



Annual Review 2021
ATD Fourth World UK
All Together in Dignity to Overcome Poverty

Building a bridge out of poverty





“Human rights for all? No – our rights are decided for us by officials who've made their minds up because of the way you're dressed or where you live. [...] Human rights are a jigsaw: if you take away a piece of the puzzle, it isn't complete. If you take away one right, then rights can't be complete either. You can't give people rights bit by bit.”

This message, from Tricia McConologue and other activists in poverty in Glasgow, was part of a human rights festival organised by Amnesty International — in 1998. Today, the challenge seems even more daunting, with the pandemic and the digital divide making it increasingly difficult for people in poverty to gain respect for their rights. Having your rights violated in a world of “them” and “us” strips your humanity away and destroys your soul.

This past year, a major focus of our work has been addressing poverty as a violation of human rights.

- Artwork by [Graham Ogilvie](#)

The Rights Bridge coalition, which includes ATD and Amnesty International, organised four webinars led by activists with lived experience of poverty who are innovating ways to defend their rights. At Frimhurst Family House, ATD's residential centre, care-experienced young people met to address the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child about the negative impact of poverty on the right to family life and the importance of listening to children and parents.

To complete the jigsaw, we need all people to be treated as equals and welcomed for themselves, because we're all perfectly normal human beings. Through our work together, we can rebuild society so that everyone feels honoured in their soul. That's our saving grace.

*- Amanda Button and Diana Skelton,
for the National Coordination and its support team*



About ATD Fourth World



ATD Fourth World - **All Together in Dignity** - has worked in partnership with people affected by poverty since 1968 to tackle inequality and promote social justice. Those with the most difficult lives hold the key to understanding and overcoming persistent poverty and are thus at the heart of everything we do.

'Together in Dignity', our family support programme, offers vulnerable families resources to get through times of crisis, build upon their strengths, develop support networks, and develop their skills, confidence and knowledge in order to pursue their goals and aspirations. Our advocacy work with these families fosters conditions allowing them and professionals to better understand one another and collaborate.

Our **'Giving Poverty a Voice'** programme aims to raise awareness of persistent poverty, counter prejudice and discrimination, and improve policy and practice. To this end, we empower people in poverty

to speak out and shape their own narrative, while offering policy makers invaluable insight into overcoming poverty from the bottom up.

OUR VISION is a world without persistent poverty where all people are valued and can participate fully in society and fulfil their potential.

OUR MISSION is to build a network of people, groups and organisations committed to overcoming persistent poverty.

OUR VALUES include: taking people seriously by recognising the strength, determination and resourcefulness it takes to just get by; a long-term commitment to accompanying people at their own pace; the belief that every voice matters, particularly from people who are rarely heard; working collaboratively with our full-time core workers, families living in persistent poverty, allies and volunteers, who are all involved in every aspect of what we do.



Together in Dignity



Community Outreach & Peer Support

The Community Outreach and Peer Support project involves meeting and connecting the most vulnerable families, and thereby enhancing their support network, strength, resourcefulness and confidence in the face of challenges. In early 2021, in response to a new national lockdown, many of our activities and support were held online. The coordinators of the Together in Dignity programme met weekly in order to understand the impact of the pandemic on families in poverty and to adapt our action plan to ever-changing restrictions and guidelines.

Our key priority remained maintaining a sense of community among all the people in poverty in our network, some of whom were unable to take part in online activities. This meant frequent telephone calls and home visits as soon as restrictions were lifted. We continued offering crisis support: in legal fights for parents to have increased contact with their

children in care; with navigating Universal Credit applications or arrears due for rent and council tax; and in disputes with energy companies and council authorities.

Over the summer, the Feltham group — a group of activists who meet fortnightly in West London — met at Frimhurst Family House to reconnect after the isolation imposed by the pandemic. They set up a memorial to honour the late Diane Hilton and her daughter Leanne in the community garden. One activist said:

“This year, Covid has robbed us of lots of opportunities, but technology has enabled us to contribute and work together in new ways. It’s given us a chance to think about what’s important, where our priorities lie, and what we want for the future. We can never replace those that went before but we can try to continue on the path they started, carrying their stories, memories and messages with us.”



Together in Dignity



Getting Away From It

During the national lockdown, the Together in Dignity team co-ordinated a well-being action group. In this group, fifteen particularly isolated activists were invited to co-create online interactive sessions called Community Connections. These sessions provided a space to play games, discover relaxation techniques, or just have a chat. All the participants expressed very strong positive feedback. One activist said: *"These sessions helped me to stay in touch with others in ATD and have news of how people are doing. That's important."*

In spring, the transition from lockdown to in-person activities meant that Frimhurst Family House and ATD's London centre could once again be utilised for rest and recuperation in the form of well-being days and short breaks — which were even more needed due to the stresses of the pandemic. *"After so much isolation during lockdown, just having a natter with a hot drink was restorative and soothing."*

With the summer months came an easing of restrictions to near pre-pandemic levels, which enabled us to plan a wider variety of in-person activities, workshops, and outings, including longer residential well-being breaks. For those who were too vulnerable or apprehensive to resume face-to-face contact, online Community Connections sessions carried on, enabling many participants to develop their skills for using Zoom to the point where they now use it very confidently. As the year drew to a close, a series of small festive workshops replaced pre-Covid Christmas parties. A full traditional Christmas meal was offered, allowing all to celebrate in a merry fashion. Adults and children were invited to try their hands at baking gingerbread biscuits, designing cards, and writing messages of hope:

"I wish for health and kindness, understanding and support for all those suffering. Love for those who need some."





Skill Sharing and Access to Volunteering

We have long used Cedar House, a lodge on the property of Frimhurst Family House, to host volunteers helping out with well-being stays there. Because it had become dilapidated, a replacement structure was being built when the pandemic began. Although this project had to be suspended during the lockdowns, in August we were able to launch the community-build stage of the Cedar House construction.

In that month-long community build, young people and adults were invited to help lay floors, fix the internal cladding, and paint. These volunteers worked alongside trained professionals to lay insulation and sub-flooring. One of the volunteers said that doing this manual labour taught him to be more flexible and to approach new and unfamiliar tasks with less apprehension:

"I feel like the more I work with ATD the more I understand the benefit of manual labour and the reward that comes with it."

Three-day community-build projects were organised at Cedar House in October and December, when project participants helped professionals to finish the treatment of the exterior of the building. The lead trades-person responsible for the project notes:

"The Skill Share team laid and fixed an impressive 100 square metres of insulated sub-flooring over the course of 13 days, in compliance with building regulations, and to a high quality and zero-accident standard. I have been impressed by the team's can-do motivated spirit, physical graft, and willingness to learn, and have a go. My thanks go to all participants. Keep up the great work, and never stop trying and learning!"



Giving Poverty a Voice



Understanding Poverty

In this project, we build a strong grass-roots network to share knowledge and develop our reflection on how poverty should be understood to challenge the stigmatisation of mainstream discourse. This work is done internally — for example during residential activist capacity-building sessions — as well as together with partners such as On Road Media, where peer groups of people in poverty develop media skills.

Activists with lived experience are at the forefront of this project, for example in our role as part of the APLE (Addressing Poverty with Lived Experience) Collective, a UK-wide grass-roots network that offers a safe space for sharing experience and expertise about changing the narrative and ending poverty. Another example is Poverty2Solutions, where ATD activists work with members of Thrive Teesside and Dole Animators in order to explore problems and visualise ways forward.

In autumn 2021, we relaunched Giving Poverty a Voice group discussions. These monthly meetings give participants an opportunity to take a step back and reflect on common challenges they face in their lives. Drawing on their different experiences and learning together about the wider context in UK, they give each other new ideas on how to overcome them. One participant says:

“My confidence has improved, so has my knowledge on poverty. I learned that you can fight for something when you believe it is right... Some people still don't know that poverty exists in the UK. If nobody speaks about it, nobody will know and people will keep struggling. The more people join in, the louder it becomes and then the message will be heard. I've learned that knowledge is power. When you are informed on an issue, you are better able to address it. It empowers you and puts you in a better position to speak out and be heard.”

Human rights education liberates --

-- & gives us help
to raise our voices..

Power
&
participation!



Giving Poverty a Voice



Poverty Experts

Through public events, activists with lived experience — Poverty Experts — share their knowledge and transform the discourse on poverty in many ways. Collaborative efforts with partners led to many strong interventions, from a large public event about digital exclusion at the United Nations Commission for Social Development to a lecture about our Hidden Dimensions of Poverty participative research for students at Sciences Po University in Paris.

The Poverty2Solutions coalition renewed its call for the UK government to “Do your duty for equality” by putting lived experience at the heart of policymaking. This campaign culminated at the Conservative Party Conference, where Poverty2Solutions co-organised a fringe event “Leaving no one behind: the people’s voice in levelling up”. In addition, ATD hosted other members of Poverty2Solutions in our London centre for three days in July to co-create a film being launched in 2022.

- Artwork by Graham Ogilvie

With the APLE Collective, ATD Fourth World co-authored *Socially Distanced Activism: Voices of Lived Experience of Poverty During COVID-19*, which interrogates the term ‘lived experience’ and critically investigates how knowledge gained from this experience is integral to developing effective policy. This book was published by Policy Press and launched in June at an event chaired by Prof. Ruth Lister, a member of the House of Lords.

Together with the Human Rights Centre of the University of Essex, Amnesty International, and Just Fair, ATD Fourth World co-organised a series of webinars “Building a human rights bridge out of poverty”. The goal was to connect people with lived and learned experience of poverty in the UK, with a particular focus on how to influence and contribute to the review of the UK Government’s compliance with the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The second phase of this work will begin in 2022.



The Right to Family Life

In this project, people in poverty with experience of social service intervention collaborate with social work academics and practitioners to improve child and family social work.

To develop poverty-aware practice, we bring parents to universities to deliver training to future social workers. This is done in partnership with: Royal Holloway, University of London; Brunel University London; and the University of Birmingham.

In an ongoing collaboration with the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory, ATD activists are looking at ways to modernise and improve post-adoption communications between birth parents, children, and adoptive parents.

Through the Parents, Families and Allies Network (PFAN), which is led by parents who offer one

Giving Poverty a Voice



another mutual support, several ATD activists promote parent advocacy in children's social care. Initially an informal network, PFAN now has a constitution and hopes to register as a charity. ATD activist Tammy Mayes has been named the co-chair of PFAN, which regularly organises webinars. It has also been highly engaged with the independent review of children's social care in the UK.

On the research front, ATD activists joined practitioners and artificial intelligence (AI) developers to discuss the risks and benefits associated with the use of AI in child and family social work. This series of three workshops was led by the British Association of Social Workers and the University of Sheffield and will lead to policy recommendations and guidance on AI.

In September, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child examined the question of "alternative care" for children who are not with their parents. To prepare, ATD spent the spring and

summer consulting 26 care-experienced children and young people. This led to five written submissions of evidence to the UN. Six of those with lived experience of poverty and social care met in Frimhurst Family House to prepare together for the conference and three of them were invited to address the United Nations. They said:

"Our lives are messed about with."

"When my sister got taken into care, one of the issues they had against my mum was that she was sleeping on the sofa. And they said 'Well that's not a proper bed', but who's defining a sofa as not a proper bed? There's too much pressure on parents to buy all this fancy schmancy stuff. If they can't afford it, but they can afford a big bean bag that their kid sleeps on, does it really matter?"

"Family life gives us access to our identity — alternative care can rob us of that."



Giving Poverty a Voice



United Nations International Day to End Poverty

*"I Own Nothing" – "Why Is Equality Too Much to Ask For?" – "Enough of Not Enough"
"The Seed Within the Shade" – "Untitled Life" –
"Mice Have Rights Too"*

These were just a few of the 30 original poems written by 23 poets living in poverty who performed for this international day. With the support of London Challenge Poverty Week and On Road Media, ATD Fourth World hosted two poetry jams, one online and one in person. First, on 14th October, participants in London — joined by one poet who travelled from Glasgow — met in Hackney's community centre Hub 67. The event was emceed by Lareine Kenmogne and Aye Aye Win, two warm and dynamic hosts. Six songs were performed by East London neo-soul singer-songwriter Kemi Sulola. Being back together in person made the sense of community palpable, as food, laughter, and emotion

filled the venue.

The online poetry jam, held on 17th October, allowed for greater accessibility, in terms of both geography and mobility. Poets came from, among others, the Poverty Truth Community in Glasgow, the APLE (Addressing Poverty with Lived Experience) Collective in Stoke-on-Trent, and the peer-led Coventry Asylum and Refugee Action Group, a signatory of the #StatusNow4All Campaign 'which is calling for indefinite leave to remain for undocumented people'. A special guest clicking in from 8 time zones away was Zouhair Mussa, the 2019 Youth Poet Laureate of Oakland, California.

*Having someone to hear your worries,
someone ready to be there:
that makes all the difference
because they've shown that they care.*

- from *"Before You Open Your Mouth"*
by Patricia Bailey



Volunteering



For eight months, Eva and Megan, social science students at King's College London, volunteered once a week to help ATD with communications.

Here, they write about their experience:

"In a global age dominated by media, it was exciting to explore the digital communications side of a non-governmental organisation. We've had opportunities to apply and strengthen our knowledge of social media engagement in an advocacy context, as well as to learn about projects like The Right to Family Life.

Working within a bottom-up organisation that focuses on elevating unheard voices has deeply changed our perspective on social change and how to make it happen.

"This is not to say that we were ignorant of social change, but we hadn't experienced such an approach before. By approach, we mean putting activists with lived experience at the forefront of social policy and social action. We also admire ATD's focus on

changing the narratives surrounding poverty, some of which are harmful and blameful. Our favourite part of this internship has been assisting in the organisation and management of the UN International Day to End Poverty. At an anti-poverty poetry jam in a community centre, activists read their poems — which are now on ATD's YouTube channel and Instagram. Another experience we particularly enjoyed was ATD's international communications seminar, in which members from different countries across the world spoke about shared projects. We were curious to see how an organisation so international keeps in contact and unity whilst attending to the different cultural contexts of each country.

"This has been a wonderful opportunity to develop not only practical skills, but also a wider understanding of the intersectional issues within poverty. We hope to spread ATD's values and frameworks throughout different areas of our lives and will always cherish the lessons learned whilst working here."



Board of Directors: Letitia Mason (chair), Caroline Davies, Rev. Nicholas Edwards, Prof. Anna Gupta, Simon Haworth, Pierre Klein, Thomas Mayes, Ellie Suh, Ian Whitefoot, and Aye Aye Win

Ambassador: the Right Reverend Saju Muthalaly, Bishop of Loughborough

Company Secretary: Thomas Croft

National Coordination Team (NCT): Diana Skelton and Thomas Croft

NCT Support Group: Amanda Button, Murielle Double, Thomas Mayes, and Gertraud Trivedi

	2021 (£)	2020 (£)
INCOME		
Grants	287,776	306,587
Donations and legacies	43,760	35,175
Charitable activities	53,135	58,261
Interest	448	919
Other income	1,439	0
	386,558	400,942
EXPENDITURE		
Charitable activities (unrestricted)	301,874	242,665
Together in Dignity (restricted)	19,026	17,842
Outreach, Respite and Peer Support Programme		
Giving Poverty a Voice (restricted)	10,889	29,968
Policy, Participation and Training Programme		
Other (restricted)	1,438	0
Support costs (administration and depreciation)	50,662	50,457
Fundraising	2,682	2,415
	386,571	343,347



48 Addington Square, London SE5 7LB

0207 703 3231

atd@atd-uk.org

Registered charity n°: 209367

Company n°: 00654676

www.atd-uk.org

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