



# Celebration & Impact Report

June 2020 - May 2023

[www.arkategwood.com](http://www.arkategwood.com)

Changing  
lives within our  
community

# Introduction

Welcome and thank you for taking the time to read ARK at Egwood's three-year Celebration Report, which has provided us all with an opportunity to reflect upon what has been an incredible journey so far.

So much has happened and changed since we started providing much needed support to people of all ages and varying needs, that we wanted to share this with you all.



**Nigel Bell**

**CEO/Founder & Director  
of Business Development**

After a series of setbacks, ARK finally opened its gates following the first national lockdown in July 2020. We asked 'who would like to come and what would YOU like to do?' and since that date, ARK has rapidly evolved into what it is today, a "safe space for people to come, slow things down, connect with themselves, then connect with others and other things". We are meeting the needs of our community, by listening to our community.

In July 2020, we had one paid member of staff and a growing team of amazing volunteers. Now, in July 2023, we have seven paid members of staff, one apprentice and a volunteer base that exceeds 45, and which is continually growing.

We started with a pony, two piglets and a small growing area; today we have four goats, two very large pigs, two lambs, six guinea pigs and we grow vegetables, fruits and flowers which we use in our day-to-day cooking.

We started with two regular attendees and now each day on site there are 30 – 40 people, of varying ages, needs and reasons for being at ARK.

## ARK – Acts of Random Kindness Changing Lives within our Community...





From the very beginning ARK has listened to the people wanting to come here, whether they are regular attendees, those attending as a one off, our local residents, families, colleagues, volunteers and staff.

To this end on a daily basis, we support people to help us look after the site, (upskilling and confidence building in maintenance, grass cutting, strimming and general gardening), bee-keeping, horticulture (growing vegetables, fruits and flowers), animal connection, nature (we have a five year bio-diversity plan), rural arts and crafts (felting, willow weaving, cookery and arts) and a woodland/woodcraft area.

We also run Health and Wellbeing courses and workshops in partnership with Somerset Skills and Learning, and have provided workshops for people to socially connect with others, these have been funded by The National Lottery Community Fund and the Somerset Community Foundation.

We have established many great partnerships and done some lovely collaborative work in providing one off activity days to different groups and corporate organisations, as well as having a very successful Open Day in 2021 and Armed Forces Day in 2022. We have also supported three Young People on a Government Kickstart Work Experience programme and been filmed by NHS England in regards to the Individual Care and Choice as well as partnerships with local schools.



Alongside this, we have secured a grant from The National Lottery Community Fund for a three-year project with Chard WATCH CIC called Pathways to Partnerships. We have become a registered Duke of Edinburgh Centre in partnership with Somerset County Council and have affiliated with the Royal British Legion (Crewkerne Branch), in our drive to provide greater support to the Armed Forces Community.



We try to embrace our local community, running one day workshops, providing community lunches (and a warm spaces soup and social in the winter months) in the local village hall, leading health walks from ARK, and opening up the space for weekly Yoga and Tai Chi sessions.



In essence, ARK is an all-inclusive environment, that strives to provide personalised support. Seeing each person as an individual we work towards supporting people on a pathway that meets their needs and ambitions for their future. We support people of all ages and needs from young people struggling at school or with anxiety, those with brain injury, or learning disability, and those seeking challenges with poor mental health, dementia/memory loss or social isolation.

We feel that one of our greatest successes has been our Therapeutic Volunteer programme, which was devised post-covid to help those coming to us wishing to volunteer, for those needing a little extra help and support, before they could support others.

*"Thank you to each and everyone on of you! The Ark has given our young people an amazing opportunity to discover themselves."*

Many people who started as Therapeutic Volunteers have moved onto volunteering with us, or other organisations, moved into work or become active members of their community.





Thank you...

When reflecting on ARK's first three years, I was intent on thanking everyone individually who has supported ARK thus far, but I soon came to realise that there has been so much support both financial, practical and moral, that this would be an impossible feat.

So, on behalf of myself and the team, and everyone that attends ARK, I would like to say a "**Huge Thank You**", for your support whether it be in the form of grant funding, donations (money & equipment), time, volunteering, publicity, your kind words and encouragement. Without all of you, none of what we have achieved together would have been possible.

# Our Objectives



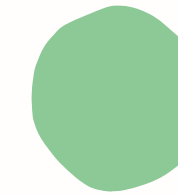
ARK aims to provide day provision and activities for adults and young people with a variety of needs.

We use a person-centred ethos that ensures everyone has the ongoing, appropriate, daily support needed.

This enables them to be engaged as part of a team, and their community, in a variety of meaningful/purposeful life activities, and in a role they feel is rewarding for them.



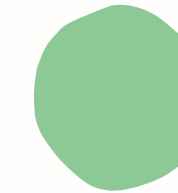
Provide meaningful, transferable **life experiences and practical skills**.



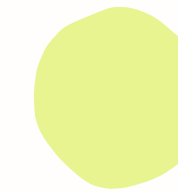
Provide personal, targeted, **cost-effective support**, in a non-threatening and engaging environment.



Enhance **social integration and lessen social isolation** in the local communities.



Engage with local partner organisations and the local community



Provide **volunteering opportunities** for local people.

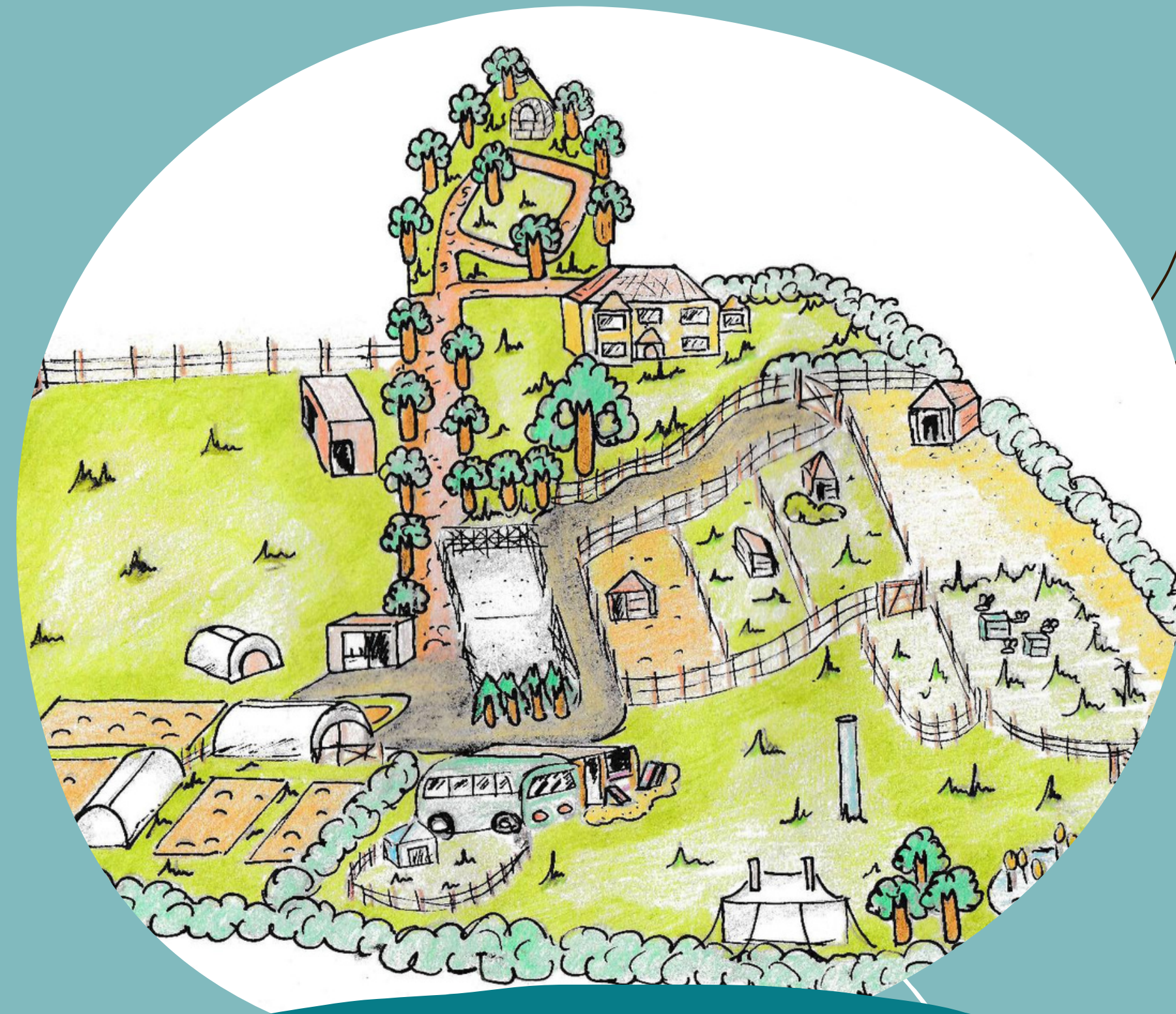




Our key objective is to support individuals to have a meaningful and worthwhile experience, whilst gaining skills, knowledge, and confidence, to live life to their full potential, by enabling participation and inclusion.

The low-key social, outdoor environment is non-threatening and enables our attendees to be themselves and flourish.

The land-based environment gives the opportunity to support people with additional needs, those with physical and emotional health issues, including those with a need to be more active, recovering after an operation, overcoming anxiety or working through depression. Thereby, enabling more people to fulfil their potential by working to address issues at the earliest possible stage.



*"ARK is a refuge,  
a beautiful place to pause,  
breathe and heal"*

# Vision

A safe inclusive place where everyone can connect with others and just be themselves.

# Mission

To enable our community to improve their Health and Wellbeing, Confidence and Community Engagement, by providing a safe and nurturing outdoor environment.

We do this by using land-based activities, such as horticulture, animals, nature, cooking and rural arts and crafts.



# Values

**Inclusivity** – We strive to provide equal access and opportunities for all, enabling participation and inclusion.

**Equality** – We treat everyone as an individual and ensure that every individual has an equal opportunity to be the best that they can be.

**Person Centred** – We believe that each person should be placed at the centre of their world and treated as an individual.

**Expertise** - We understand that each person is an individual and promote self-efficacy to support them to realise their own potential.

**Choice** – We believe that everyone has the right to choose and have control over their own lives.

# Our Team

## Nigel Bell - Director of Business Development & CEO

Nigel is the founder of ARK and responsible for the strategic direction and development of partnerships across corporate and public sectors, including business development.

Nigel was in the Royal Navy for 28 years, ending his career in 2014 as a qualified Social Worker. During his time in the Royal Navy, Nigel supported a generic service user group with a variety of personal issues including mental and physical health, disability and personal issues.

A large part of his career was spent supporting serving personnel and their families through trauma (with life changing injuries) experienced with the war in Afghanistan, with two years spent directly supporting those returned to Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham. Since leaving the Royal Navy, Nigel has been working with a local fostering agency, enabling foster carers to support and nurture young people overcome a variety of personal difficulties and traumatic life events. Nigel is a Fellow of the Dartington School of Social Entrepreneurs, which has empowered him to set up this Land Based Therapeutic Environment.



## Amanda Bell - Co-Founder & Director

Amanda's previous experience has predominately been in Operations Management, Customer Services Management and Project Management in both the public and private sector. Amanda holds a Diploma in Management Studies, Diploma in Marketing, Level 5 Institute of Leadership and Management and PRINCE2 Project Management. Amanda originally focussed on the business setup and administration and now works on a voluntary basis supporting the whole team on all elements of the business.



# Our Team

## Matt Laughton - Operations Manager

Matt has worked with young people and adults all of his working life, initially delivering outdoor education and adventurous activities as part of the education team for Exmoor National Park Authority. Matt then worked as a parent support advisor in a secondary school in Taunton before joining the South Somerset Local Service team as an Education Attendance officer, supporting children and their families to access education. Matt then trained as a social worker, working in Somerset's child protection, children looked after and children with disabilities teams. Matt has also worked as a supervising social worker for an independent fostering agency.

Matt Joined the team at ARK in July 2021. Matt says that working at ARK allows him to combine his professional knowledge and skills with his passion for being outdoors and the environment to support all members of ARK's community to enjoy and appreciate the mental and physical benefits of engaging with nature and interacting with each other.



## Tilly Bell

Tilly our much beloved chocolate lab cross, was the lifeblood of ARK, welcoming one and all onsite. Unfortunately Tilly passed away in March and she is missed by one and all

# Our Team



## Sam Sheppard - Support Worker

Sam served in the Royal Navy for nine and a half years as part of Mine Counter Measures 1 Squadron in Faslane, Scotland. Throughout his time, he was operationally deployed to the Northern Gulf and was part of NATO task group to The Baltics. Sam left the Royal Navy in 2016 as a Leading Hand. After leaving the Royal Navy, Sam trained as a boat builder at The Boat Building Academy, Lyme Regis. Although Sam enjoyed his time there, he did not feel fulfilled and therefore decided to become a support worker for adults with autism. Sam is studying BA (Honours) Health and Social Care with The Open University. Sam joined the team at ARK in October 2020 and enjoys combining his work with hobbies by teaching skills he has developed, allowing others to find new interests and progress with their own lives.

## Jemma Harper - Educational Lead

Before Jemma joined the ARK team in 2021, she was an infant school teacher for seven and a half years, gaining a PGCE with SEN specialism. She worked with both Year 1 and 2 children and, despite it being a mainstream setting, Jemma used her SEN skills within her classroom every year. She feels very blessed to have had the opportunity to work with so many wonderful children and believes they taught her as much as she taught them! Prior to embarking on her teaching career, Jemma studied for a Fine Art BA (Honours) degree at SCAT in Taunton. She specialised in photography and installations but, since being at ARK, her art knowledge has been expanding at a rate of knots. Thanks to one of ARK's dedicated volunteer tutors, she now has a very large collection of needle felted objects adorning her selves at home! If someone gives her an idea, she will always try to make it happen, with the integral help of the team. This has included a Quidditch pitch! When Jemma isn't at ARK, she enjoys spending time with her family within the countryside of the South-West, and can be frequently found trying not to fall off of her paddleboard!



# Our Team

## Claire Baldry - Expressive Arts Therapist & Dementia Lead

Claire has always had a love for creativity and the arts, starting out her professional career with a degree in Musical Theatre. Since then her path has taken her in many different directions, from working with adults with development disabilities on an organic farm in Hawaii, taking theatre games into refugee camps for children across Europe, and working in a care home during the covid-19 pandemic. Most recently Claire has completed a masters in Expressive Arts Therapy at the European Graduate School in Switzerland. Looking at how creativity can create space for connection and community is what drives Claire's work, and being able to utilise ARK's outdoor space and emphasis on nature is one of her favourite parts of the job. Claire Joined ARK as part of the team in August 2022 having started out as a volunteer.

## Ella Tarnowski - Apprentice

Ella has always been passionate about health and social care, having been a patient and service user in various services throughout her life, including ARK. Originally wanting to become a psychiatric nurse, she completed a level 2 qualification in Health and Social Care with Yeovil college. She decided that full-time college learning wasn't for her, and so decided to undertake a level 3 diploma as a Lead Adult Care Worker with Yeovil college and ARK. Now having stepped away from nursing and possibly moving on to social work, she is still discovering what direction she wants to go in career-wise. She is passionate about arts and crafts, especially lino printing and textile art, and enjoys taking care of our Guinea pigs.



We are super lucky to have a fantastic merry band of volunteers; we have built up to approx 45 core volunteers who support the employed team in all aspects of running ARK including working alongside and mentoring people, listening, horticulture, beekeeping, cooking, wood working, teaching arts and crafts activities....and the list goes on. We would not have been able to build and establish ARK without these amazing people that we have around us and supporting us.



Our   
Amazing  
Volunteers





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"I hadn't been in a very good place in over 10 years, and had been feeling lonely. Since attending the Health and Wellbeing course, my confidence has grown, and my mental health and wellbeing is in a much better place. The course gave me the opportunity to meet new people, and now I have a couple of people in my life who I would consider good friends. I'm so grateful for the opportunity to attend the course as it has really put me on the path of good health, and I'm now able to smile and laugh again. A big thank you to the amazing people at the Ark and their support. This course has great value, and I hope that it will continue to help all the people that attend like it helped me." J

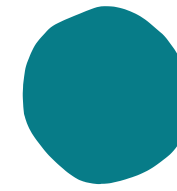
"You change lives. What you offer at Ark outlived all of my expectations, having attended the health and wellbeing course.. I don't know of anywhere in Somerset that offers what you do. So you should be really proud. I cannot wait to start my first week of the Therapeutic Volunteer Programme on Monday. So I look forward to seeing you then and I'm interested in what you guys are going to get me doing. This is just the start of my time at Ark. And that brings me much joy and happiness. I kept saying to Mum today "now you know why I love The Ark so much!" G

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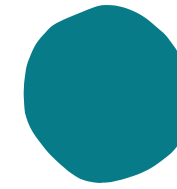
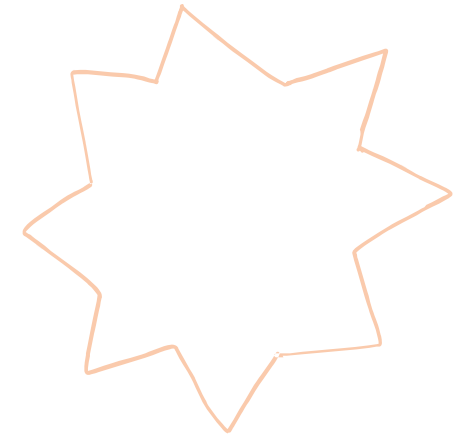
# Awards & Achievements



Resonance Certificate of Achievement Award for Good Governance 2019



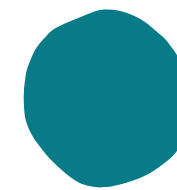
Resonance Certificate of Achievement Award for Community Focus 2020



Resonance Certificate of Achievement Award for Growth 2022



2021 & 2022 - NatWest Top 100 Social Enterprises and Top 25 New Trailblazing Newcomers in the UK



Certificate of Fellowship for Nigel Bell from the School for Social Entrepreneurs during 2022



Somerset Bee Keepers Association 2022 - First Prize in Honey, Biscuits and Cake



*"Keep on doing what you're doing! You make a big difference to our patients."*



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*"ARK is amazing and I am always excited to go there. Before I came to ARK my anxiety was getting dangerous and everyone was worried. But ARK is helping me so much, there are a lot of fun things to do at ARK. When I go to ARK, I feel safe."*

*"ARK at Egwood is honestly such a unique gem and really helped me regain my confidence, through activities such as woodworking and horticulture. I've never come across an organisation that takes such a genuine interest in your health and well-being."*

*"Every day at ARK is a learning day, gaining new skills and techniques from people of many different backgrounds and areas of expertise. You also learn how best to help and develop people with different needs to yourself. It works both ways; I give to them, and they give great things back to me. It couldn't be simpler or more rewarding."*

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IMPACT & VALUE

ARK  
Workshops

570

people

57

courses

Attendee Hours

12880

Cooking in nature

Felting

1067

Learner hours on  
Somerset Skills  
& Learning  
Courses

Health and Wellbeing

Willow Weaving

Gardening

Site Maintenance

Rural Arts & Crafts

Volunteering Hours

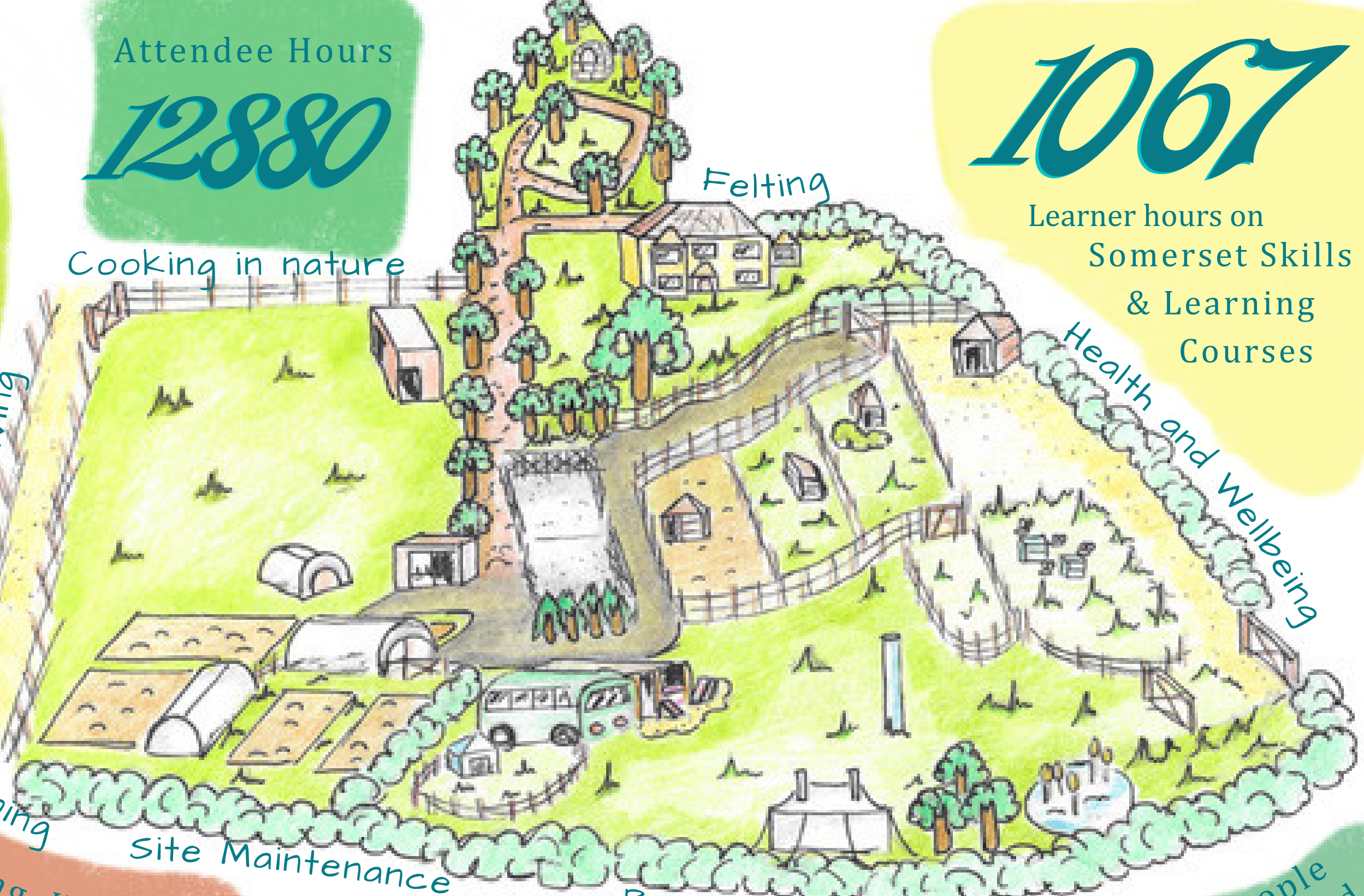
1970

@ ARK

Young People  
hours supported

117

2020 - 2023



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*"This has been a huge relief to my mental health. As someone with Asperger's Syndrome, I have always felt like I'm expected to perform in a specific way or slot into a defined role. At the Ark I feel no such pressure. If I want to, I can just wonder around the field, lost in my own thoughts until the cows come home. Or I can take part in one of the Ark's craft sessions. I've been painting, felting and willow weaving."*

*"ARK has supported a positive change in both my physical and mental health. It has given me a purpose, something to get up for, something to look forward to. Learning new things boosting my confidence in my abilities. Being more active and enjoying the outside."*

*"I referred J to ARK as he had lost his confidence and direction after being out of work for a couple of years, inc through the pandemic. When I saw him recently at ARK, he was more comfortable talking and clearly enjoys being there, esp caring for the animals. His confidence has grown to the point where we can start looking at employment opportunities"*

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# Next Year



It is our intention that the basis of this report, will now become an annual report, so that we can celebrate all of the achievements and developments, before they become a distant memory.

So, our plans for the next 12 months, are to **continue to provide the regular daily support** to individuals, groups and one-off activity days, continuing to provide the safe, relaxing space that we have, and ensure that we have all the right infrastructure and capacity in place to meet the needs of everyone who comes to ARK, now and for many years to come.

We intend to finally finish off and **start using our converted shipping container classroom/meeting space**, convert two old toilet containers into an office space, add further toilets on site, and complete this area with accessible pathways. This area will then provide us with an **all year round dry/warm space**, which will be accessible by all and to be used by many.

Our bid to Somerset Skills and Learning has been accepted for next year, so we can **provide further six-week Health and Wellbeing courses, and one-off workshops**, and continue to partner and collaborate with other organisations to ensure we reach and support as many people as possible, within our locality.

Support wise, in line with the Pathways to Partnerships project, we wish to **understand barriers for people accessing support**, establishing why certain groups within our community do not engage with us or others and enhancing our levels of support to the Armed Forces Community.

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*"I can't praise the opportunities enough that are provided at Ark for people who may benefit from a warm and welcoming environment. I genuinely cannot praise this establishment enough." C*

*"Ark has helped me improve my social skills and develop relationships with staff and visitors which has encouraged me to open up and talk through some of the problems I face on a day-to-day basis and share ideas about how to get around difficult situations."*

*"A wonderful place where people can come together for support whilst struggling with issues. All the staff are very kind and caring and the range of activity for clients is wonderful. A happy and safe place!*

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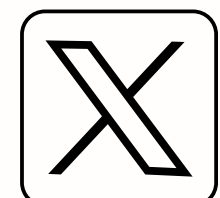
If you would like to learn more about anything you have read, or ways to get involved at ARK, please get in touch:

ARK at Egwood, Egwood House,  
Merriott, Somerset, TA16 5QN  
Tel: 01460 391974 / 07974658782

Email: [office@arkategwood.com](mailto:office@arkategwood.com)

Website: [www.arkategwood.com](http://www.arkategwood.com)

Facebook, Twitter & Instagram @arkategwood



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