

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Making Life Better



Welcome from the Chair and the CEO



Key Highlights for Community Action Dacorum

2023/2024 was a period of change for Community Action Dacorum with the formation of new departments based around three themes of Communities, Employability, and Wellbeing. Our new Heads of Department were appointed and our services grouped within these areas to provide consistency and a foundation of support to help local groups and residents improve their quality of life.

We were enormously proud to receive the High Sheriff's Award for our training programme. Our online regional ESOL course was particularly recognised, alongside our work with Ukrainian guests to help them integrate into our community whilst facing horrific challenges back home. We were thrilled to collect the award at a ceremony earlier in the year and to be amongst such august company.

Our strong financial outcomes from our trading company HITS allowed us to invest in our infrastructure, with improved IT/IS systems rolled out across the organisation, as well as ensuring our working environment is welcoming to both our clients and our staff and volunteers. More and more volunteers have come in to help with our service delivery and we have really benefited from their support and assistance.

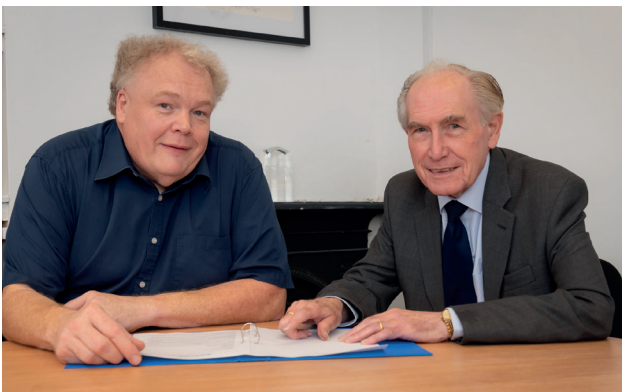
Our projects have helped residents across the borough and beyond. The growth of our Staying Connected project, which gifts IT equipment to residents, offers guidance in how to use it and ensures digital connectivity, has reached more than 1,000 people in Hertfordshire and saved enough carbon to fly around the world 30 times!

Our volunteers have continued to support us as drivers, advising people on volunteering, helping those with mobility issues access The Marlowes, and many other things. Without their help and dedication we would struggle to provide the range of services we do and we have been very grateful for their support this year.

We have recruited several excellent new trustees this year, who have helped us meet skills gaps we had identified. We are also working to increase the diversity of our board. We are grateful to trustees who have agreed to stay in post longer than their normal tenure to allow a smooth transition to a new board and to ensure our skills mix remains strong.

It has been a busy year for Community Action Dacorum as demand for our services has increased whilst at the same time grants and fundraising income has reduced. It is a testimony to our team that they have not only supported everyone who has come to us for help but managed to develop the charity with new projects and processes.

We hope you enjoy this report and the impact that Community Action Dacorum has on our community.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Simon".

Simon Aulton
Chief Executive

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Colin".

Colin Gage
Chairman





Meeting our Charitable Purpose

Community Action Dacorum exists to 'link the public, corporate and voluntary sectors for the benefit of the community', as set out in our governing document. Specifically, these are:

To promote any charitable purposes for the benefit of the public, principally but not exclusively in the local government area of Dacorum and its environs and, in particular, build the capacity of third sector organisations, providing them with the necessary support, information and services to enable them to pursue or contribute to any charitable purpose.

To promote, organise and facilitate co-operation and partnership working between third sector, statutory and other relevant bodies in the achievement of the above purposes within the area of benefit.

We achieve this by working in three areas for the benefit of the residents of Dacorum. These are:

Communities | Employability | Wellbeing

Our Communities team promotes, organises and facilitates co-operation and partnership, working between third sector, statutory and other relevant bodies in the achievement of the above purposes. Together with our Employability and Wellbeing teams, and with the support of our training and development and interpreting service, the charity is focused on improving the quality of lives of people across the Borough. All the activities we deliver work to improve the wider determinates of health for our community, often supporting the most vulnerable residents. We support the labour market, we promote life-long education, we support people with their income and expenditure during a cost-of-living crisis, and we build a sense of community within Dacorum.



Our Impact

We are proud to showcase the hard work our team has put in this year and how it has strengthened social and community networks within Dacorum, continuing to make it a better place to live and work.

Our services help residents improve their work opportunities and environments by supporting them in developing their job prospects. Our wellbeing team ensures people can access the services they need by working to bridge the gap between patient and healthcare provider. Whether it is access to transportation or appointments, or addressing digital poverty,

our wellbeing services increase dignified independence to the most vulnerable members of our community. Our training and development work addresses loneliness and isolation through education, providing a sense of community interaction and instilling skills and self-belief that can be applied in all aspects of life.

Whilst it would bring us much pride to be able to share each and every one of the many interventions we have undertaken this year, space will sadly not allow. In this report we present and celebrate some examples of our work.



Community

It reflects the strength of community in Dacorum that so many organisations exist and so many people choose to volunteer. Our Communities team works with community sector organisations to promote the joy of volunteering, to support groups to run safely and effectively, to bring in money into the borough, and to marshal the voluntary sector to support local communities in crisis.

At Community Action Dacorum our goal is to ensure smooth and swift movement at the heart of this. We aim to coordinate the approach to meet social needs and ensure the voices of those within the voluntary sector are heard by decision-makers.

Community Support

Our team supports local community organisations in making a difference to lives across the borough. This year we have welcomed many additional sports clubs into membership as a result of our work with Herts Sports Partnership. We have been able to support them and other members with networking, funding and minibuses, to name but a few. Some examples of our impact are:

Stewart Hunt, Apex in the Community

"Community Action Dacorum has provided us with invaluable guidance, particularly with applications to the Dacorum Shared Prosperity

Fund for funding to launch and develop free park tennis opportunities in Dacorum. Their partnership has also been crucial in our diabetes prevention initiative in Markyate and with providing affordable minibus solutions, which has given us much-needed transport solutions. Their support has significantly expanded our project opportunities, allowing us to reach and engage with a broader range of people across the community."

Gordon Harland, Harbour Lights and Matthew Sharks Scuba Diving Clubs

"The staff and volunteers at The Roundhouse have helped us make contacts, fill in funding forms and set up spreadsheets to get our finances on track. This support has helped us receive a grant to enable 100 children in Dacorum a chance to try out scuba diving." Gordon also said: "Having met other people at the networking event, we have been contacted by other organisations to work in partnership on events, which we are delighted with."

We have also been able to support our wider membership, securing funds from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Mayor's Charity to help all charities across Dacorum achieve their goals. This, as well as our ongoing provision of services, volunteers, and advice, helps promote the joy of volunteering within our community. Some comments from our members:

COMMUNITY PROJECTS

- Community Help Hertfordshire
- Community Support Team
- Cost of Living Advice Programme
- Volunteer Centre
- ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages)
- Minibuses for Groups
- Supporting Refugees and Guests

Carol Walls, Dacorum Mencap

"Allowing us to use the facilities at The Roundhouse for Dacorum Mencap members to meet up and socialise with a Chatter Table has been really popular." Carol said that members, all adults with learning difficulties, can suffer from social isolation and that the weekly events have really helped give them a safe space to meet and chat.

Jo Chappell, The Hospice of St. Francis

Reported that the Community Action Dacorum community team helps them by recruiting and checking out volunteers, as well as supporting them to forge relationships with other local community organisations.

Edmund Adutwum, Smart Innovation Exchange (SIEX)

Edmund is a new member of Community Action Dacorum and says he has found the information, funding advice, marketing, governance and event planning support, all invaluable. *"Loretta and Leanne helped us get our organisation off the ground and have been very helpful helping us structure our activities for black and ethnic minorities."*

Jacqui Sheppard, Liberty Tea Rooms

Jacqui said she calls on our Communities team for advice, promotion of events, DBS support and volunteer referrals and said: *"Community Action Dacorum are a great source of information whenever we need it."*



Volunteering

Our Volunteer Centre helps organisations recruit and vet potential volunteers. We work with individuals to find the perfect placement to use their skills and give them something to really enjoy. By linking together potential volunteers with voluntary organisations we increase the amount of support delivered by the sector and help build the strength of our community. Some of our volunteers have told us:

Mpho Motlhabane, Receptionist role

"When I first signed up to volunteer, I was a bit nervous but there was a welcoming atmosphere that told me I should do it. I am normally a shy person, volunteering has increased my confidence, has made me meet with so many people with different characters."

Aaron-Martin Lovette

Says he found registering to volunteer very easy saying: *"I am enjoying the opportunity to help others with learning disabilities and would definitely recommend it to others"*.

Yvonne Baldwin, Receptionist/admin role

"Volunteering has given me an interest outside home and it has become my hobby. I have met and worked with a lot of lovely people who have become my friends and certainly would recommend volunteering to others."

Carol Debnam, Metoring/Community Fridge

Carol volunteers in a reading support and mentor role with children, to help enhance their reading skills. She said: *"Signing up to volunteer was very straightforward, Kerry is very personable and completed the initial details, checked my ID and two references, did my DBS check and I was ready to go!"*



Employability

Employability environments have a strong link to our overall health, so we offer skills-based practical development opportunities to all members of the Dacorum community, including the most vulnerable. From helping young people build their CVs through our schools' careers work, to supporting those whose abilities outshine their disabilities, or providing purposeful retirement to people leaving the workforce, we support residents to better their life chances and thrive. Through this work, members of our community get the support they need to gain employment, schools are supported in meeting their Gatsby targets, and volunteering opportunities are available for skills development or retirement.

Developing Employability Opportunities

After many years of being a full-time mum and with her daughter now attending secondary school, Katie was seeking a volunteering role where she could gain experience for a career in admin or finance. She joined the finance department at Community Action Dacorum in January 2023 and volunteered one day a week for 10 months. Katie gained experience in invoicing, purchase orders, sending emails, petty cash, volunteer expenses, bank reconciliation, and credit notes. Most importantly, it increased her confidence.



EMPLOYABILITY SERVICES

- Connect Dacorum
- CV Writing Days
- Digital Inclusion
- Dragon's Apprentice
- Employment Courses
- Introduction to Interpreting Courses
- Purposeful Retirement
- Staying Connected
- Volunteering for Employment

Finance manager, Linda, said: "Katie has been extremely helpful to a very busy finance office. To have another person to enter things for us and help with the admin has taken some pressure off the rest of the team."

Katie was looking for a permanent job position, so we helped her prepare a CV and invited her to the Dacorum Schools Careers fair as a volunteer, where she could also meet employers. She was offered an interview with B&M Care as a care assistant and has since been offered the job. Congratulations, Katie!

Katie thanks Community Action Dacorum for all the help offered to her. She says she has really enjoyed volunteering here, has met a lot of new people, and her confidence only continues to improve.

Radio Dacorum

Bournemouth University student Joel reached out to Radio Dacorum in the hope of completing some practical work experience to enhance his Sports Journalism coursework portfolio. The 20-year-old was offered the opportunity to shadow the station manager, Matt Hatton, and quickly immersed himself, learning how to use the station's database and show programming software, as well as invaluable tools for creating engaging content like Canva and Audacity. Joel designed a social media poster, a short video reel to promote his show, and produced a radio jingle. He even curated and planned his own two-hour live sports show. Although Matt was available to support with any technical difficulties, the content and direction of the show were entirely Joel's creation, demonstrating his growth and confidence.



Joel's experience at Radio Dacorum gave him tangible skills to flourish in the broadcasting industry and allowed him to develop a portfolio that will undoubtedly benefit his future career in sports journalism.

Dragons' Apprentice Challenge

For 11 years, Connect Dacorum has run the Dragons' Apprentice Challenge, whereby local secondary schools are supplied with £100 stake and compete to turn it into £1,000 or more, with support and advice from business mentors and local charities.

We have heard many great stories over the years about what an amazing difference the challenge has made to students. This year all the teams showed determination and perseverance in their aim to raise as much money as possible for their charity.

Reflecting on an incredible journey with the Dragons' Apprentice Challenge 2023/24 one of the students from a local school said:

"Throughout this journey I honed a variety of transferable skills that I'm excited to carry forward into future endeavours:

Project Management: *From planning to execution, managing every detail of our fundraising events taught me the importance of organisation and time management.*

Team Collaboration: *Working closely with a diverse team, I learned the value of effective communication, delegation, and leveraging each team member's strengths.*

Goal Setting and Achievement: *Setting clear objectives and working strategically to exceed our fundraising targets was both challenging and rewarding.*

Marketing and Promotion: *Promoting our events and engaging with the community sharpened my skills in social media marketing, public relations, and persuasive communication. One of my highlights being the radio interview with Radio Dacorum.*

It was an incredible experience that reinforced my passion for making a positive impact. Also, including budget and financial management and problem solving skills. I'm excited to apply these skills in future roles and projects."



Wellbeing: Support Where Needed

Our wellbeing services provide people with mobility challenges, who would not otherwise have access to various healthcare services, dignity and increased independence. Services like transport to and from medical appointments, easy access to mobility scooters to allow families to shop together, or day trips that provide dignified independence and a sense of community and ease feelings of loneliness and isolation, all contribute to an atmosphere of belonging in Dacorum.

Community Cars

Our Community Cars initiative provides transport solutions to Dacorum residents where needed. After experiencing some anxiety over how to get to and from an important eye appointment, Lou reached out to Debbie in Community Transport, who arranged for Community Car driver, Philip – Lou's 'Knight On A White Charger' – to help.

Philip collected Lou from home and took her to the entrance, waited for two-hours then picked her up and drove her home.



WELLBEING SERVICES

- Cancer Prevention Programme
- Community Buses
- Community Help Hertfordshire
- Community Transport
- Dacorum Library of Things
- Day Trippers
- Door2Store
- ShopMobility

Lou said:

"I felt the most important part was waiting for me and taking me home, I had 10% vision so a taxi wouldn't have sufficed, I could not have looked for one. Philip was like having my own special person looking after me and making me feel safe."

Lou continues to thank Community Transport, Debbie, Philip, and Community Action Dacorum for their valuable support.



Shopmobility

Shopmobility assists those with disabilities or limited mobility in getting out and about independently, helping them access community spaces and reducing their sense of isolation. It plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of life of its users while also contributing to the local economy through the so-called 'purple pound', the spending power of people with disabilities and their families.

Located in the heart of Hemel Hempstead at The Marlowes Shopping Centre, Shopmobility has scooters and wheelchairs among its range of mobility equipment for hire. The service is designed to facilitate access to shopping areas, leisure facilities and local amenities, making it easier for users to participate in community life. The impact of Shopmobility is hard to quantify, with some of the key benefits being:

Enhanced Independence: The opportunity to hire a mobility aid allows people to access shops, restaurants, and other services independently without relying on friends or family.

Improved Quality of Life: By offering opportunities to participate in everyday activities, Shopmobility contributes to mental wellbeing and social inclusion.

Accessibility: The service not only provides physical mobility aids but also raises awareness about accessibility issues in the community and encourages local businesses to consider inclusivity in their services and facilities.

Increased Spending: Shopmobility provides access to the high street for individuals who might otherwise stay home due to mobility challenges. This increased footfall can lead to higher sales for local businesses, with close to 9,000 extra shopping hours facilitated in The Marlowes alone.

Encouraging Inclusivity: As more businesses recognise the importance of accessibility, the overall shopping environment improves, benefiting all customers, including those with disabilities.

The Shopmobility service is a vital resource for people with mobility challenges, providing tools to engage with the community and to live independently for longer. Its impact extends beyond the individual to stimulate the local economy via the 'blue pound'. And, by fostering inclusivity and accessibility, Shopmobility enhances the lives of its users and strengthens the economic fabric of Hemel Hempstead.

Comments from some of Shopmobility's service users include:

"All the staff and volunteers are so welcoming and helpful. Without the use of the scooters, I would not be able to go to the shops or socialise, I'm so grateful."

"It makes such a big difference to my life."

"Nothing seems too much and the pick-up and drop off of the scooter is so easy!"





Wellbeing: Improving Quality of Life

Being part of a community has proven benefits for your health and wellbeing. Our social and community networks make us who we are and provide us with support and strength. The joy that comes from volunteering and being involved in the community is one of the ways that Community Action Dacorum supports residents to have purposeful lives. Our wellbeing services ensure that people across Dacorum have the highest quality of life possible.

Blurring Boundaries: Volunteers and Service Users

At The Repair Shed and Radio Dacorum, the line between volunteer and service user blurs beautifully. Unlike traditional volunteer roles where there is a clear distinction between the helper and the helped, these projects foster a more symbiotic relationship. Participants give and receive support, contributing their skills while benefiting from the therapeutic and educational aspects of the work.

The Repair Shed

In The Repair Shed, individuals engage in practical projects that promote skill development, mental wellbeing, and social interaction. Similarly, Radio Dacorum offers a creative outlet for volunteers, many of whom are also service users. This dual role builds confidence, teaches new skills, and promotes a sense of purpose and community.

The impact of these projects is enhanced by the intertwining roles, making them valuable to the charity's mission of fostering inclusive and supportive environments.

Earlier this year, a teacher from St Luke's Special Educational Needs School asked The Repair Shed if they could introduce a small group of children to basic woodworking. After some discussions about scope and supervision, it was agreed to host five students over several weeks to create flowerpot holders. The project quickly turned into a valuable experience not just for the students but also for the 'Shedders' guiding them.

SUPPORTIVE WELLBEING PROJECTS

- Day Trippers
- Radio Dacorum
- Volunteer Centre
- The Repair Shed





The Sheddors' experience:

"The work began by designing the holders, with each student creating a drawing that included precise dimensions for each panel. As the children marked out the wood panels using a ruler, set square, and pencil for the first time, it was clear they were eager to learn. Intergenerational sharing of knowledge and seeing their interest grow was incredibly rewarding. It wasn't just about the technical aspects; it was about passing on skills that could inspire confidence and creativity.

Sawing was a new skill for many of the students. They started out cautiously, but their determination to master the task was inspiring. Their successes, however small, brought a sense of accomplishment that made the teaching process fulfilling. It was encouraging to see how quickly they caught on, turning their initial hesitation into confidence.

Drilling and countersinking screws was another challenging step. Using hand drills required patience and coordination, but they managed to get through it with some guidance. These moments, though simple, were a reminder of how hands-on activities can teach focus and persistence. There was a sense of quiet satisfaction in watching them overcome each hurdle.

The gluing stage, while messy, brought some light-hearted fun to the project. It wasn't just

about the building; it was about enjoying the process. When the students decided to paint their holders, the excitement and creativity they displayed added a fresh dynamic to the experience. Their enthusiasm made all the effort worthwhile.

Throughout the project, it was interesting to see the transformation in the students. Some who were quiet and reserved at the beginning gradually began to open up and share their thoughts. From a supervision perspective, the project was both exhausting and rewarding. It served as a reminder of the simple joys of working with others and passing on practical skills. In the end, it wasn't just about building flowerpot holders — it was about creating a shared experience that had a positive impact on everyone involved."

The benefits of intergenerational working and role modelling such as this are huge. The school is able to put real-life experience in front of young people who develop skills for life from the experience. The 'Sheddors' get a purposeful volunteering experience, experiencing the joy of volunteering as well as sharing their knowledge with a future generation. The value of this type of project was recognised when The Repair Shed won the National Schools and Academies Innovation Award.



Training and Development

We are firm believers in the idea that you 'learn something new every day'. Education is a lifelong pursuit, and keeping both body and mind active with new challenges is proven to improve our health and overall wellbeing.

Community Action Dacorum training courses cover all three areas of focus: **Communities** | **Employability** | **Wellbeing**, and support our work with the trading company HITS.

Lifelong Learning

Lifelong Learning is a way to ensure residents can build essential skills for employment, or skills that bring people together. Crafting is one of the key areas in which we work with people to address loneliness and isolation, as well as building skills within the community.

Sarah, who attended our Rehash the Stash training in August, said:

"I left school at 15 and I couldn't wait to get out! I did get O Level English and several CSE's. I was entering retirement but still wanted to learn and develop. I was a full-time carer for my mother who had Alzheimer's and dementia. When she passed away, I was feeling very lost and lonely with a void to fill. I didn't want a regimented environment and wanted a small group. I also knew the tutor from a previous course and liked her teaching style. I liked the tutor, the idea of utilising old items into



new, learning about sustainability and creating beautiful pieces into which I could incorporate natural items like twigs, offcuts of wool, threads, and ribbons, etc. I loved the company of the other ladies and learnt a lot.

Living in a sheltered housing scheme now since my mum died, I run monthly craft classes for the residents and get so much pleasure teaching them the way my tutor did with a 'yes, you can do it' approach, just give it a try! I'm also volunteering as a teaching assistant, where I have really enjoyed seeing what other people can achieve and stretching myself to remember all that I have learnt through previous Step2Skills courses.

I consider myself to be young for my age and capable of learning new skills and now with my tutor's help I have learnt ways to pass this information on to other people in ways they can understand. I know I can relate to people's different learning styles. I am more at ease.





TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

- Community Interpreting
- Diploma in Public Service Interpreting (DPSI)
- ESOL
- Governance for Charities
- Introduction to Interpreting
- IT courses
- Lifelong Learning
- Multiply
- Recruiting Volunteers
- Safeguarding for Charities
- Staying Connected.

If you get the opportunity to enrol on a course, then just do it! They are great learning experiences and can lead to opportunities for future learning and volunteering, building new friendships with like-minded people and doing different courses. Your health and wellbeing improves by keeping physically and mentally active and having a new interest."

Community Integration

We run numerous courses to help members of our community integrate into British culture and society, including ESOL, integration and communication, interpreting, employability, and cultural trips.

Recent courses for BNO Hong Kongers included boat trips arranged with the Waterways Experience, which were very much liked and appreciated. Both the adult and family boat trips had a good turnout, with more than 80 adults and young people attending.

Participants got in touch to share their gratitude:

"Thank you for organising the boat trip, it was fantastic."

"Thanks for organising those wonderful trips!"

A very busy year for Training and Development, training over 900 people throughout Dacorum, Hertfordshire and the East of England.

The last of our 3 year contract with DLUHC was successfully run with over 200 Hong Kong participants, their classes included English for beginners and high fliers. We then took families on our canals, showing them our countryside whilst giving them the history behind the canals. Nearly all of them willingly jumped off and opened/shut the locks. Many of them have now gone into employment or set up their own small businesses.

We worked closely with our Ukrainian families, offering English classes and leisure/crafting courses, both of which were readily received and participated in. They happily ran coffee mornings and invited others to join them including a wonderful feast prepared in their homes and brought to St Mary's Church Hall. This is a strong resilient Matriarchal system with great support from their community and their courage is evident for all to see.

It is an honour to work closely with these groups as well as other refugees and asylum seekers and with the help of these 2 groups we achieved The High Sheriff award for literacy.



Our Future

Our Vision

Our vision for Community Action Dacorum is to be the local leader in the provision of high-quality and good-value community services, both directly and indirectly, to the people of Dacorum, addressing identified social needs in the areas of Communities, Employability, and Wellbeing.

Our Mission

Our mission is to make a positive difference to the lives of people in our area of operation. We support our community by working through member and partner organisations. Through the services we deliver directly, we improve life chances for those seeking employment or moving into retirement. We also improve the quality of life for individuals by delivering wellbeing programmes.

Our Core Values and Beliefs

We believe that community organisations play a vital role in an inclusive society. We aim to achieve this by: -

Listening to and respecting others' ideas and aspirations;

Giving everyone the right to equality of opportunity and the chance to make a contribution;

Committing to quality in all that we do and emphasising throughout our activities that quality matters;

Bringing people and organisations together to achieve more;

- Encouraging the widespread participation of volunteers in the organisation and leadership of all our Activities and Business Units;
- Working always in an ethical and responsible manner;
- Responding to the need for change in a timely and responsible way;
- Seeking to develop new initiatives which address developing social needs;
- Being an employer of choice, supporting our staff team.

How we will achieve this

Our strategy is made up of seven key objectives:

1. Communities
2. Employability
3. Wellbeing
4. Trading
5. Finance, Funding and Governance
6. Resources
7. Reputation, Impact and Influence

The first three strategic objectives in the Trustees' Strategic Plan 2022-2025 set out our direction to meet our charitable objectives of Communities, Employability, and Wellbeing. These strategies were developed following a review of our successes from the previous strategic plan, and the gaps we saw in providing a holistic service to vulnerable people in the borough. We have set out our plans to work for the public benefit in Dacorum and surrounding areas over the next three years. The trustee board has been restructured in line with the seven themes and closely monitors progress in each area.



Focusing on the three major areas of our charitable delivery:

Communities remain at the centre of our strategy. Over the coming years we will get to know our community even better, building our relationships to understand the residents of Dacorum, and be an independent voice for those hardest to hear. Our work will be impactful and facilitate community groups to grow and be stronger, through an increasing range of offers and the development of our community services. These include Radio Dacorum and Connect Dacorum, as well as our work supporting community groups and the Volunteer Centre. We will aim to forge strong partnerships across the sector to work collaboratively towards a common goal.

Employability and aspiration are perennial issues in Dacorum, with average incomes lower than the rest of Hertfordshire. We will work with voluntary, statutory and business partners to offer holistic support to both those who need help in achieving their ambitions and those

seeking employment. By delivering training and offering opportunities to learn through intergenerational experiences we will support people seeking their first job, those who wish to upskill or reskill, and those leaving the workforce to begin a purposeful retirement. Through our ESOL courses and language services, we will break down barriers to employment and build our local workforce.

Wellbeing support is at the heart of our volunteering offer, we will continue to work in strong partnerships to leverage the benefits of the voluntary sector to strengthen the wellbeing of Dacorum's community. Building on our existing range of services, we will encourage independence and develop confidence for vulnerable residents. Through this work we will continue to contribute to the health and wellbeing of Dacorum and beyond.

Our Year in Numbers

The financial year which ended in March 2024 has been a relatively stable period for Community Action Dacorum in terms of the charity's finances. The activities of the charity remained consistent allowing us to renew our focus on delivering a better service for our stakeholders. Once again, the contribution made by our trading subsidiary was much larger than expected. This led to another increase in our overall reserves position which is now in excess of £2.0m.

The trustees have designated £791k of our funds to continue overdue renewals of facilities and updating of our operations; to develop projects that will enhance the work of the charity; and to provide funds for our trading subsidiary to develop its business. All of this should enable us to provide a better service to our beneficiaries.

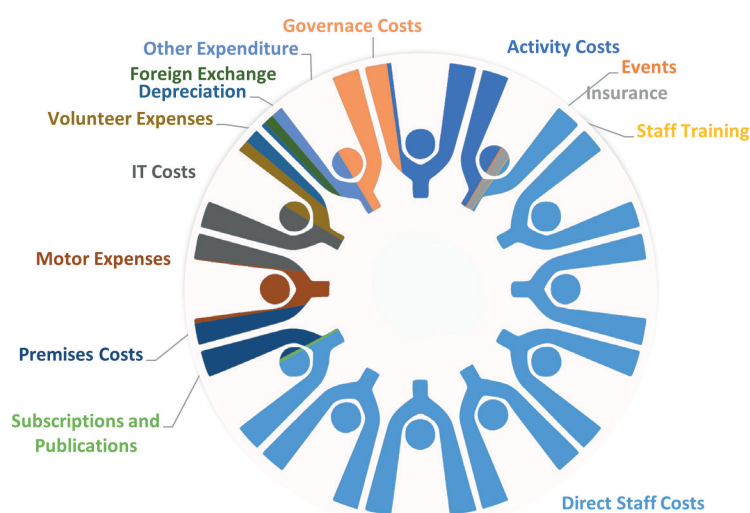
It is always difficult to predict the future, but we try to focus on the main risks we think the charity may face. One of these is the ongoing cost of living crisis and the effect it may have on our costs and those of residents. Another potential challenge is the impact on the work of the charity as a result of decisions made by the new government. Community Action Dacorum is largely dependent on local authority funding, in one form or another, and any decisions to change the levels of local authority expenditure would affect the charity. However, Community Action Dacorum's high level of financial reserves give us confidence that we will have sufficient time to adjust to any unforeseen difficulties that may arise in the future.



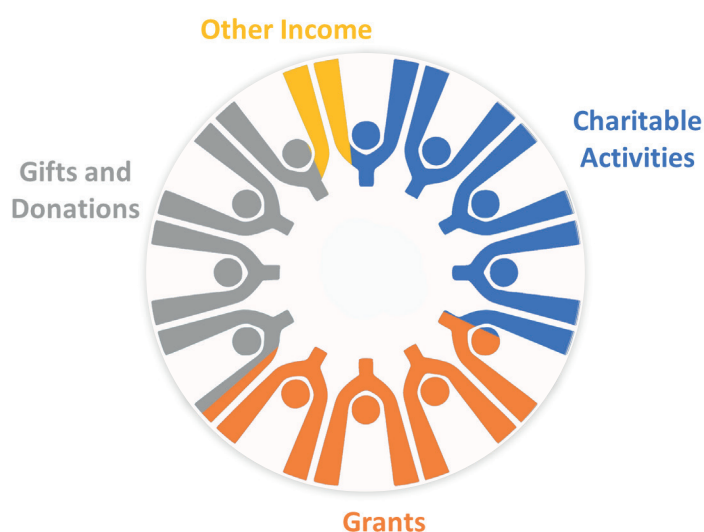
James Lowe
Honorary Treasurer



How we spend your money



Where the money comes from



Scan the QR code For our full historical accounts

<https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/en/charity-search/-/charity-details/288080/accounts-and-annual-returns>

01 Shopmobility Wellbeing

We helped an additional 114 people through ShopMobility during the year.

114

02 Community Volunteering

We have recruited, checked, and placed 394 people into voluntary roles for Dacorum based charities.

394

03 Radio Dacorum

4,573 people followed Radio Dacorum on Facebook, 55% of whom were female.

4,573

04 Herts Interpreting

HITS supported 40,927 people to communicate in different languages.

40,927

05 Training & Development

We trained 69 new interpreters through our in-house training programme.

69

Repair Sheds 06

83% of our Shedders reported that being a member had positively impacted on their quality of life.

83%

Dacorum Volunteers 07

We have referred 454 volunteers to local community organisations across the Borough.

454

Employability 08

Over £110,000 raised for local charities in the 10 years of the Dragons Apprentice programme.

£110,000

Staying Connected 09

1,571 individuals digitally connected thanks to Staying Connected

1,571

DBS Checks 10

200 DBS Checks done for local groups to help keep Dacorum safe.

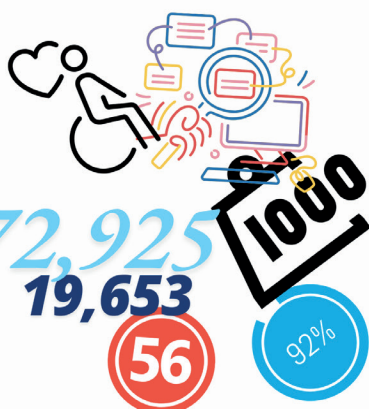
200

Our Community Impact

2023-2024

69,776

people helped by us



Scooters

Our ShopMobility scooters facilitated 2518 shopping trips in the Marlowes, which is 8,813 shopping hours.



Re Imagined

557 computers reimaged and gifted to Hertfordshire residents



Listeners

Radio Dacorum was tuned into 72,925 times by 19,653 local listeners.



Being Well

Over 100 tonnes of Carbon saved from landfill.



Shed Health

56% of our Shedders said that shedding was important to improving their Mental Wellbeing.



Community Support

92 community groups received one-to-one support to help them grow and develop.





Financial Review

The parent charity had incoming resources of £1,306,046 and expenditure of £1,011,685 for the year giving rise to a surplus of £294,361. At the year end the charity had total reserves of £2,104,659 comprising of £43,708 of restricted funds, £790,789 of designated funds and £1,270,162 of unrestricted general funds

Reserves Policy

The Charity Commission's guidance does not proscribe a single method or approach to setting a reserves policy. Community Action Dacorum's reserves policy has been tailored to the charity's plans and objectives. This approach takes into account the size, complexity of activities, legal structure and the nature of funds received and held by the charity. The Executive Committee decided that Community Action Dacorum will seek to maintain free reserves within a target range of 9 to 12 months of net operating expenditure. The trustees will review the reserves policy in the middle and at the end of each year to determine whether it continues to be appropriate. Free reserves represent

unrestricted general funds of Community Action Dacorum and exclude both the restricted funds held and funds that have been designated by our Trustees. The free reserves also exclude any funds that could only be realised by disposing of fixed assets held for charitable use. As of 31 March 2024, the charity had free reserves of £1,164,543 which equates to 9 months of net operating expenditure.

Trustees are aware that with ongoing inflationary costs and reduction in income from some funding sources, recourses may be needed to support the delivery of our charitable purpose and are keen to ensure that appropriate provision is made to protect the charity.

Funds Held on Behalf of Others

As a part of our role as a CVS, Community Action Dacorum operates a payroll service for our members. As part of this service Community Action Dacorum holds funds on behalf of our member organisations, which are used to pay salaries on a monthly basis. As of 31st March 2024, the charity held £129,969 (2023: £129,898) on behalf of our payroll service users. These are held as a specific account in the Community Action Dacorum balance sheet and reported in Note 13.





Statement of responsibilities of the trustees

The trustees are responsible for preparing the Report of the Trustees and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial period that give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. In preparing those financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- Comply with applicable accounting standards, including FRS102, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- State whether a Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) applies and has been followed, subject to any material departures which are explained in the financial statements
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- Prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006.

They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

In so far as the trustees are aware:

- There is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditor is unaware; and
- The trustees have taken all the steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

The Trustees' Annual Report is approved by the trustees of the Charity. The Strategic Report, which forms part of the Annual Report, is approved by the trustees in their capacity as directors in company law of the Charity.

Signed on behalf of the trustees on 5th November 2024.

Colin Gage
Chairman



DCVS (Trading) – Herts Interpreting and Translation Service

DCVS Trading Ltd is the commercial (trading) arm of Community Action Dacorum and is the mechanism through which it manages Herts Interpreting and Translation Service (HITS).

Founded in 2001 as a training provider for potential interpreters located within Dacorum, HITS is now one of the largest and most successful providers of language support services in the UK.

HITS provides a full range of services (face-to-face, video and telephone interpreting, communication support services for Deaf people, written translation, audio recordings, language assessments) for Health Trusts, Local Authorities, non-statutory-sector organisations, commercial and private clients throughout Hertfordshire, Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and beyond.

In addition to the delivery of language services, HITS has also established a national reputation

for its high-quality interpreter training courses. Since 2001, HITS has been a training and examination centre on behalf of the Chartered Institute of Linguists and has received more than a dozen awards for the success of its students in national examinations. As well as its own core training provision throughout the East of England, HITS has also been commissioned to deliver interpreter training courses by local authorities throughout England, Scotland and Wales.

HITS in numbers

Although bare numbers cannot hope to capture the high quality of the service we provide and the positive impact we have upon the lives of the users of our service, they do provide a good representation of the scope and extent of our work.

In the financial year, 2023-24, HITS received approximately 46,000 requests for interpreting and translation services from more than 170 customer organisations on behalf of over 15,000 end users.

As an indicator of the recent move away from in-person interpreting towards remote services, approximately 13,300 were requests for an interpreter to be provided via telephone and approximately 9,500 via video.

Across our entire customer base, the most requested language was Polish, with nearly 4,400 incidences, followed by Portuguese (3600), Romanian (3400), Lithuanian (3150) and Arabic (2800). Our Top Ten was rounded out by

Pashto (2200), Russian (2000), Urdu (1950), Turkish (1925) and Kurdish (1850).

Among the subject areas in which our interpreters most commonly operated were mental health services (7500 bookings), maternity (5500), child protection (2500), consent and support for surgery (2000), physiotherapy (1500), cancer treatment (700), GP appointments (600), school and college meetings (600), CT scans (450), diabetes (350), occupational therapy (250), dental (220), housing (200), driver awareness classes (200), hospice care (45) and Coroners Court (40). During the year, we provided interpreters for voluntary sector organisations on 315 occasions. We also provided an interpreter for one wedding!

During 2023-2024, HITS provided at least one interpreting session or written translation in more than 140 languages and dialects.



Case Studies

During the year, HITS deployed more than 400 interpreters and translators on at least one occasion. Nine interpreters were assigned on at least 450 occasions during the year.

The following three case studies show how HITS has successfully developed its own resources through a commitment to professional training and community development.

Nihal

Our most frequently engaged interpreter in 2023-24 was Nihal, a Turkish-language interpreter based in St Albans, who was booked on just under 700 occasions.

Nihal's history is proof positive of the impact HITS has had on individual lives. She first contacted HITS in 2009 to enquire about enrolling on one of our introductory ("short") training courses. From there she progressed to our full DPSI (Diploma in Public Service Interpreting) the following year and obtained the full degree qualification at her first sitting. Since 2010, she has turned that initial speculative enquiry into a full-time job and a profession.

Rahmatullah

Arriving in the UK as part of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, Rahmatullah trained with HITS in 2023 on a course funded by the East of England Local Government Association (EELGA) and administered by Community Action Dacorum's Training and Development service. In his first year of work after completing his training and passing his interpreter assessment, Rahmatullah had more than 550 assignments, making him our fourth most frequently engaged interpreter during the year.

Iram

An Urdu and Punjabi speaker living in Watford, Iram first trained with HITS in 2019 and joined the HITS interpreter Register the following year. She has since become one of our most outstanding interpreters. In 2023-24, as well as achieving her full DPSI qualification, Iram completed 520 assignments, making her our fifth most used interpreter for the year.

Contact Us

HITS provides a full service to its customers every minute of the day, every day of the year.

If you would like to book an interpreter, or arrange for a written translation, or if you are interested in finding out how you could train to become a professional interpreter, or if you just want to know more about any aspect of our overall service, please get in touch:

Address: Herts Interpreting and Translation Service, 48 High Street, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP1 3AF

Phone: 01442 867212

Email: interpreting@communityactiondacorum.org.uk

Website: www.hertsinterpreting.org

Directors

Chris Dove
Colin Gage
Richard Milnes
Terry Douris (Independent)
Tup Dutta (Independent)



Legal and Administrative Information

NAME OF CHARITABLE COMPANY: Dacorum Council for Voluntary Service (Community Action Dacorum) Legal and Administrative Information

COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE NUMBER: 01745852

CHARITY COMMISSION NUMBER: 288080

TRUSTEES (NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS)

Colin Gage (Chair)

Margaret Griffiths (Vice Chair)

Doug Root (Vice Chair)

James Lowe (Hon. Treasurer) [Appointed 07 December 2023]

William Allen

Peter Ashman

John Birnie [Deceased 28 August 2024]

Chris Dove

Tina Howard [Resigned 07 December 2023]

Pushpa Kalu [Resigned 07 December 2023]

Richard Milnes [Appointed 07 December 2023]

Richard Roberts

Sally Symington

Roger Taylor

Helen Young

Trustees are inducted and have opportunities for ongoing training on a regular basis both individually and as a group.

SENIOR STAFF MEMBERS TO WHOM DAY-TO-DAY MANAGEMENT OF THE CHARITABLE COMPANY IS

DELEGATED BY THE TRUSTEES:

Simon Aulton

Chief Executive Officer

Helen Mutio

Deputy Chief Executive



PRINCIPAL ADVISERS:

BANKERS:

Metro Bank

56-58 Marlow Centre

Hemel Hempstead

Hertfordshire

HP1 1DX

ACCOUNTANTS:

LB Group

Swift House

18 Hoffmanns Way

Chelmsford

CM1 1GU

AUDITORS:

Moore Kingston Smith LLP

4 Victoria Square

St Albans

Hertfordshire

AL1 3TF

The Cooperative Bank

3/7 Market Street

Watford

Hertfordshire

WD18 0PB

SOLICITORS: SA Law

Gladstone Place

36-38 Upper Marlborough Road

St Albans

Hertfordshire



Background

Dacorum Council for Voluntary Service is a charitable company, limited by guarantee, originally incorporated on 8 December 1976 with its activities taken over by the company on 1 October 1983, and registered with the Charity Commission on 1 October 1983. In addition to the legal name the charity has as a working name Community Action Dacorum, which is primarily used in promoting the work and activities of the organisation.

We are a registered non-profit company limited by guarantee and governed by a memorandum of association and articles of association which date back to 11th August 1983. The charity is controlled solely by its members, who elect its trustees and whose members make up the board of directors. Trustees are appointed for an initial term of three years and can stand for re-election at the Annual General Meeting for a maximum of three terms. During the current period of transition to comply with the principles of The Charity Code, we are working to replace some longer-standing trustees with new members. In this period several trustees are remaining on the board beyond the three-term limit to ensure that we do not lose all of our established skill sets at the same time.

The trustees elect from their membership the positions of Chair, two Vice Chairs and Honorary Treasurer. All trustees are volunteers and receive no payments. Trustees are elected to the executive board which meets eight times per year, alternating between general business (including risk management / mitigation) and financial review. The risk register is reviewed annually. Sub-committees monitor progress against our strategic objectives and report into the executive committee meetings four times per year.

Our CEO is responsible for operations reporting to the board four times per year. The CEO manages the management team who in turn manage staff, interns and volunteers. The

trustees set the salaries of key management personnel and oversee the allocation of pay increases for all personnel. Community Action Dacorum has an Equal Opportunity Policy which is applicable both internally to all staff, volunteers, the board and externally. We also have a Safeguarding Policy, a Modern Slavery Policy, a User Engagement Policy, a Data Management Policy, and a Volunteering Policy. We have an employee handbook and a Finance Management Policy.

The charity adheres to the guidelines laid down in The Charity Code and follows the principles that are in that document.

The charity has a wholly owned subsidiary trading company, "DCVS Trading Ltd.", which includes Hertfordshire Interpretation and Translation Service (HITS). This trading company was formed prior to the financial year ending 31st March 2019. DCVS Trading Ltd., is a company limited by shares. It is controlled by a board of five directors brought together from the local community, including three directors who are trustees of the charity. The board meets 6 times per year to make decisions and receive the report of the Chief Executive Officer. The CEO is responsible for the operations and line manages the DCVS Trading Ltd. management team, who in turn line manage staff and contractors. All profits from the trading company are transferred under the terms of a deed of covenant by GiftAid donation to Community Action Dacorum.

**We are grateful to our many sponsors and supporters
some of whom are listed here:**

Dacorum Borough Council

East of England Local Government Association

Hertfordshire Community Foundation

Hertfordshire County Council

Hertfordshire Interpreting and Translation Services

Hertfordshire County Councillors Locality Budget

Herts and West Essex ICB

Herts Sports Partnership

Herts Valleys CCG

NHS Charities Together

Step2Skills

The Mayor of Dacorum's Fund

The National Lottery Communities Fund

UK Shared Prosperity Fund



Registered Office:

Community Action Dacorum

48 High Street

Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, HP1 3AF

Office telephone: 01442 253935

www.communityactiondacorum.org.uk

Email: reception@communityactiondacorum.org.uk

Web: <http://www.communityactiondacorum.org>

Charity registered in England and Wales number 288080

Registered company number 01745852

