



2021

A S P I R E 2

A N N U A L

R E P O R T

KEEPING OUR COMMUNITY INFORMED AND INVOLVED

2021

ASPIRE2 ANNUAL REPORT

Message from the Chair

Following two years of Covid restrictions we have had to rethink how best we can fulfil our charity's aims. Thankfully we have all been subject to fewer restrictions for enough of last year to allow us to be able to begin to plan to return to normal operations. We have resumed our holiday visits to Ufton Adventure, collaborated on an event with Reading Rock Academy and Reading Rep, and provided the funding for each school to provide some much missed fun. Details of each are in the report.

Much has been said and written about the impact of Covid on children's academic education because of the lack of normal classroom lessons. Less has been said about the lack of extra-curricular activities, school trips, residential visits and inter school sports events. In last year's annual report I announced our intention to work towards providing our WEC schools with two minibuses to open up these "beyond the school gates" experiences to all children. Thankfully I'm pleased to be able to say that on 23 September this year we brought this initiative to fruition by presenting two minibuses to our WEC schools.

We know that many of the children have suffered emotionally from the pandemic and that the children we support are amongst those who have suffered most. We are acutely aware that the activities we promote and fund will be needed more than ever as restrictions are increasingly relaxed. Having acquired the minibuses gives us the impetus and opportunity to seek and fund new events and places to visit with even more determination than in pre Covid years

In brief the current crisis has renewed our determination to make a difference to our children's lives. Needless to say we continue to fundraise in earnest to increase our capacity to help. In this respect we continue to be grateful for the support of our partners listed in the financial report and on the last page. In addition to these I would like to give special thanks to the personal efforts of Tim Lancaster, Dave Marks and Chris Cole who raised funds by running this year's Reading Half Marathon on behalf of Aspire2.

This year our Clerk to Aspire2 has moved on. We thank her for her hard work for Aspire2 during the last two difficult years and wish her well in her new job. Essential to the success of any charity is good management and I'm pleased to report that at the beginning of this school term we were fortunate to appoint Helen Bligh as Aspire2 manager. She brings with her much valued expertise, drive and commitment.

This is a very exciting time for the charity.

Thank you for your continued support. With your help we will make a difference.

Charlie Clare



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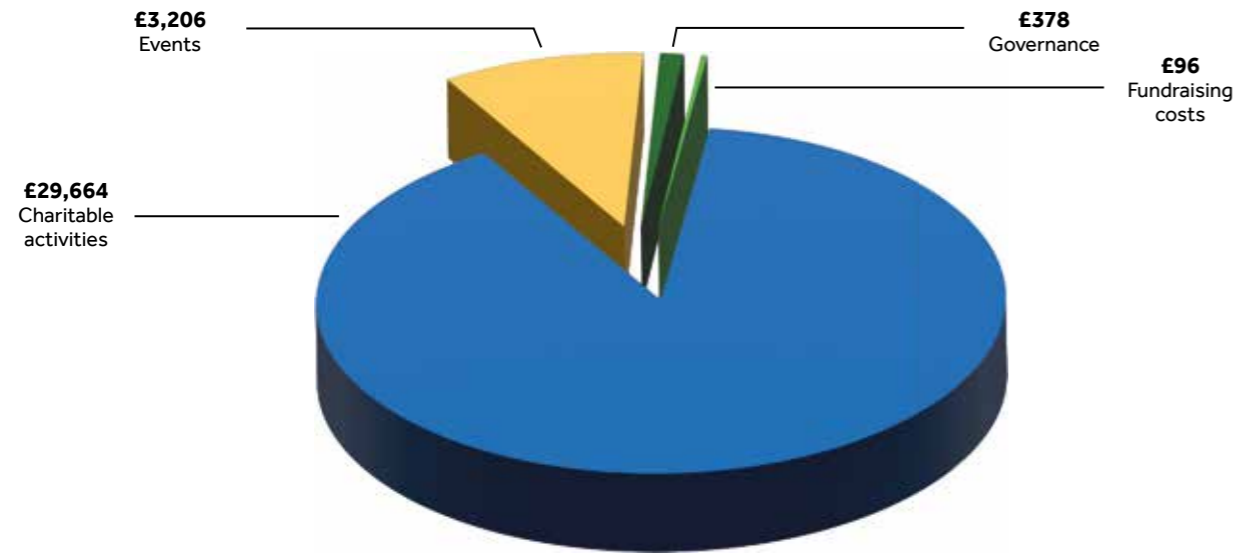
Aspire2 Finance Report

Over the 15 years that Aspire2 has been active, we have generated and received significant sums of over £800k

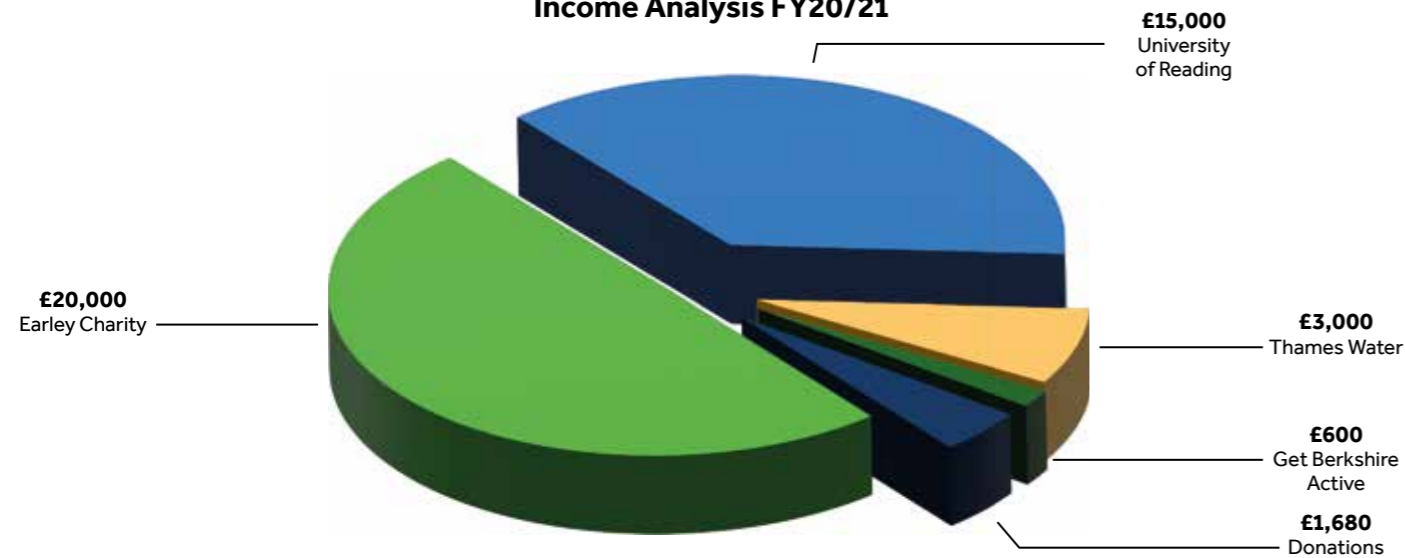
Due in part to the Covid-19 pandemic, our year on year income has once again reduced, however our current bank balance is £87,493 which is up on last year.

The main reason for this is that spend has been lower year on year. This is largely due to the Covid-19 pandemic which paused the majority of our activities. However, we have still been able to run our Ufton Court trips and have helped schools with post-Covid recovery activities. Looking to the future, we also began to fund our successful campaign to lease two minibuses.

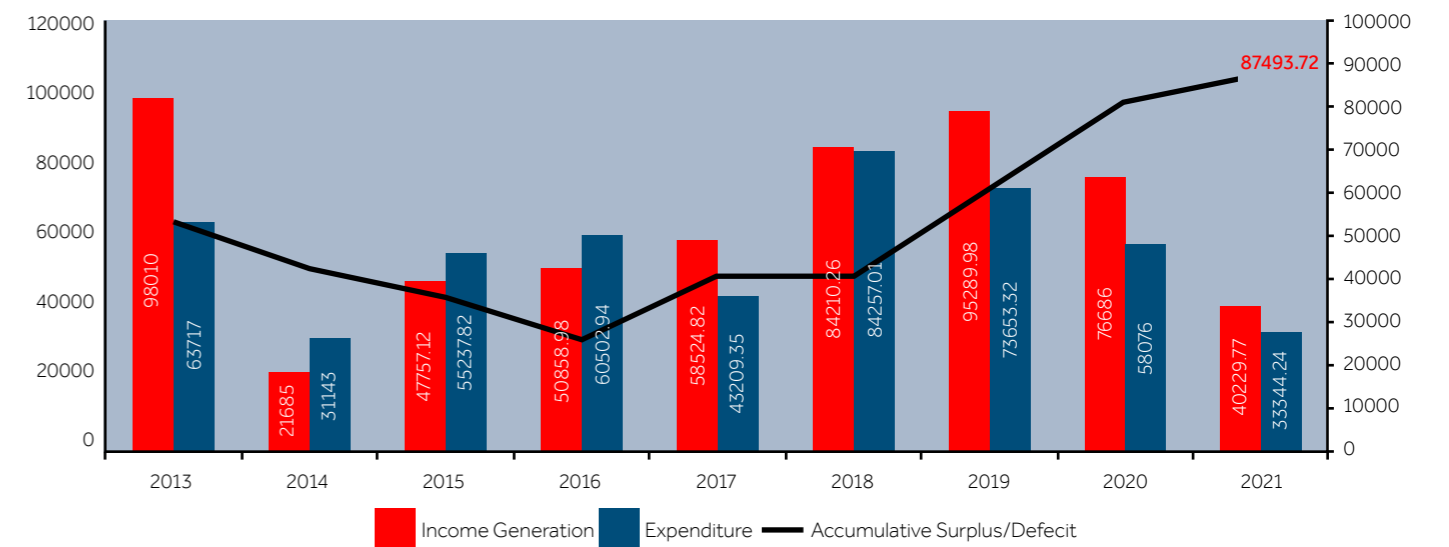
Expenditure Analysis FY20/21



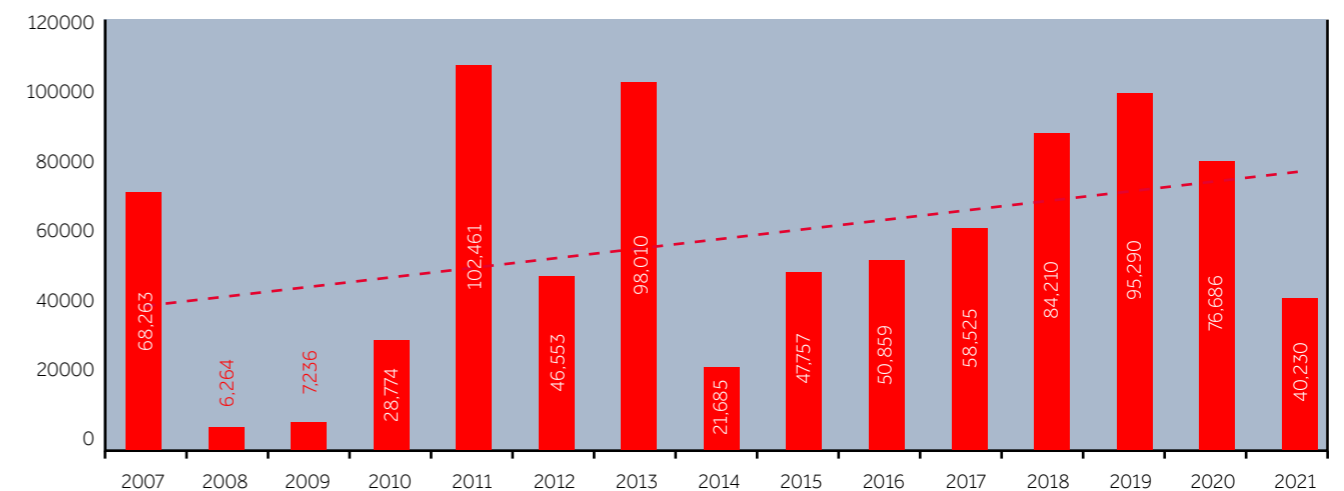
Income Analysis FY20/21



Aspire2 Accumulative Reserves



Aspire2 – Income History



Core Activities/Projects Supported by Aspire2

Due to the ongoing pandemic, activities over the last year have been restricted and have taken a different direction. However, Aspire2 has still funded and launched a number of initiatives that will have a lasting positive impact on the children and families of South Reading, and which will pave the way for future development.

Minibuses

In conjunction with funding from the John Sykes Foundation, Aspire2 has leased two minibuses for use by Whitley schools. These each seat 16 passengers (plus driver), and are adapted to take wheelchairs. They can be driven by members of school staff without needing additional licences or expensive training programmes. The minibuses are housed at The Ridgeway Primary School and are available for all schools to book for trips, events and activities. This initiative will provide new opportunities and freedom for schools to take children on extra-curricular trips and activities without the burden of additional transport costs, or the lead time and logistics involved in booking and organising external transport providers.



John Sykes with Mayor Rachel Eden and Chair of Trustees Charlie Clare at the launch of our two minibuses



Children from The Ridgeway Primary and Geoffrey Field Junior schools trying out the new minibuses with donor John Sykes

Ufton Court

Aspire2 have continued to facilitate day and residential school visits to Ufton Adventure at Ufton Court. These help children to develop the skills, behaviours and attitudes that will enable them to better deal with the challenges they face in life. Repeated visits to Ufton show a demonstrable improvement in children's abilities and attitudes, as evidenced by the Ufton Ladders of Success. These focus on raising self-esteem, development of friendship skills, tenacity, empathy and the management of personal wellbeing. The experiences and interventions offered by Ufton Adventure facilitate children's progress towards success in school and beyond.

Silent Disco

The purchase of 100 sets of silent disco headphones has allowed schools to run innovative, fun, inclusive events for all children. These are available for free use by all Aspire2 schools, and provide opportunities for a wide range of audio events including discos, languages and mindfulness.

Summer term Covid grants

Each school in Whitley was awarded a grant of £1,000 in the summer term to run a fun activity as a way of making up for some of the social activities that children may have missed out on during the pandemic. These have been used in a variety of creative ways, including parties, a trip to a theme park, circus skills, a BMX display and even a visit from reindeer. Each school has very much appreciated the chance to give their children something to look forward to in what has been a very challenging year for everyone.

Lockdown Stories podcast project

Local theatre group Reading Rep and music school The Rock Academy have come together to bring a unique podcasting project to Whitley schools. Year 6 children have been able to express their experiences of lockdown and of the pandemic, creating a digital time capsule that reflects the events of the last couple of years. This project allows children the opportunity to pause and reflect on their own experiences, and delivering this via podcast gives a strong and unique sense of the children's own voices. There is potential for this project to roll out to other schools over the coming year.



Aspire2 Partnerships

Aspire2 are very fortunate to partner with a number of fantastic institutions, charities and business.

The Earley Charity

The Earley Charity continues to be a valued supporter of Aspire2. Their ongoing funding to support enrichment across our schools is greatly appreciated. The Earley Charity have this year once again been hugely instrumental in enabling Aspire2 to realise our aspirations.

John Sykes Foundation

Aspire2 have formed a strong partnership with the John Sykes Foundation, whose support has facilitated the lease of our two new minibuses. These will open up a world of opportunities to children at the WEC schools, enabling them to go on trips, to fixtures, and on ad hoc adventures without the cost and logistical limitations of booking external transport. We are very grateful to them for enabling this project which will make such a fundamental difference to the children of Whitley.

Ufton Adventure

The programmes offered by Ufton Adventure help children develop the skills, behaviours and attitudes that they need to succeed, to help children deal with the challenges they face in life. Throughout the last ten years, Ufton have supported Whitley children to enjoy new experiences, challenge themselves in new ways, and develop skills that will help them to grow and develop as well rounded, confident young people.

The University of Reading (UoR)

Aspire2's partnership with the university has been strong for many years and is greatly valued. The university's outreach team provides unique opportunities for Whitley children to experience a taste of their potential future, and to aspire to learning at a higher level. The U of R also hosts our public speaking and poetry competitions providing a highly appropriate stage for children to display their oral skills.

Reading Voluntary Action

Aspire2 are continuing to build on our close relationship with Reading Voluntary Action. RVA has offered training and support, and has enabled us to forge some great partnerships with other local community groups and associations.

WCDA

We are also grateful to the Whitley Community Development Association (CDA) who unquestionably assist Aspire2 with many of our plans and initiatives, and enable us to deliver our services to the community at the heart of Whitley.

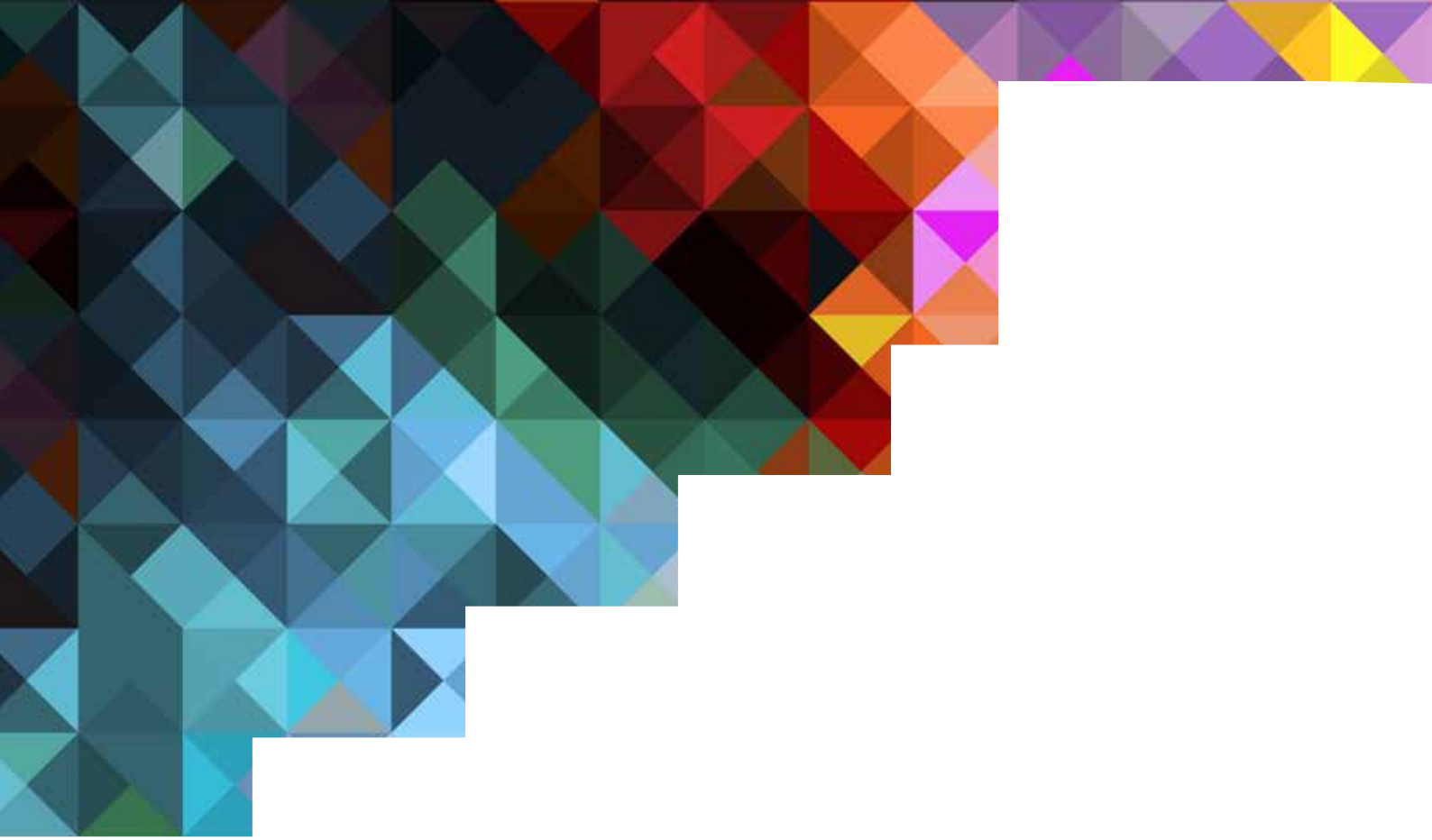
Holy Brook Associates

Their support of Aspire2 is multifaceted, with them believing in our programmes and aims, and also by providing much appreciated professional support and expertise.

The CEP

The Reading Cultural Education Partnership continue to provide a wealth and depth of enrichment opportunities over the last year, from offering children tickets to local events, to signposting free enrichment and educational opportunities. We are incredibly grateful to the CEP for inviting Aspire2 into their community.





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