We as a store are happy to support such a wonderful charity and supply these items to your local women's refuge in Ashton-Under-Lyne"*

## Ashton United in the Community

### Winter Pressure Fund 2022

#### Summary

Since January 2022, the scale and pace of our engagement with our local community has been incredible. Our activities, including running the Cedar Park Pantry Store and activities for local people have continued to grow. Our aim for the Winter Pressure Fund was to support our most vulnerable local families, and adults by helping them keep warm and healthy over the winter period; this includes older people, people with mental health issues, people with learning difficulties, people with no access to public funds and those in and facing homelessness.

Our activities have been two-fold; devised to support the 'whole' person and/or family, mind, and body and also to give beneficiaries wherever possible a choice in how they feel is best to keep themselves fit and healthy. We have achieved this by supporting our most vulnerable people and families, distributing vouchers, and equipping people with knowledge and resources to withstand the Cost-of-Living crisis.

Early in 2022 the UK began lower Covid-19 lockdown restrictions; with the Winter Pressure Fund we were able to use art and raise awareness about good health & hygiene to support our local community to adjust to life after lockdown. Using our activity packs, events, food pantry, social media, we have used art as a medium to relieve stress and encourage people to come together to share anxieties and fears and importantly, recreate community spirit.

#### Winter Pressure Fund Activity

##### 1. Supporting resilience and providing food to those most in need

An emerging theme has been the cost-of-living crisis and the disproportional devastating impact upon our local community. However, through our networks and connections we have been able to collect local experiences, engage with support services and the voluntary sector, to provide insights into how to better target and support those most in need. Our creative children have been involved in #endpoverty – Full Time Meals and are also devising their own recipes, keeping an eye on the budget and understanding the importance of choice and nutrition.

Meanwhile, our adult community have been busy exploring ways to source nutritious, affordable food, using low energy equipment and expanding knowledge and skills, making best use of ingredients available from the Pantry Store. With our partners in the Tameside Food Network, they have provided cooking lessons and advice to our community. Activity includes sourcing foods ethically and cheaply, preparing meals from scratch, making the best use of food bulking, using vegetables pulses and beans, batch cooking, storing food, whilst building confidence in both using equipment and confidence in cooking. Importantly, building peer support by bringing people together and encouraging members to share experience and ideas.

##### 2. Co-producing solutions to keep healthy

We have provided vouchers to enable people to keep well, beneficiaries decide on what they need, as oppose what 'we think' they need. These vouchers provide the means and choice to obtain nutritious foods, warm clothes, bedding, cooking utensils and heating. We have targeted the resource to ensure it reaches those who need it the most by taking referrals from partner agencies including JIGSAW Housing, the Early Help Team, schools, and the Youth Service. This has proved popular by partners and beneficiaries alike as it offers the opportunity for us to provide the means and beneficiaries exercising their own choices.

## Ashton United in the Community

### 3. Using Art to achieve healthy living

Over the last 2 years, we have lived with COVID-19, and AUITC has come together with partners to create safe space for our local community to come together to express feelings, support one another and find solutions to problems. Art and storytelling have played a big factor in capturing experience of life at the various stages of lockdown and the more recent lifting of restrictions. Using our activity packs and events, we have used art as a medium to relieve stress, share anxieties and fears.

We have been able to provide the materials for local people to experience and get involved in crafting, painting, colouring etc and our volunteers have been busy capturing and collecting artworks and stories through social media, visual methods including drawings, pictures, soundbites, narratives, and ethnographic methods including video, film, and animations. We teamed up with partners and a local artist to curate an

exhibition using a variety of artworks created.

The artworks were displayed in a local public (Cedar Park) so that it visually and physically accessible to all the community. The local artist created an Art Trail throughout the park using



of the

park was

artist

various methods to show the art installations, set in different locations. Our artists (the local community) were given a map of the exhibition to help them negotiate the trail. Over 200 people attended which was an amazing turn out for everyone involved.

### 4. Our Winter Pressure Fund activity has directly reached 837 people

Overall number of people directly benefitted from our activities	837
Number of people/families supported to cook on a budget	61
Number of people & families provided with hot nutritious food	61
Number of food bags provided	378
Number of people benefiting from Art packs	250
Number of people or families receiving vouchers to the value of £50 - £75	75
Number of people benefiting from vouchers to the value of £50 - £75	209

***With thanks to trustee Julie Wilson for the Winter Pressure Fund report***

## Ashton United in the Community

### Pumpkin Carving



On Friday 28th October, at Cedar Park Pavilion, we geared up for another event building our services to promote and support families in accessing a fun environment in their local parks. Spooktacular Pumpkin Carving for Halloween provided 150+ pumpkins at the



ready and a team of 10 volunteers to support the children, some dressed up for the occasion, and families for the two hour long activity. Let the carving begin! Attacking the pumpkins with gusto were more than 150 children creating some creepy carvings whilst taking part in this, one of our most popular events.

With free pumpkins and carving kits for all, together with plenty of sweets, teas and coffee the opportunity for family time was relished by everyone. The feedback from parents and carers was very positive with some taking to social media to publicly express their thanks for a great day out.

Paige said ***"A brilliant afternoon out and the kids loved it"***

Christine ***"Fabulous afternoon, my grandchildren loved it. Thank you"***

Thanks again to the army of volunteers who made the afternoon such a great success.

### Skillz & Drillz – Holiday Hunger

Working with Ashton United Football Club, supported by Tameside Community Safety Partnership, the National Lottery Community Fund Awards for All England programme and Smallshaw Hurst Children's



## Ashton United in the Community

Community we were able to provide, free to attend, Skillz and Drillz coaching sessions during school holidays, and at HurstFest. As last year the sessions were complimented by our Holiday Hunger scheme where children in attendance were provided with a packed lunch.

In total 501 children ages 6-16 have taken part, 525 Packed Lunches were given out. Over the sessions FA qualified coaches have delivered 264 coaching hours over 22 days ably supported by two volunteer assistants between them volunteering for 176 hours.

Michelle and her son Jacob said ***“he continually enjoys the sessions and he wants to join the Ashton United Juniors”***

Linda and her girls ***“really look forward to the school holidays”***

‘Shop Steward’ on Twitter: ***Thanks @AshtonUnitedFC for looking after the kids during the summer holiday. It's a brilliant football training camp and my kids love it ...you do fantastic work supporting the local community and you're a wonderful football club***

## Manchester City Mascots



Thanks to our partnership with Smallshaw Hurst Children’s Community, and their relationship with Save the Children Fund and Mastercard, 24 of the children that attended our autumn term Skillz & Drillz sessions were given the

opportunity to act as pre-match escorts to the teams competing in the November Champions League fixture between Manchester City and Sevilla. Despite torrential rain the children (and their escorting parents/volunteers/guardians) had a blast!



Part and parcel of the work with Ashton United is providing opportunity for local families to share experiences together. We invite families along to Hurst Cross to share The Matchday Experience and make a fuss of them. Introductions are made to the team in the changing rooms and they join in with the players during the pre-match warmup, walking out with both teams for the handshakes and also warming up at half-time with the substitutes. Whilst not on the scale of the Champions League and Premier League day out we see just as many smiles and memories generated by those involved.

## Golf Day

At the end of July, Ashton United Supporters Club held their first Ashton United Golf Day at Ashton-Under-Lyne Golf Club with funds raised being donated to Ashton United in the Community. The event gave many volunteers the opportunity to experience delivering an event including management, setting up and closing down.



## Ashton United in the Community

Ashton United Supporters Club Chairman Luke Sayle said ***'It was amazing to see so many members of the local community, who didn't necessarily have any previous connections with the football club or AUITC,***



***coming together to enjoy the wonderful weather and raise money for a fantastic cause. These ties within our community are invaluable. Hopefully it highlights to everyone what volunteers can do when they come together. It serves as a fine example of what we are aiming to achieve, by bringing members of different organisations within the community together and holding events of mutual benefit to all.'***

The winning team on the day just so happened to be the Ashton United 3 first team coaches, Michael Clegg, Nicky Hunt and Andy Heald who, with former Welsh International footballer Dean Saunders as their mentor for the day, managed to amass an impressive 97 points! A special mention for Dean, who very kindly donated the £100 prize back to the charity. The event made a profit of over £2000, which was donated to Ashton United in the Community.

## Winter Warmer



On Thursday 1 December, together with our partners



Smallshaw Hurst Children's Community, we arranged for Ashton United's Cross Bar to open its doors to the people of Tameside for a Winter Warmer Event aimed at the over 55s. We had a slow but steady stream of visitors throughout the day and everyone benefitted from the sound information, advice and guidance on offer.

Around ten different support organisations attended on the day and visitors were welcomed with a nice hot drink and a choice of lunch, all provided by AUITC. Those organisations that attended were, Citizens Advice, Helping Hand Tameside, Action Together, Be Well Tameside, Age UK Tameside (pictured right), Greater Manchester Fire Service, Groundwork, Digital Wellbeing Project, and Jigsaw Homes (pictured left).

Reflecting back on the event and discussing the day with participating organisations we recognised that older people were still struggling to come to terms with leaving their homes after the Covid experiences.

## Ashton United in the Community

Apparently other such events had struggled to attract large numbers of people. We did not help ourselves by restricting the event to over 55's. A lesson learned and something we will address at future events.

### GAA Academy Links

One of our aims at the start of the year was to forge closer links with Great Academy Ashton. Together



with the use of facilities at the Academy site for Skillz and Drillz sessions the relationship manifested itself this year with an alternative education project where a number of academy students visited Hurst Cross and were introduced, by our Community Development Officer and AUITC volunteers, to a programme of activities that demonstrated 'real life' use of English and mathematics.

The activities included reading about the rules and regulations for sports pitch marking, measuring pitch



dimensions, counting seats and space for ground capacity calculations, pitch maintenance regimes and practical methods of creating patterns on turf.

The young people were fully engaged with the processes and procedures. They enjoyed the experiences so much over the six week period they also chose to return, in their own time, as volunteers for Ashton United first team matches.



### It's Party Time

In the two weeks leading up to Christmas 2022 we hosted two big parties, one for OAP's and one for children in the Cross Bar. Both events were fully subscribed and a great time was had by all. The OAP's enjoyed a full, three course,

## Ashton United in the Community



Christmas dinner, with all the trimmings and were entertained by a great singer. The children had party food and were enthralled by a children's entertainer who had them up dancing and playing party games. All were all given selection boxes as they went home. Both events were heavily supported by our team of volunteers giving up their time, not only to staff the events but to set up and tidy up afterwards - no mean task in the case of the children's party!

### Volunteers

A cornerstone of our work continues to be providing local people with volunteering opportunity. During 2022 some people have again been restricted to the amount of time they could offer to volunteer, and indeed some were still reluctant to volunteer due to concerns over their personal safety after isolating or shielding. This being said, we have continued to recruit and deploy volunteers. In 2022 we have registered 76 volunteers who collectively have recorded 16676.25 hours volunteering. This is almost a 50% increase in recorded volunteering hours on 2021, where roughly the same number of volunteers (70+) delivered 8997hrs volunteering!

In 2019 the estimated average equivalent market hourly wage rate across a range of volunteer activities was around £13.70 (Power to Change 'Assessing the value of volunteers in community businesses' report June 2020). If we were to place a nominal value of £11 per hour on our volunteer's time in 2022 this equates to a social value contribution to volunteering of £183,438.75, a quite remarkable achievement when still, some people were reluctant to return to volunteering post Covid.

Volunteers are utilised in our work beyond Hurst Cross and in and around Ashton United FC, some through home working and giving general support to our charity others by supporting our pop-up events and those events organised by our partners and other charities e.g. several of our volunteers were out and about with the local Rotary Club bringing the joys of Santa to the local community. People, many with complex needs including LGBTQ, learning disabled, students, unemployed or lonely and isolated individuals, have gained confidence and learned new skills as part of the 'Ashton United Family'. They have engaged in ground maintenance, media, stewarding, and coaching, together with pop up events, the food pantry, at Hurst Band Concert and HurstFest. We are very proud of their contribution without which we could not function.

Throughout the year there are always plenty of opportunities for volunteers to get out and about in the fresh air, and be part of a team, engaging in activities that improve general mental and physical health and wellbeing. This is achieved by building confidence, reducing isolation and loneliness, making new

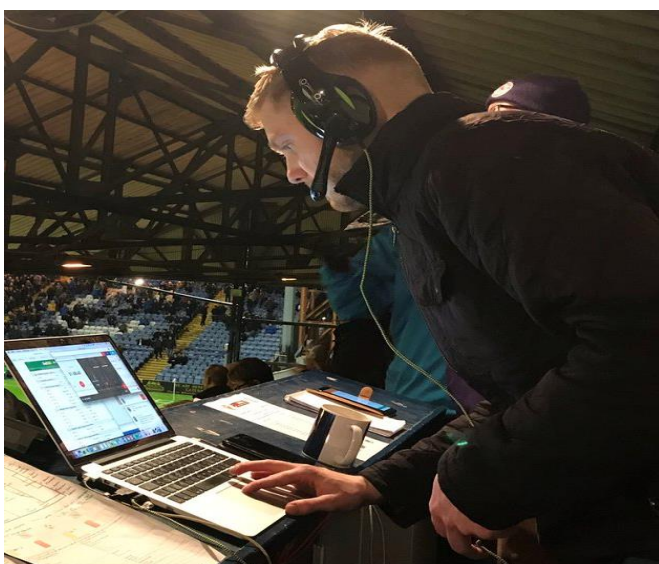
## Ashton United in the Community

friends and becoming part of a team. Our doors are always open to people wanting to join our volunteer programme.



Some severe stormy weather early on in the year left Hurst Cross with major repairs needed due to wind damage to perimeter netting, roofs and general infrastructure; but the plus side was plenty of opportunity for our ground maintenance volunteers to pull together as a team learning new skills and gaining confidence along the way. New volunteers were recruited through our friends at Action Together and they were given the opportunity to join our team.

Alan's story (not his real name): Alan contacted Action Together wishing to do some volunteering. Within an hour of receiving an email we had contacted Alan's mum Kate to come to Hurst Cross and see what her son would like to get involved with. Alan arrived and it quickly became apparent he would need quite a bit of support. Alan has some complex needs with Autism so our Community Development Officer (CDO) Andy Finnigan, supported him through the day. Alan then arrived home and Andy called his Mum to ensure he arrived home safely. She was so thankful for the experience he had at Ashton United in the Community, even though Alan arrived home 'like a drowned rat'. Kate then emailed Action Together with some very pleasing comments about Alan's wonderful experience.



In last year's report we introduced Matt as our volunteer Media Manager. Matt has contributed so much over the course of the year and has passed on his skills and expertise to several other volunteers wanting to follow in his footsteps. This includes Luke, who started volunteering as a matchday photographer, with his grandad John, then progressed to media assistant filming matches, and has now gained casual part time employment as a result of the confidence and skills he has gained as a volunteer. We continue to support Luke as he looks for full time employment supporting him

with references and with job search.

In September we were contacted by James' mother Emma asking if we could offer any volunteering opportunity to her 14yr old son who was seeking voluntary work as a part of his Duke of Edinburgh award and to pursue a love for journalism and specifically sport journalism. James was invited along with a parent and, under Matt's watchful eye, was tasked with supporting Ashton United 1<sup>st</sup> team matchday media activities.

## Ashton United in the Community

In James's own words: ***'During my introduction, and first of hopefully many days at the club, I was introduced to two members of the board and the Head of Media, and also many other very caring, passionate and overall excellent members of the club. Contrary to what I imagined I'd be doing on the day, I was thrown completely into the deep end and, due to two staff being absent, I had the honour of recording the match and I had to manage the scoreboard. Overall I enjoyed an extremely welcoming and productive day.'***

***I would like to thank the media manager, Matt Clayton for being so helpful and welcoming during my visit, Steve the vice-chairman for giving me this extraordinary opportunity and finally the fans for creating a great atmosphere and for showing me how vital this club is in the community.'***

James enjoyed his time so much whilst volunteering he has now become a regular AUITC volunteer. Hopefully, in time, we will help him realise his ambitions to work in sports media and journalism.

At Ashton United in the Community we like to encourage our volunteers to express themselves. This helps them build confidence and, where things go wrong as they will from time to time, have the self-belief that they can get support from their peers to put things right and learn. This philosophy has worked well for us over many years with volunteers blossoming as they learn new skills and gain confidence in their ability, and that of the rest of their fellow volunteers.



This thinking was exemplified in November of 2022 when Matt took it upon himself to issue a rather 'tongue in cheek' press release on behalf of Ashton United FC requesting a 28-day loan for a Norwegian player not involved in the World Cup due to his country failing to qualify:

***'Ashton United can confirm that the club has submitted a 28-day loan approach for Manchester City striker Erling Haaland. With the current Premier League champions not in action until late December due to the 2022 FIFA World Cup, The Robins have reached out to our neighbours at the Etihad in order to keep Haaland's match fitness with him not being involved in Qatar.'***

The response to the audacious statement was a viral media frenzy highlighting both the football club and charity with media outlets worldwide. Almost every media channel in the UK covered the story and there were interviews with TV/radio stations as far and wide as Australia, Egypt, Hungary, Germany, Norway and others. In total, within a week, there were 48 million media impressions. In marketing terms this single piece of marketing genius by a volunteer has a marketing value of over £2million.

It just goes to show the benefit of trust in your volunteers and giving them the opportunity and confidence to express themselves!

## Volunteer Recognition

On Friday 21st October we held a recognition and celebration evening at Ashton United's, The Cross Bar. The evening, supported by a grant from Action Together and supplemented by others, was a celebration of our volunteer's achievements during the year and was also a chance for team building and socialising with each other. Around 80 volunteers and partners enjoyed a fantastic evening of food and musical entertainment. We took the opportunity to thank volunteers for their support and to share with the audience the successes of several individuals by presenting them with their certificates for completing courses in Mental First Aid, Dementia Awareness, Safeguarding and Hate Crime Awareness. People

## Ashton United in the Community

celebrated and reflected on the achievements they had made changing their own lives, as well as the support they had given to others across the community with theirs. We were delighted to be able to welcome some family members of volunteers, brought along to share in the success and camaraderie of the Ashton United in the Community volunteering experience.



Throughout the year of 2022 many volunteers received accredited training from Ethical Enterprises' Jill Tichborne, to help them understand better the community we serve; at the football club, at the pantry and across the district; and systems and processes that will underpin their work. Furthermore two volunteers were recognised by Ashton United FC for their lifelong outstanding contribution as volunteers by being awarded Life Membership of the club. Fed and watered those attending had a fantastic evening rounded off with entertainment from a

band to which they danced the night away. Pictured is Jill Tichborne (left) presenting certificates to volunteer Angela Gratton.

But not all volunteers were able to attend the evening event, some due to age, and visiting licensed premises not appropriate for safeguarding reasons. To ensure that they did not miss out we arranged for a visit to a local restaurant for the group of volunteers under aged 16yrs. Here some are pictured with a youth worker chaperone and Andy Finnigan our Community Development Officer, about to tuck in.



## Staff

This year we have continued with the same staffing structure as last year viz. a full time Community Development Officer ably supported by trustees and a volunteer Project Manager. We have brought in sessional staff as required including coaches, catering, face painters, artistes, partner organisations, etc. This structure has worked, primarily due to the commitment and enthusiasm of everyone connected to the charity to be the best at everything they do, however, as the charity has grown it has become apparent for the need to put in place a more sustainable model which would include appointing a Community Director, something recognised by the trustees in their business plan for 2023-25.

## **Ashton United in the Community**

The grant support we have continued to receive towards the staffing costs has been crucial to the successful delivery of services and activities to local people, without which our operational capabilities would be severely restrained. The challenge is to grow the team and secure the resources needed to offer longer term contracts to staff in order to maintain the quality of our employees

### **Community van**

The purchase of a Community Van in 2021 has enabled us and our partners to be flexible enough to pick up food donations, make deliveries, move equipment around to pop up events, etc. The vehicle, owned and managed by AUITC has been available to other partners to use e.g. Smallshaw Hurst Community Action Group, SSHCC, Tameside Youth Services, and AUFC and has proven to be a real asset when supporting project delivery across the neighbourhood. The vehicle is in constant use and is a regular sight, promoting the partners, via it's livery, across Smallshaw & Hurst.

### **Matchdays**

Ashton United is a strong supporter of Ashton United in the Community; not just a football club, a family run club that embraces its community and recognises that, in difficult times everyone should all pull together. Importantly our football club partner and their suppliers hold similar values. Volunteering opportunities are available for Saturday and Tuesday fixtures for Ashton United throughout the football season. Volunteers attend prior, during and after games to meet and greet fans, carry out pitch and facilities maintenance, stewarding duties, media, etc. This is the chance for people to socialise, learn new skills, put their training into practice and has proven to be a great grounding for volunteers to hone new skills, put into practice learning and gain confidence as they undertake their duties.

### **Strong Political Support**

Throughout the year we were again grateful to be able to call upon the strong support of local elected members who 'rolled up their sleeves' and got stuck into the task of supporting local constituents.

They were ably supported by both of our Patrons Angela Rayner MP, Deputy Leader of the Labour Party who found time during her very busy schedule to support many of our initiatives; and Jonathan Sayer who supported the charity with fundraising through his Mischief Theatre Company.

### **Consultation with Users**

Local people are canvassed when attending, events, activities and the Food Pantry, to determine both their immediate needs and also what they would like to see in the future e.g. what works and what could be done better, what activity packs would people like to see for themselves and also to occupy children during holidays and out of school time, what training needs are there amongst volunteers, etc. We also have regular dialogue with our volunteers who are encouraged to speak to us about what their needs are, what they/we might do to improve their role and/or volunteering experience. The feedback we receive, specifically around training needs, informs the role of Training and Development Coordinator; to work with our people, to create opportunities for them to develop the skills and knowledge they seek to improve their lives and the offer we have as a charity.

### **Coming Soon**

In 2023, together with maintaining our core provision, e.g. Skillz N Drillz, Holiday Hunger, Hurst Band Contest, HurstFest and pop up events across the year, we are looking to introduce a weekly luncheon club during the winter and early spring. We are also working on a Literacy Kicks project that is in two local primary schools. The programme utilises the medium of sports reporting to engage children in reading, writing and editing; taking students inside the captivating world of sports journalism and presenting innovative and authentic tasks for them to complete.

## Ashton United in the Community

Literacy Kicks provides children with an alternative, enjoyable platform to improve their reading and writing skills, as well as offering a fascinating insight into the sports journalism industry. Subject to securing sufficient funding our project will be supported by Smallshaw Hurst Children's Community delivering a similar programme to an older cohort of children and young people.

Our gardening group will be deployed in Cedar Park to engage local people with a tree planting project and with maintaining community space across the neighbourhood.

### Thank You

During the year Ashton United in the Community were successful in a number of grant applications. We are extremely thankful for the support of the following organisations providing grant support (predominantly over £500) toward a number of objectives:

- Action Together Tameside Wellbeing Fund
- ASDA Foundation
- Jigsaw Housing Trust
- Jigsaw Foundation
- The National Lottery Community Fund
- HM Government
- Save the Children Fund
- Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council
- Tameside Community Safety Partnership
- Jonathan Sayer
- Mischief Theatre Company
- Ashton United FC players, management & officials.

The grants we receive enable AUITC to continue to develop as an anchor charity in the Hurst, Smallshaw & Broadoak area of Ashton under Lyne; delivering positive outcomes for local people adversely affected by the complex issues they face living in some of the poorest areas in England, let alone Tameside. These issues are set to expand as the effects of low wages, fuel poverty and rising costs of living put further pressure on those facing the greatest challenges in society. Together we can, and will, help people survive and thrive.



Ashton United in the Community  
Project Manager

Date: 6<sup>th</sup> January 2022