

Introduction

In reflecting on the past twelve months it is clear that two events have shaped and informed the work of The Orrell Trust. The Covid-19 pandemic has affected everything The Trust has done over the past year whilst, more locally, The Orrell Trust said farewell to Tanya McGibbon our popular and successful Project Manager who had ably led The Trust since 2017. Tanya left her post in September 2020 and Matt Jeziorski succeeded her in January 2021 as we entered lockdown once more.

2020 – 2021 Overview

April – June 2020

With the first National Lockdown announced all regular Trust activities were suspended from 23 March and four staff were furloughed for 10 weeks.

At the same time the work of The Orrell Trust was transformed as we continued to serve the needs of our local community. A Community Support Project was established which supported vulnerable, isolating, or shielding people which provided serves such as:

- Shopping collections and delivery
- Prescription collection and delivery
- Essential medical supplies collection and delivery
- Telephone befriending service
- Online engagement via Social Media and Zoom for young disabled adults who usually access the Jolly Soap Opera Mob.



This work was coordinated by the Project Manager and supported by a team of dedicated volunteers and, later, other staff.

Staff returned to work on 1 June 2020 with temporary role changes that reflected the change in provision and allowed preparation for cautious reopening in the months ahead.

July – September 2020

As the shopping, prescription collection, telephone befriending, and online Jolly Soap Opera Mob continued attention also turned more fully to the reopening of the Community Centre in September.

Working in collaboration with The Church we developed and implemented a plan to safely reopen the Church and Community Centre and ensure a consistent approach for both The Church and The Orrell Trust. Amongst the provisions were a well-signposted one-way system was introduced, a strict capacity limit in all areas of the building, PPE for staff and volunteers, and a welcome desk to ensure the requirements of Track & Trace were implemented.

The Jolly Soap Opera Mob adapted to life online with great enthusiasm with a great variety of activities and projects undertaken remotely. Workshops have included dancing, singing, tin can decoration, seed planting, balloon art, owl making, quizzes, and collage. Alongside these were frequent sessions that have been focussed on socialising and keeping in touch with one-another. That the Jolly Soap has continued throughout the pandemic has been deeply appreciated by the participants, their families, and carers.



“We, have really appreciated the tremendous effort that has gone into making the Zoom sessions so much fun for the young people and what a lifeline they have been during the lockdowns - which for E has meant staying home pretty much for the last 12 months.

“All you guys at JSOM have managed to turn a negative situation into a positive one by your hard work, determination and cheerfulness, and we often reflect how glad we are that E ever joined the group.”

With the reopening of the Community Centre we restarted those projects that could be done safely. The Wednesday Club, Down Orrell Hey, and the Thursday morning Coffee Morning and Crochet Group restarted with the Bootle Buddies befriending continuing as a telephone provision. The Jolly Soap Opera Mob were also able to come back into the centre.

Tanya McGibbon resigned as Project Manager on 10 August and left her post on 25 September. A significant part of work during those weeks was to support the Board in putting together the recruitment pack and advert for the Project Manager post.

After Tanya’s departure Mary Carr (Older Person’s Development Officer) agreed to work 1 day per week in the interim covering some of the core day-to-day duties of the Project Manager.

October – December 2020

All of our projects were interrupted during the last months of 2020 as Tier restrictions were replaced by the second national lockdown in November. We were able to open once more, under the Tier system, for the last couple of weeks before Christmas. It was a great tribute to the flexibility and dedication of the staff that these changes were responded to creatively and positively to ensure as much of our project work could continue as possible.

There was still time for highlights in the centre – particularly around Christmas – including a British Sign Language class for The Wednesday Club where they learned to sign a Christmas carol and a Christmas Quiz with mince pies.



Intergenerational work began too with the Jolly Soap Opera Mob joining forces with the older person's projects to deliver a Words of Wisdom project where the young people make or do something for an older person and they, in turn, give back a word of wisdom. This began with the Jolly Soap Opera Mob making Christmas cards for clients.

Meanwhile the Trustees were engaged in the recruitment of a new project manager and, after interviews in November, appointed Matt Jeziorski to the role from January.

January – April 2021

Matt Jeziorski began as Project Manager at the beginning of January 2021 on the day that the latest national lockdown was announced that would see the Community Centre closed for the foreseeable future.

Despite the lockdown the tone of our work shifted with the New Year. With the vaccine roll-out and the roadmap it felt like an end was in the distance. As we developed a plan for our projects during these months it was with a view to getting things back up and running again, building up to being back in the centre, and building confidence in our clients to enable them to come back in as soon as possible.



We relaunched our Soup in a Basket luncheon club – rebranded as Soup in a Bag, a delivery service – with a meal, a quiz, raffle tickets, a bunch of flowers, and other seasonal goodies being taken to clients. We received funding for 2021 to set up a similar club at St Paul's Church, Hatton Hill, and considerable groundwork has been put into ensuring this can promptly as lockdown eases.

Working with St John & St James we ran Meet & Eat during the February mid-term break. Ordinarily this would be a day of activities and food in the Community Centre but was revised as a collection service with craft activities and an online fitness/dance class to join in the afternoon.



A double celebration

In April there was cause for a double celebration at The Orrell Trust. Alongside the joy of finally emerging from lockdown, reopening the doors, and welcoming people back into the centre we were also celebrating a generous grant from The National Lottery Reaching Communities Fund.

This lottery funding – worth £187,841 over three years – secures our key project work whilst also allowing us to develop our offer for Children and Young People. Later this year we will be recruiting a Development Officer to work creatively with young people, developing projects and activities to promote physical and mental wellbeing.

This past year has been strange, unusual, and challenging. The next looks to be dawning rich in opportunity and hope for The Orrell Trust as we continue to grow and develop in order that we can ever more effectively serve our community.

Matt Jeziorski
May 2021