

the
exchange

EVALUATION REPORT

April 2021 – March 2022



ALT TEXT – A child entering The Old Library, The Exchange's home

And, we are OPEN!!

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	3
OUR AIMS	4
AIM: ENSURE THE OLD LIBRARY’S HERITAGE – AS A SPACE THAT SHOWCASES LOCAL CRAFT & THE POTENTIAL FOR LOCAL EMPOWERMENT – REMAINS AT THE CENTRE OF OUR WORK	5
AIM: EMPOWER PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES	8
AIM: ACTIVELY SEEK OUT AND CHAMPION CULTURAL DIVERSITY	12
AIM: SHINE A LIGHT ON AND CELEBRATE LOCAL HERITAGES	19
AIM: TAKE ACTION TO TACKLE THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY.....	24
AIM: TAKE ACTION TO TACKLE RACISM, LACK OF COHESION AND INCLUSION	27
AIM: TAKE ACTION TO TACKLE POOR MENTAL HEALTH, POOR WELLBEING AND LONELINESS	30
AIM: SUPPORT LOCAL INNOVATION AND IDEAS	33
IS ERITH A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE?.....	36

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It has been an exciting year; a year of new beginnings and where our community vision finally started to be realised.

The upstairs spaces are now in proper use, with people coming in every week to make things, start and join conversations, and lead on ways to make Erith a better place. And the building is now fit for a new generation of people wanting to use it for local good. Make your way to page 5 to see what the main space looks like now, or pop into to see one of the new craft workshops in action.

It has also been a year of new initiatives. A particular project of note was the ERITH MADE festival that was funded by Three Rivers / the Arts Council and delivered by local residents and businesses. It included live music across different incredible venues in the town, as well as a market and street performances on Pier Road, wine tasting and exhibitions at The Exchange, and family activities in the Riverside Garden. And there is another planned for September this year.

The festival was also supported by the Town Centre Partnership, a group brought together by The Exchange with the aim of working more closely on town-wide events and marketing. As a result of the success of ERITH MADE, we were able to secure further funding for future town events and to employ a Town Partnership Lead to run the group for 18 months and to develop a coordinated vision for how the town centre develops alongside Bexley Council.

Craft is of course at our core – the historic library was designed and built by local craftspeople – and so we have been extremely delighted with the success of the Craft Markets. These events bring together and showcase some of the incredible variety of craft talent in the local area and are becoming a popular regular feature for the town.

Another major success has been the garden. Designed by award-winning garden designer Sarah Price and planted by local volunteers in just four days in September, it is now in bloom and looks incredible. This garden space will grow into its own year on year and is set to become a destination garden in Bexley. The Bookstore too is going from strength to strength. Coming out of a very tumultuous couple of years riddled with the pandemic, the café/restaurant team is delivering some great food and creating a space and experience to fit for our “hidden gem” status.

The Exchange couldn't be what we want it to be without the amazing staff and volunteer team. So much time, energy and passion are put into realising the objectives that the community set out for us. So, a massive thank you to everybody.

The following pages give a summary of all that hard work, and we ask you – our shareholders, members, visitors – to tell us whether you think we are doing what we set out to, i.e. making Erith a better place to live or visit. [Please leave your thoughts here.](#)

Thank you for your support.

The Co-Founders, Sarah & Peter

OUR AIMS

Our ambition is to make Erith a better place to live.

We do this by focusing on a group of aims – developed together with our local community – to underpin any programme, project and event decisions. These aims are to:

- Ensure the Old Library's **heritage** – as a space that showcases **local craft** & the potential for **local empowerment** – remains at the centre of our work
- Empower **people** and **communities**
- Actively seek out and champion **cultural diversity**
- Shine a light on and celebrate **local heritages**
- Take action to **tackle the climate emergency**
- Take action to **tackle racism, lack of cohesion** and **inclusion**
- Take action to tackle poor **mental health**, poor **wellbeing** and loneliness
- Support **local innovation** and **ideas**

The following pages show what we have achieved against these ambitions in the year April 2021 – March 2022.

AIM: Ensure the Old Library's **heritage** – as a space that showcases **local craft** & the potential for **local empowerment** – remains at the centre of our work

WHAT WE DID

CAPITAL BUILDING PROGRAMME

The building programme has transformed the old library, from a derelict and deteriorating space to a bright and airy community space ready for activity.

The year started with the builders (Harpers) still on site owing to delays caused by Covid-19. By September, the builders were out of the old library, but with significant areas of snagging still to address. By the end of the year, these had predominantly been addressed, excepting the front wall and fencing, the historic toilets and the book hoist works on which are planned for 2023.



ALT TEXT - A picture of the main space at The Exchange

AIM: Ensure the Old Library's **heritage** – as a space that showcases **local craft** & the potential for **local empowerment** – remains at the centre of our work

THE WORKSHOPS

The Textiles and Timber Workshops opened to the public for projects in February 2022. These workshops focus on community production and skills development, where local residents work alongside professional craftspeople to develop craft technical skills and produce items that can either be used by the community or sold to generate income for The Exchange programme.

The Print Workshop is open on an ad-hoc basis, with its engagement focus through the weekly Draw/Design workshops that started in October 2021. The workshop yet to open is Ceramics.

At the end of March 2022, there were 45 volunteers across Draw / Design, Textiles and Woodwork.



ALT TEXT - A picture with our partners Mentsen working in the Timber Workshop

PARTNERSHIPS

Through the Workshop programme, we have developed some exciting partnerships with professional crafts organisations and makers. This includes National Trust Red House, Crafts Council, Local Works Studio, Mentsen and Hand & Lock. These groups provide the workshops and the staff with support to ensure that what we offer our community is of the best quality.

“I have always known that I am a creative person, but the workshops that I have been part of have shown me that I am a REALLY creative person. It is empowering to think that, when creativity has a purpose, a person can do things that they never thought they could do. The idea of contributing to a community project has made the experience of being at The Exchange double-enriching.”

Sara Blas de Hernandez, Workshop Participant

AIM: Empower people and communities

TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP

During the pandemic, The Exchange formed a Town Centre Partnership, inviting representatives from different sectors (from charity to retail, youth to leisure) to join together to work on town-wide programming and Erith marketing to draw more people to the town.

In 2021/22, the Partnership supported with the programming for ERITH MADE, and secured funding from the government/Bexley Council to employ a Town Partnership Coordinator to grow the work of the partnership, and to deliver a youth-led programme of events across different town venues.

At the end of March 2022, there were 15 town partners, 45 young people led on the delivery of the youth-led programme, a website for Erith was launched (welcometoerith.com) and additional funding had been secured to keep the Town Partnership Coordinator in post for another year (currently managed by The Exchange).



ALT TEXT - An illustration from the Welcome to Erith website

STAFF

It has been a difficult year for the staff team with many moments of change and uncertainty, coupled with lots of opportunities and new beginnings. Within the year, the team had grown from 5.6 full-time equivalent employees to 9.5 full-time equivalent, employing a new Operations & Events Manager, Town Partnership Coordinator and Head Gardener, as well as new recruits to the Bookstore team.



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KIRSTINE NEWMAN
KITCHEN PORTER



PAULA-LOPEZ RODRIGUEZ
BOOKSTORE ASSISTANT



VICTORIA ZEMAN
BOOKSTORE ASSISTANT

ALT TEXT – Pictures of The Exchange staff team

AIM: Empower people and communities

VOLUNTEERS

The Exchange could not be The Exchange without the incredible voluntary support we receive from local residents. This includes everyone in the Makers group, the Workshop and Garden teams, and the Town Square Hosts.

At the end of March 2022, we had a team of 170 volunteers.



ALT TEXT – A picture of a pair of Exchange volunteers

AIM: Actively seek out and champion cultural diversity

WHAT WE DID

DISCUSS & DECOLONISE

Discuss & Decolonise was initiated in response to the black square phenomenon and in desire to do something more meaningful to tackle racism. It started as a safe space for people to discuss their experiences of racism and discrimination, and then later turned into a discussion programme supported by artists, thinkers and cultural practitioners.

This year we welcomed Ali Eisa (Autograph), Kwame Boateng (Black Curriculum), ceramicist Bisila Noha, and Black Girl Knit Club.

Feedback on these events has been incredibly positive, but there is a need to focus more on engagement to draw more people to these events, as well as connecting these discussions more closely with the work of The Exchange. We are also planning to reframe this programme, renaming it “Narrative Editions” so that there is a broader focus of diversity, including disability & low-income narratives.



ALT TEXT - A group of people sitting in chairs at a discussion event

AIM: Actively seek out and champion cultural diversity

ERITH MADE FESTIVAL

The Erith Made Festival was devised, developed and delivered by local residents. 27 core Makers led with the ideas, with 95 others helping to “Make Things Happen” over the three-day weekend.

The Festival included delivery partnerships with St John’s Church, the Running Horses, Re-Instate, Erith Football Club, Wasteless Market, Theatre Box Performing Arts Academy, Erith & Belvedere History Society and North West Kent Countryside Partnership.

We worked with London South East Colleges, where the students supported the creation of a film and taking of photography; and with local schools who produced some of the bunting that was used to decorate the town.

Over the weekend, there was an audience of 2,714 people, with over 1,000 participants directly getting involved.

In terms of diversity, here is the data about the attendees:

AGE	% of attendees	ETHNICITY	% of attendees	Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health condition or disability?	% of attendees
Under-16	2%*	Asian / Asian British	9%	No	75%
16-24	9%	Black / Black British	9%	Yes, limited a little	21%
25-34	19.5%	Mixed / Multiple ethnic	5%	Yes, limited a lot	1%
35-44	18.5%	Other	11%	Prefer not to say	3%
45-54	12%	Prefer not to say	2%		
55-64	15.5%	White British	63%		
65-74	13.5%				
75+	9%				
Prefer not to say	1%				



ALT TEXT – a picture of a man on a unicycle at the Erith Made festival

AIM: Actively seek out and champion **cultural diversity**

SOUTH ASIAN CULTURE DAY

The South Asian Culture Day featured a taste of Pakistani cuisine with a menu designed and co-delivered by Hamza Zaheer alongside our Head Chef; an exhibition by local artist Usarae Gul; a documentary screening on art in the Islamic World followed by a Producer and Director Q&A with Faris Kermani.

Over the course of the day over 100 people attended.



ALT TEXT - A picture containing groups of people taking part in a family activity and looking at an exhibition as part of the South Asian Culture Day

AIM: Actively seek out and champion **cultural diversity**

FREEDOM OF BEING

The Exchange supported students from London South East College to develop an event they would like to see in Erith. They devised a family event that included an art exhibition, workshops in lino and butterfly printing, face painting and a make-up tutorial and performance by two Drag Queens. The themes of the event were freedom, equality, creativity, art and expression. The entire event was planned and delivered by the students. The exhibition artwork was also used within their college course and counted towards their mark for the year.

The event was attended by members of the public of all ages from Erith. 211 people visited over the course of the day.



ALT TEXT – A group picture of students from London South East Colleges with drag performers after a performance at Erith's Cross Keys

AIM: Actively seek out and champion **cultural diversity**

ACTIVE HORIZONS @ RUNNING HORSES

The Exchange supported young people from Active Horizons to deliver their '**Active Event**' which took place at The Running Horses. The day consisted of African drumming and storytelling, African print arts and crafts and food challenges. The event was a free family day which saw families coming together to enjoy the activities.

The entire event was planned and organised by the young people of Active Horizons who also helped facilitate the day. 73 people visited over the course of the day.



ALT TEXT - A group of people taking part in an African drumming workshop

"Speaking with visitors about my heritage and getting a chance to really celebrate my identity was great. People came from as far as Bromley! I think it's really important to have events like this that reach out to everyone in the community, it makes you feel seen and a part of things!"

Usarae Gul, local resident and key Maker in the delivery of South Asian Culture Day

AIM: Shine a light on and celebrate local heritages

WHAT WE DID

HISTORY WALKS & TOURS

Over the year, local resident and Maker Hugh Neal delivered 4 tours of the Old Library. The Co-Directors also delivered a number of tours post the second phase of the building works. Collectively this has brought in 150 visitors to The Exchange.

As part of ERITH MADE, Ken from Erith & Belvedere History Society and Andy from Erith Playhouse led two riverside walking tours from St John's Church to and around the town centre.



ALT TEXT - A group of people walking along Erith's riverside

AIM: Shine a light on and celebrate local heritages

ST JOHN'S CHURCH

We have been working with St John's Church since the first lockdown, where we supported them with the creation of an Assessment of Significance for the Grade II* building, and the testing of future activities to open up the church to the non-worshipping community.

In 2021/22, the partnership continued with the collaboration at Erith Made 2021 – the Carnegie Ensemble played a Sunday concert, the History Walk began at the church, the town's oldest building, and collaborating with Re-instate across the road, a garden fete was held. We are now discussing new plans for Erith Made 2022.

Over 150 people attended the St John's events.



ALT TEXT – A group of people sitting in a church watching a classical string concert

CROSS KEYS

The Cross Keys is a historic pub on Erith's riverfront. It has been closed to the public for many years, but through the Welcome Back project, the doors were opened for a weekend event organised by young people from London South East Colleges.

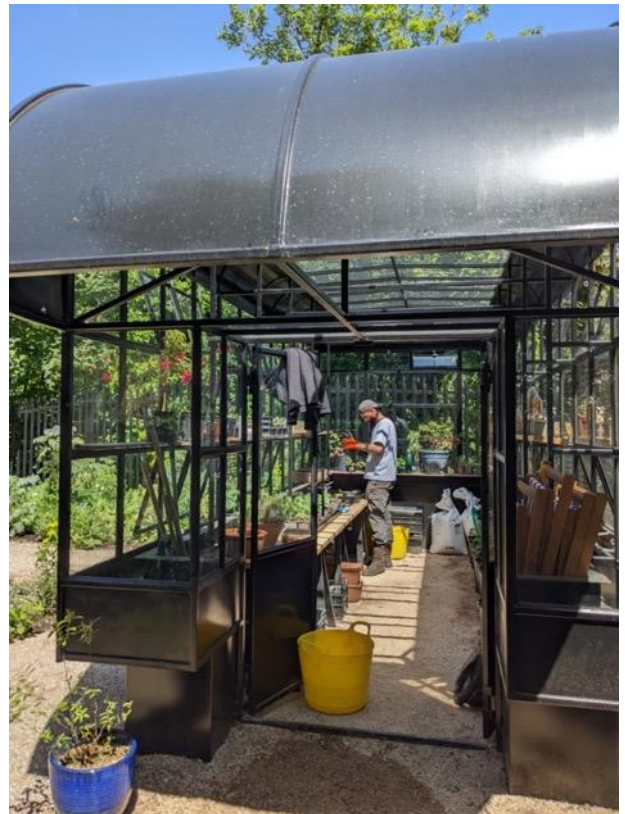
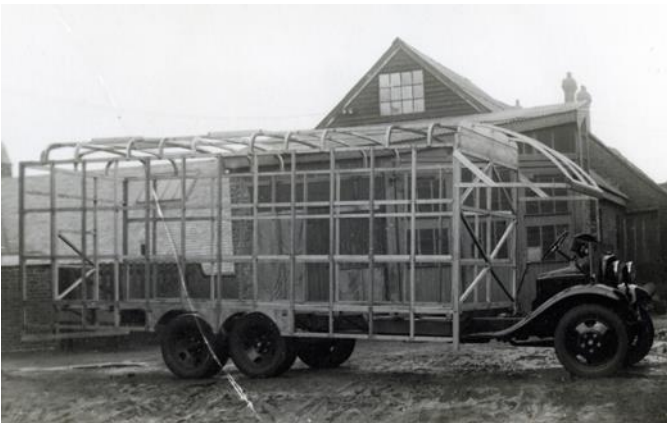
211 people attended this event.

AIM: Shine a light on and celebrate local heritages

THE GREENHOUSE

The newly installed Greenhouse is inspired by the story of Florence Barton-Young, the Head Librarian of the Old Library for over 20 years, and the Travelling Library Van which she commissioned in the 1930s. This was the first ever purpose-built mobile library, and the second mobile library ever to be commissioned in the UK. It was built to serve the District of Erith, travelling to areas of the borough that were then much harder to reach.

Fabricated by [Surrey Ironcraft](#) with the support of structural engineers [Buro Happold](#), this incredible new piece of metal craft is a welcome addition to our green space and a fitting memorial to Florence.

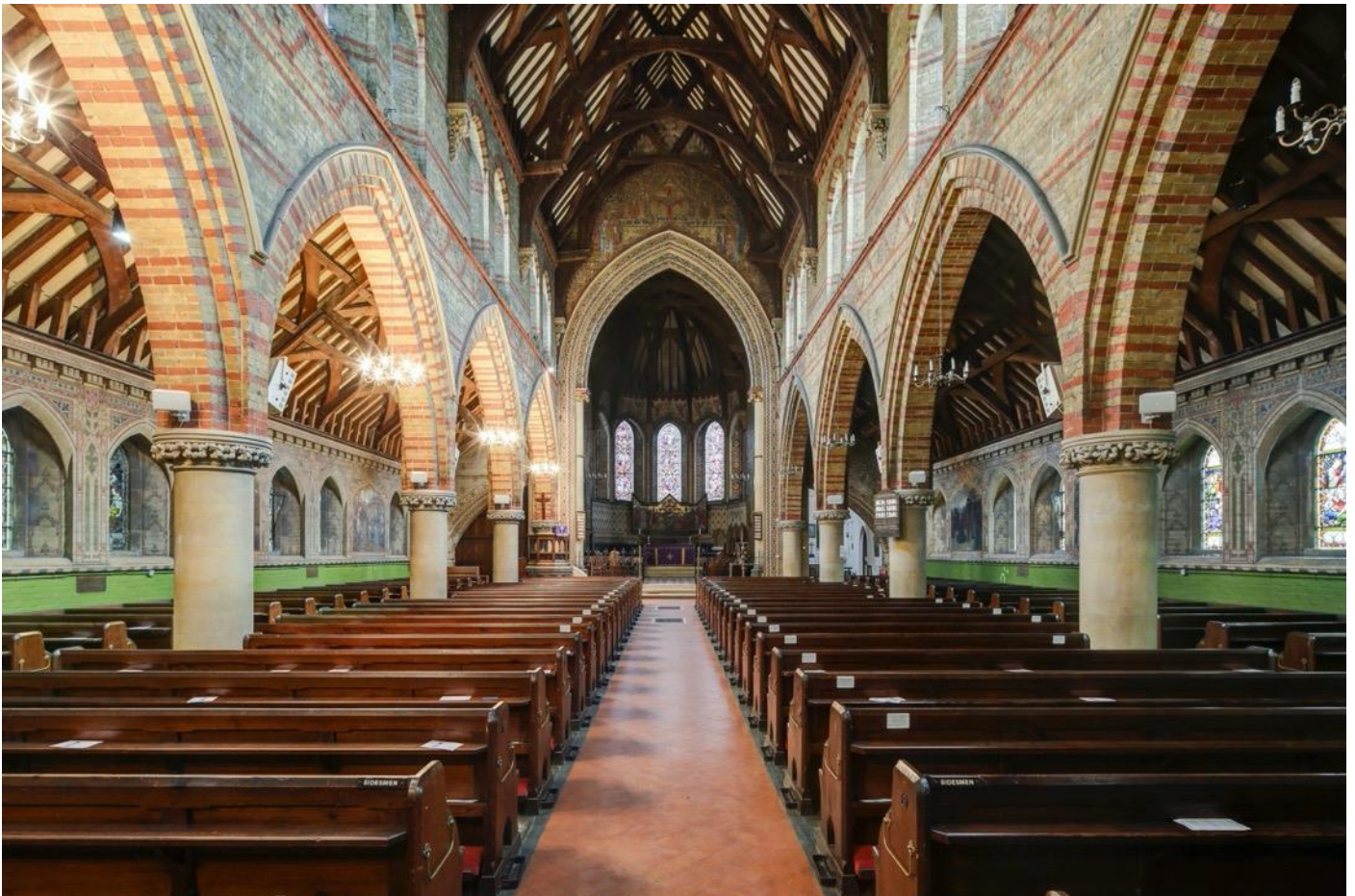


AIM: Shine a light on and celebrate local heritages

VENUE IMAGES

As part of the Welcome Back funding, we commissioned professional photographers to take images of the venues and businesses in Erith for the new Erith website.

In terms of historic venues, this included: St John's Church, Christ Church, The Old Library, Erith Playhouse and Erith Pier.



ALT TEXT - A picture showing the interior of Christ Church Erith

“It is an enormous pleasure and privilege for me as the Assistant Priest in Charge of St John the Baptist Church Erith to bear testimony to the excellent and outstanding work carried out by The Exchange in the context of this very ancient and historical church and churchyard.

The Exchange shows a great deal of care for the people who are here with a great strategic vision as to how this resource could be used for the good of the community in both the immediate and longer term.”

Neil Bunker, Assistant Priest in Charge, St John's Church

AIM: Take action to tackle the climate emergency

WHAT WE DID

GARDEN + GARDEN ROOM

The Exchange aims to be a hub for green learning, using our garden, greenhouse and garden room as spaces for skills development and learning.

In 2021/22, the garden was planted. This garden was designed by award-winning garden designer Sarah Price and planted by over 50 volunteers. It was designed to include permeable pathways, water collection and composting. The plants encourage biodiversity, with one area designed specifically around warmer/drier climate where the sun is hottest.

The garden room is an internal space that will function as a workshop, providing opportunities for learning and community. This space was opened in 2021/22, but the programme will start the following year.

Leading on the garden programme, and supporting the incredible group of community gardeners, is our new Head Gardener Louis Schultz-Wiremu who joined us in January.



ALT TEXT - A group of potted house plants in The Exchange's Garden Room

AIM: Take action to tackle the climate emergency



ALT TEXT - A picture of The Exchange's garden, containing trees and plants in spring

AIM: Take action to tackle the climate emergency

WASTELESS MARKET

We continued to support Wasteless Market through provision of free venue hire for their markets, arranging for them to take outdoor space as part of ERITH MADE, and free use of our Conversation Room for a pop-up refill/recycling hub.

Through the hub, Wasteless:

- Refilled 408.494 litres of liquid - equivalent to 816, 500ml bottles
- Recycled 8kg of medicinal waste
- Recycled 5 big boxes of bras to raise money for Against Breast Cancer
- Recycled 26kg of Terracycle waste - e.g. crisp packets, toothpaste tubes to raise money for Kent & London Air Ambulance
- Recycled 10kg of bottle tops to raise money for a guide dog charity
- Recycled large bag of old unusable inflatables

INTERNAL OPERATIONS

Internally we have taken the following steps:

- signed up to Creative Green Tools establishing a baseline for energy use of The Exchange (building & operations)
- modified our programme planning and delivery processes to ensure that all staff are considering and acting on environmental sustainability at all points of development
- established an internal composting process whereby the Head Gardener is working with the other workshops to establish a circular model at The Exchange
- installed in the garden water collection methods and permeable pathways

AIM: Take action to tackle racism, lack of cohesion and inclusion

WHAT WE DID

DISCUSS + DECOLONISE

See page 12 for details.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

We provide multiple opportunities to get involved in what we do, bringing people together from different communities and experiences. We aim to make volunteering fun, where you actively give your time for the benefit of our community organisation in collaboration with others.

This includes the opportunity to become a “Guardian of the Garden”, a Workshop volunteer, or a “Town Square Host” welcoming people to The Exchange and the Old Library.

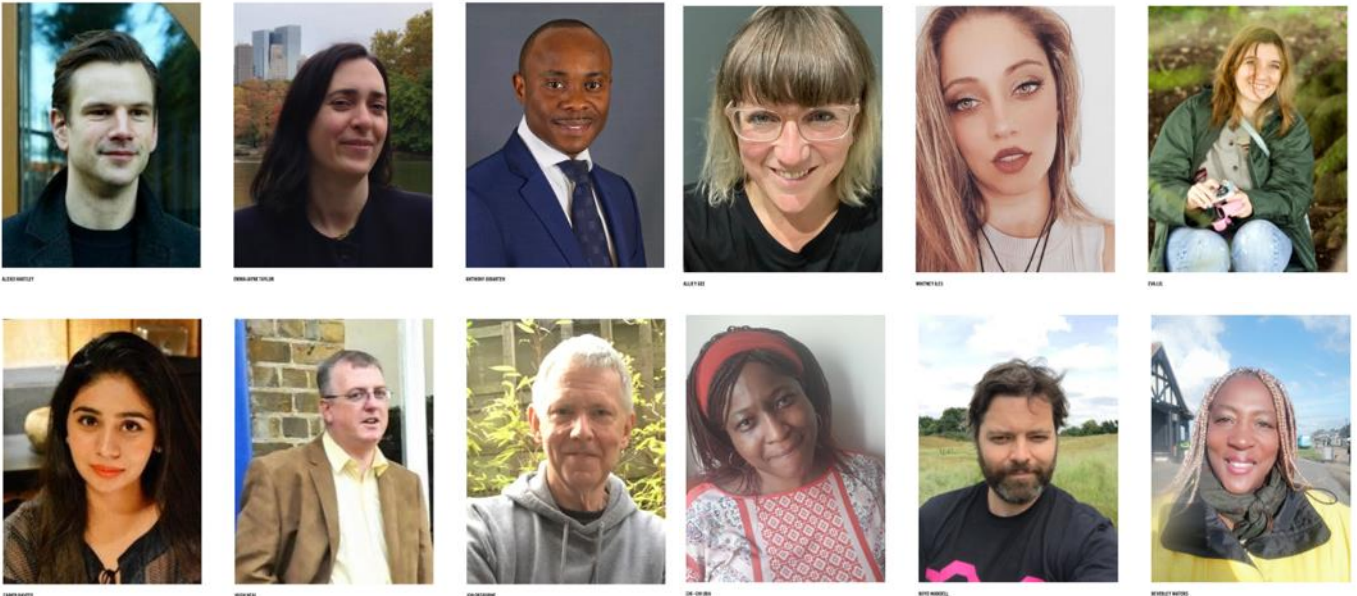
We currently have 170 volunteers.



ALT TEXT - A picture containing a person taking part in an embroidery workshop

AIM: Take action to tackle racism, lack of cohesion and inclusion

THE EXCHANGE BOARD



ALT TEXT – Pictures of Exchange Board members

We are proud of our Board that bring a diverse set of skills and voices to the governance of The Exchange. We believe visibility and diverse leadership are key to tackling issues of inclusion and racism. Each board member has a three-year tenure, after which they step down to give someone else the opportunity to lead our community organisation.

DIVERSITY TRUST / EMPLOYMENT / POLICIES

Making The Exchange a place where everyone feels welcome is at the forefront of what we do on a daily basis. To support us to achieve this, we commissioned The Diversity Trust to review our recruitment policies and procedures to ensure we are being as open as we can for people of all backgrounds to feel they would like to work here.

We also developed a Code of Conduct policy that outlines what is expected of everyone while at the Exchange, ensuring it remains a place where everyone feels comfortable.

“It’s the kind of place you want it to grow into the neighbourhood place where everyone feels so proud to have and it’s the kind of place you want in your neighbourhood forever.”

Online review

AIM: Take action to tackle poor mental health, poor wellbeing and loneliness

WHAT WE DID

WORKSHOPS + GARDEN

The Garden and Workshops have become places that promote positive wellbeing, through creating connections; delivering activities that encourage people to take notice, learn something, and/or be active; and encouraging people to give back to their community.

This aligns with MIND's "Five Ways to Wellbeing"



ALT TEXT - Volunteers planting the garden at The Exchange

AIM: Take action to tackle poor **mental health**, poor **wellbeing** and loneliness

EVENTS / OPPORTUNITY FOR INTERACTION

Not everyone has the time to give the garden and workshops, but we also try to encourage positive wellbeing through creating opportunities for making connections and learning through our wider event programme, particularly through the work of The Makers.

Over the year, nearly 8,000 people have attended our events; and over 20,000 people have come to The Bookstore café/restaurant in spite of the pandemic.



ALT TEXT - A group of people participating in a family workshop



ALT TEXT - A group of people posing for a photo at an Exchange festival

AIM: Take action to tackle poor **mental health**, poor **wellbeing** and loneliness



ALT TEXT - A group of young people sitting at a table outside



ALT TEXT - A group of people watching a performance

STAFF TRAINING

Six members of staff received Mental Health First Aid training in March 2022.

AIM: Support local innovation and ideas

WHAT WE DID

DEVELOPMENT LAB

The Development Lab is a space where local people with ideas for projects or businesses with a social cause can get support. Provision of support during the pandemic was difficult, as all organisations/individuals had to navigate a constantly changing environment. Nonetheless, support was provided to the following organisations:

- Theatre Box Performing Arts Academy
- Wasteless Market CIC
- Rob Mason Wine
- Lauriann's STEM Club



ALT TEXT - A group of children on stage for a festive winter performance

AIM: Support local innovation and ideas

THE MAKERS

The Makers are a group of local residents who make things happen in Erith. There are a few certain individuals who have given the energy to lead and deliver on ideas, with the support of The Exchange.

In 2021/22, this has included:

- Colin Dyer's *Life Drawing*
- Boyd Wardell's *Exchanging Places*
- Cris Ryan and Jade Flannery's *Quiz Night*
- Jade Flannery's *Crack the Case*
- Phil Hall's *Carnegie Ensemble*



ALT TEXT – A group of classical musicians receiving applause

AIM: Support local innovation and ideas



ALT TEXT - A group of people on bicycles



ALT TEXT - A group of people playing a quiz in a bar

IS ERITH A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE?

YOU DECIDE. LET US KNOW YOUR THOUGHTS HERE.

[SURVEY LINK](#)