

ASCENSION EAGLES CHEERLEADERS
(A company limited by guarantee and registered charity)

UNAUDITED

TRUSTEES' REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2022

ASCENSION EAGLES CHEERLEADERS
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**REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS OF THE CHARITY, ITS TRUSTEES AND ADVISERS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2022**

Trustees	Sue Winston, Chair Lorraine Hart (resigned 7 April 2022) Duncan Smith (resigned 21 October 2021) Susan Spiller Hayley Budd Peter Leslie Sharp Farrah Mughal Tara Stimpson, Treasurer Larsen Mabika (appointed 17 October 2022) Lewis Ridett (appointed 17 October 2022) Erica de Rosa (appointed 17 October 2022)
Company registered number	04197666
Charity registered number	1106766
Registered office	Ascension Church Centre Baxter Road, Custom House London E16 3HJ
Principal operating office	Talent Central Cheer & Dance Unit 27a, Gallions Reach Shopping Park 3 Armada Way London E6 7ER
Company secretary	Tara Stimpson
Chief executive officer	Angela Green
Independent Examiner	MHA MacIntyre Hudson Chartered Accountants 910 The Crescent Colchester Business Park Colchester Essex CO4 9YQ
Bankers	National Westminster Bank plc Frobisher Road Beckton London E6 5LX

ASCENSION EAGLES CHEERLEADERS
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TRUSTEES' REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2022

The Trustees present their annual report together with the financial statements of the charity known as Ascension Eagles Cheerleaders for the year 1 September 2021 to 31 August 2022.

The Trustees confirm that the Annual Report and financial statements of the company comply with the current statutory requirements, the requirements of the company's governing document and the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP), applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

Since the charity qualifies as small under section 383, the strategic report required of medium and large companies under The Companies Act 2006 (Strategic Report and Director's Report) Regulations 2013 is not required.

Our objectives and activities

Our purpose, as stated in our Memorandum and Articles of Association, is to provide facilities for the recreation and leisure time occupation of young people under the age of 25 in the interest of social welfare.

We provide training in cheerleading activities and performance opportunities, to develop young peoples' fundamental capacities, so that:

They may grow to full maturity as individuals, so that they become effective and considerate members of their communities, and their conditions of life may be improved.

We - alongside our members and their families - are still experiencing the lasting impact of the Coronavirus pandemic which caused us to close our doors for the first time in over two decades.

Our focus over the past year has been on rebuilding our programmes across our Ascension Eagles competitive teams, our schools outreach work and our community with our Talent Central recreational classes.

Alongside this we have worked hard to support our members and families as they face the challenges of a post-pandemic world.

Despite all of the challenges, the 2021-22 season has been very much a celebration of being back together, resuming our full service to our members and working towards growth for the future.

In 2022, the Board of trustees and the Management Team agreed that it would adopt the term "**The Group**" (or "We" or "Us") to describe the combined activities of Ascension Eagles Cheerleading and Talent Central, to recognise and to emphasise that our mission is delivered through a range of competition, recreational and schools' programmes.

People working on behalf of The Group include senior managers (known as "the senior team" or "the Management Team"), the Board of Trustees, paid staff, volunteers, sessional workers, agency staff and students.



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Our mission, vision and values

Our Mission	Our Vision	Our Values
We strive to develop Britain's best cheerleaders while transforming and inspiring children and young people to reach their full potential.	Cheerleading is an effective way of helping children and young people to be healthy and gain confidence, while helping them to make a positive difference - both in their community and in the world.	Consistency Integrity Perseverance Persistence

Background and history

Our charity began in 1996, as a grassroots outreach programme and part of the Ascension Church Centre, with the aim of keeping young people off the streets and out of trouble.

When AEC ranked bottom at their first National Championship in 1997, they were fed-up with negative stereotypes. They decided that coming bottom at Nationals was something they would not accept; instead, they combined efforts with the aspiration of achieving a different result in future competitions.

The following year, in 1998, they won their first National trophy, and, in doing so, proved to themselves that hard work can bring success. With sheer determination and teamwork, this group of individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds committed themselves to being the best that they could be.

Over a quarter of a century later, our programme is firmly established as the best of British Cheerleading, consistently coming top in competitions but also making a vital contribution to young peoples' social and physical development through our recreational classes and school programmes.

In 2021-22 we experienced our first full season after the Covid-19 pandemic and, despite facing legacy effects of the pandemic, particularly on our membership levels, we were determined to ensure a great season for all of our members and their families.



Structure, governance and management

The company was incorporated on 10 April 2001 and became a registered charity on 15 November 2004. It took over the assets and liabilities of the unincorporated association of the same name on 1 September 2004. The company is limited by guarantee and its management is the responsibility of the Trustees who are elected and co-opted under the terms of the Articles of Association at each Annual General Meeting, with the day-to-day responsibility delegated to the Management Team.

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The Group's Board has elected to follow the principles and practices set out in the [Charity Governance Code](#) as published by the Charity Commission.

Safeguarding

The Group recognises the importance of its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people entrusted to its care ("the beneficiaries").

We are committed to regular child protection training for all staff, coaches, volunteers and Trustees, to develop their understanding of the signs of abuse and how to respond to disclosures of abuse. Anyone in leadership who has contact with children/young people will complete an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. Any Trustee appointment is subject to a DBS check; we believe this is sensible to mitigate risks to our beneficiaries and the charity.

Our safeguarding policy, referred to as the Child And Adults At Risk Protection Policy ("CAARP Policy"), was reviewed and updated on 1 May 2022 in line with changes recommended by the NSPCC. The latest version of our CAARP Policy is available for public view via [a link on the Ascension Eagles website](#).
(https://www.ascensioneagles.com/_files/ugd/87f7e5_3e6eaf93607a4fa1807ddd0fb7583573.pdf)

In keeping with the requirement that all organisations working with children must have a designated individual who takes the lead on safeguarding, The Group's Board of Trustees annually appoint a Nominated Safeguarding Lead and a Deputy Safeguarding Lead to ensure the implementation of The Group's CAARP Policy.

In addition, the Board also appoints a Trustee Safeguarding Lead who reports to the Board at each Board meeting on The Group's safeguarding practice, including raising any concerns of which the Board needs to be aware and any incidents which have taken place (in accordance with any confidentiality/ reporting restrictions which may apply).

Trustee matters

Board changes in 2021-22

We appointed [three new Trustees](#) in 2022: Erica De Rosa, Larsen Mabika, and Lewis Ridett. Together they bring greater diversity to the board, together with experience in sports fundraising, product development, equality and inclusion, and youth sport.

Duncan Smith resigned as a trustee of AEC on 21 October 2021. During his four years as a trustee, Duncan was a great advocate for our work, giving his time generously and using his network to benefit not only our charity, but others in his native South Africa.

Lorraine Hart resigned as a trustee on 7 April 2022. Lorraine was a passionate supporter of The Group's mission; we benefited greatly from Lorraine's excellent third sector experience and she was instrumental in developing our Theory of Change.

The Board is grateful to both Duncan and Lorraine for their significant contributions as AEC Trustees.

Our approach to trustee appointments

We have a thorough and thoughtful approach to the selection and appointment of trustees. We advertise trustee vacancies on sites such as Reach Volunteering and Getting on Board; we participate in the BoardMatch events run by the East London Business Alliance (ELBA), and we share vacancies on social media, such as LinkedIn. For roles requiring technical skills we also approach membership organisations for specialist roles (e.g. ICAEW for financial skills and IPD for people skills).

Mindful of the benefits of increased Board diversity, the Board aims to place value on candidates' passion for our mission - not simply on their skills or the extent of their professional experience. In the recruitment we undertook in early 2022, we achieved this aim; we appointed three new trustees who bring to our Board a greater diversity of age and ethnicity, as well as experience of youth sport (as participants and coaches), fundraising experience and experience of living on a low disposable income - the key areas identified in the Board skills audit that we conducted prior to our recruitment programme.

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Our recruitment process

All Trustee applicants are invited to complete an Expression of Interest form and submissions are shared with the Board. Suitable candidates are informally interviewed by at least two existing Trustees, then invited to attend one of The Group's events or to visit our gym to see what we do 'at first hand'.

We aim for a candidate to have met at least 75% of the Trustees by this stage of the process. If the candidate is considered a potential appointee, they are invited to attend a Board meeting as an observer. If the candidate subsequently confirms that they still wish to proceed, the Board agrees in principle whether they wish to appoint the candidate. If they do, the potential new Trustee receives an induction pack (in line with the Charity Commission's recommendations), is subject to an enhanced DBS check and is asked to sign a declaration to confirm that they have not been disqualified from acting as a trustee and to declare any conflicts of interest.

Assuming no issues arise from the DBS check or declarations, the Trustee's appointment is formally voted on by the Board.

Board development

Board effectiveness review

In late 2021 the Board decided to undertake a Board effectiveness review to self-assess its effectiveness on what the Board does well and areas for improvement.

This review was facilitated by one of the Trustees using a framework employed by other boards. Each Trustee was asked to respond to a detailed questionnaire covering: the functioning of the Board, Trustee training, composition of the Board, culture, and the role of the Chair. The results were anonymized and a summary of the results was shared with all members of the Board. At a separate debrief session held in Q1 2022, the Board agreed key actions to address areas highlighted by the review.

Board skills audit

In January 2022 we conducted a Board Skills Audit to identify any skills gaps or diversity factors we should address in our future trustee recruitment campaigns.

We adapted a template from the Trustee Recruitment Cycle and to include aspects specific to The Group's requirements. Each trustee self-assessed 65 aspects of their own skills, knowledge and experience, which were under headings such as Governance and Leadership, People, Finance, Operations, Digital, Marketing and Fundraising.

The Board accepted that some of the skills gaps identified in this exercise could be 'bought in' if necessary (e.g. legal and marketing). We therefore focussed on addressing skills gaps in fundraising and HR, and lived-experience of youth sport and living on a low disposable income and we highlighted these areas in the person specification when we ran our trustee recruitment campaign.

The key outcomes from the Board effectiveness review and the skills audit were:

- The Board recognised its strengths in terms of culture and positive, open, collaborative working relationships. In addition, these exercises confirmed that the Board adds value in terms of guiding The Group's strategy and objectives, and the Chair provides a positive atmosphere for this work.
- In term of addressing areas for improvement, the Board has taken the following actions:
 - Each trustee met individually with the Programme Director, Angela Green, to ensure they were fully up to date on The Group's operations and challenges, and to discuss how each Trustee can best contribute to the organisation
 - Actions arising from Board meetings have been streamlined to ensure the Board focuses on those which are most valuable in terms of delivering The Group's mission
 - The recruitment of three new trustees, who bring additional skills and address some gaps in terms of diversity of age and experiences

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- The Board has undertaken a review of the committee structures and their terms of reference to ensure it is best able to support The Group.

Review of The Group's policies and practices

We undertook a review of all of The Group's policies in May 2022. This was a significant project which included assessing whether we had the right policies in place and whether additional policies were required, ensuring existing policies were up to date, reformatting all of the policy documentation to ensure a consistent approach, agreeing a new annual review process and applying a categorisation to all policies (eg internal or public). Each policy now has an allocated 'lead trustee' who is responsible for leading an annual review of the policy.

As part of this process we also reviewed the Members' Code of Conduct (for athletes and their families) and the Staff Handbook. The East London Business Alliance (ELBA) facilitated a human resources director in the financial services sector, who generously gave The Group her time and expertise to help with our Staff Handbook review.

A review of our approach to performance management and our pay review process were included as part of this project.

The Director's Report



Angela Green, Programme Director – Ascension Eagles, writes:

We have been deeply rooted in the community we serve during our 27 years of consistent service. Part of the success of our programme has always relied very much on the face-to-face connection we are able to have with our athletes and their families; from sharing moments of joy, to being the shoulder to lean on when times get tough and everything in between. All these things we took for granted and they were hugely missed during the pandemic.

While I am incredibly proud of the hard work and dedication of our staff team to our athletes during this unprecedented time, it just wasn't quite the same.

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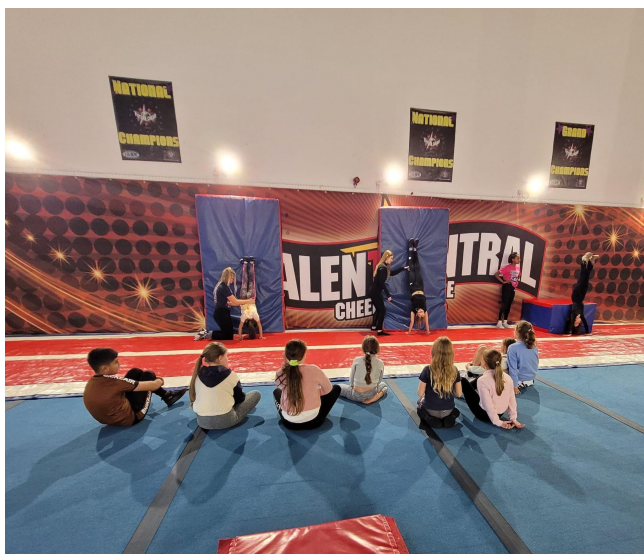
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This past year, coming back post-Covid-19, has been both rewarding and challenging. While it has been incredible to see our athletes back to doing what they love without restrictions and to have those personal connections, we have had to rely on our resilience in response to the ongoing impact of the pandemic and the increased support our members, families and staff team have needed. Across this year I have been privileged to work alongside such a great team of people who have given their all for our athletes regardless of their own personal circumstances.

Overall this has been a year of celebration, with several highlights:

- Delivering a “World of Work” workshop for our members, in partnership with ‘15 Billion EBP’, a local charity dedicated to promoting mobility and raising aspirations among children and young people, whom we also work with to deliver work experience placements. During the session 60 school children from schools in the Borough of Newham visited us at Talent Central for some ‘real life’ experience of different professions within sport in line with the ‘World of Work’ area of the national curriculum.
- This year saw the introduction of our Champions In Training (CIT) programme, designed to offer a lower-commitment alternative to our full competitive cheerleading programme. Given the current economic climate it creates an additional pathway, making cheerleading accessible to more children and young people. Despite starting small, the team progressed well over the season with 10 athletes going through to competition under the team name ‘Ascension Eagles Harmony’ where they were graded as “Excellent” by judges. We are very much looking forward to seeing this as an area of growth over the coming season.
- This past season has been very much a rebuilding year with our membership numbers impacted by the pandemic over the past two years. It was wonderful to see numbers building back up towards pre-pandemic levels and the retention of just under 100 athletes for AEC’s competitive season, with four out of six teams achieving National Champion status - and two of those teams remaining unbeaten for the whole season. While we are proud to have proven that Ascension Eagles continue to be a force to be reckoned with on the competition floor, in spite of all challenges, we were equally proud that we also provided a safe place for all of our members, along with continued support, as they navigate a new, post-pandemic ‘normal’.

Junior Leadership Team (JLT)



The Ascension Eagles’ Junior Leadership Team continues to go from strength-to-strength. This season, as part of our post-pandemic rebuild, the team comprised six AEC competitive team junior coaches, five junior coaches assisting our recreational gymnastic classes, and three SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) support coaches.

In the learning sessions and evaluations for the JLT members, our focus has been on building their confidence as coaches, including effective planning, and session-leading skills, particularly for the younger athletes.

Junior coach Shante, who supports our Youth 1 Team Symphony, said: *“Understanding that athletes will respond to different behaviour management strategies has really helped me think more about how I can get the best from them in a way that makes them feel valued and appreciated, while still maintaining clear boundaries of expectation.”*

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In October 2021 we sent our JLT members, with their mentors, to a cheerleading industry coaching conference. This gave them the opportunity to join coaches from across the UK for a weekend of learning from industry professionals from around the world.

Many of our coaches are approaching 16-years old and are now eligible to sit the qualifications and courses for which they have been preparing since the inception of our JLT programme.

All our JLT members now have first aid and safeguarding certification and, additionally, those who have turned 16 have achieved recognised coaching qualifications provided by Building from the Ground Up (BGU) - the UK's leading cheerleading educator.



Of course, our mission is about more than just creating successful, happy athletes - it's also about helping our young people to be productive members of their community.

To this end, we partnered with local community association Bonny Downs to give our young leaders valuable volunteering experience. Bonny Downs are dedicated to supporting the needs of Newham's older and more vulnerable residents.

Our JLT members led an Elders project and a Christmas Hamper making event.

For the Elders project, they helped prepare the venue and the catering, and took part in the quiz during the day. This was a great opportunity for our young leaders to have a chance to give back to the local community and to experience leading something which was completely new to them and outside of their typical 'comfort zone'.

JLT member Lexy said of her time with the project members; *"I'm really glad I came. It was nice to meet them and to spend time talking to them. I especially enjoyed the quiz!"*

We are pleased with the progress the JLT programme is making, notwithstanding the unavoidable impacts of Covid-19, and look forward to seeing our programme continue to evolve next season.

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A parent's view

My daughter's transformation to a confident, bubbly girl

"From a very young age my daughter has always shown an interest in gymnastics; she was always doing the splits, handstands, cartwheels etc.

In 2017, aged five, she joined a Talent Central recreational class. I remember telling her the fantastic news, she was so excited and couldn't wait to start.

She thoroughly enjoyed gymnastics and loved going there every week. She learnt a great deal and made lots of friends.

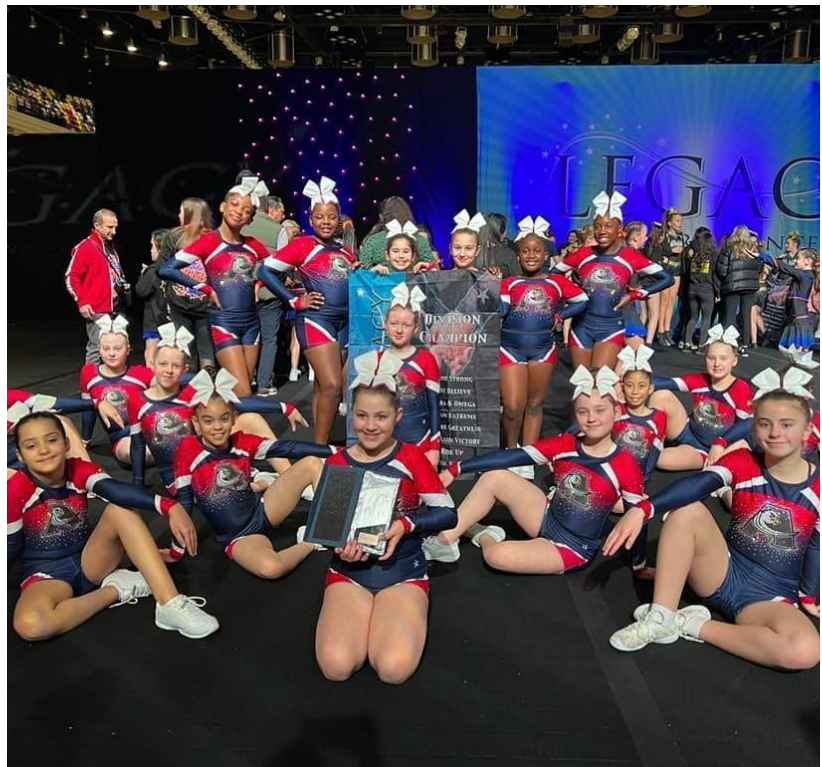
As much as she loved gymnastics, in 2021 we decided to transition into Ascension Eagles; so she auditioned for a team and was so happy to be placed on the youth team, Symphony.

They have had a fantastic year, they won all four competitions they entered along with two Grand Champion titles. But more importantly than that, I have seen such a transformation in my daughter; from such a shy little girl to now, a confident bubbly girl - and that is all down to her time in Talent Central and Ascension Eagles.

What is lovely is that Rob has coached her from the beginning of her journey in Talent Central and he still does now in her tumble classes for cheerleading.

The coaches really go 'above and beyond' for each child in the gym, and my daughter adores her coaches, especially Coach Mel who coaches her for Symphony.

We are so glad that we made the decision to join cheerleading and can't wait to see what is in store for our daughter's second season."



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Ascension Eagles in 2021-22

Competition results

Our squads train year-round, and compete against regional and national teams in their respective age groups.

Prodigy Mini Level 1 Prep (aged 5-8)	Symphony Youth Level 1 (aged 9-11)	Prophecy Junior Level 1 (aged 10-14)	Royalty Senior Level 1 (aged 10+)
Legacy Regionals - 1st Future Cheer Regionals - 2nd Legacy Nationals - 1st Future Cheer Nationals - 3rd	Legacy Regionals - 1 st Future Cheer Regionals - 1 st & Grand Champions Legacy Nationals - 1 st & Grand Champions Future Cheer Nationals - 1 st	Legacy Regionals - 3 rd Future Cheer Regionals - 1 st Legacy Nationals - 2 nd Future Cheer Nationals - 2 nd	Legacy Regionals - 4 th Future Cheer Regionals - 2 nd Legacy Nationals - 3 rd Future Cheer Nationals - 10 th
Majesty Senior Level 2 (aged 11+)	Trinity Senior Coed Level 3 (aged 11+)	Harmony Youth Novice (aged 6-11)	Serenity (Special Educational Needs Team)
Legacy Regionals - 1 st & Outstanding Technique Award Future Cheer Regionals - 1 st Legacy Nationals - 1 st Future Cheer Nationals - 1 st	Legacy Regionals - 2 nd Future Cheer Regionals - 1 st Legacy Nationals - 1 st Future Cheer Nationals - 1 st	Future Cheer Regionals - Excellent Award	Performances at: Legacy Regionals Future Cheer Regionals



Talent Central in 2021-22

Talent Central is London's first "cheer gym", based on the well-respected principles, values and training ethos of Ascension Eagles. The centre is used by many athletes, from beginners all the way through to other competitive cheer programmes. We deliver our community outreach work through the Talent Central brand.

Our schools' outreach programme

Our school-based sessions are important as they allow us to extend the positive benefits of cheerleading beyond our gym facility. They enable us to take the experience of cheerleading into the wider community.

We are still working to bring participation in our schools outreach programme up to the same levels as they were pre-pandemic. However, we made excellent progress in this objective in 2021-22.

At the start of the season four schools were able to commit to our programme and this meant that we were able to run our first showcase event since 2019. Although the event was on a much smaller scale than our usual Schools Showcase events, the participants' passion and enthusiasm to show what they had learnt from their Talent Central cheerleading coaches was as powerful as ever. It was an important step towards regaining some of the opportunities and freedom that these children had lost as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

These showcase events have always created an important opportunity for young people from across our local communities to come together; crucially, these events allow them to form connections with other young people from different schools, cultures and backgrounds all of whom share a common goal - cheerleading.

By the end of the school year we had increased our schools' outreach programme to 11 classes a week; this meant that we were once again able to deliver our full-scale, end-of-term showcases in March and July at the ExCeL Centre London. Each participant received an individual medal and certificate; each school received a trophy and either a bronze, silver or gold award level certificate. In total, 492 children attended our three showcase events.

We delivered cheerleading sessions for the following schools during the 2021-22 season: Britannia Village (two clubs), Hallsville, Lathom Road (two clubs), Manor Road, New City, Rosetta (two clubs) and St Angela's.

We are grateful to all of our school partners for the opportunity to bring the joy of cheerleading to so many young people and we look forward to further rebuilding our outreach programme over the coming seasons.



“Cheerleading has been a great success at Manor Road Primary, the kids have found new confidence and self-belief and that’s all through cheerleading.

A number of girls who have joined cheerleading have never been to one of our sports clubs before and now we have boys coming to show it’s for everyone. We can’t thank cheerleading enough.”

Charles Murphy – Manor Road Primary School

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Our recreational classes

Despite our expectations that we would face a slow rebuild of our recreational programme following the Covid-19 pandemic, the Talent Central recreational classes continued to go from strength-to-strength in 2021-22. For example:

- class sizes steadily increased over the season
- we found that we were able to make the content of the classes more challenging because the participants were making such good progress
- feedback from our young people confirmed how much they enjoy attending the sessions.



Our aim is to provide fun, accessible and affordable tumbling and gymnastics for young people who want to develop their skills and without the significant levels of time and the long-term commitment that participating in our competition programme requires.

Through our recreational classes, we see that several of our young athletes are starting to show some flair for gymnastics. Many participants are now confidently able to perform intermediate-level skills which has been a fantastic boost for their own self-confidence, but has also inspired and incentivised a greater determination among the other participants.

This season has been primarily about introducing session frameworks and gymnastic elements which will support all of our athletes' development. Next year our focus will be on balancing the ability ranges of new-joiners and less-able athletes with the abilities of the more experienced athletes, so that we can create learning environments which are suitable - and enjoyable - for all participants.

"I love that my son is learning new skills. He is meeting new people and learning to work with others to achieve his goals in gymnastics. He is so happy he can now do a bridge."

Parent feedback

"My daughter had tried gymnastics before but refused to stay for the session - then we found you. She loves being in the gym and working with her coaches. She has found her motivation and I can't ever imagine her doing anything else."

Parent feedback

"I like doing gymnastics at Talent Central because I get to practice my skills and I make lots of friends and the teachers are nice here."

Athlete feedback

"I really like doing gymnastics because it's fun and I learn new things. I'm happy I get to move to the next class soon, I will miss my coach but I will learn new things"

Athlete feedback

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Chair's review

We began our 26th season with a slight sense of apprehension; we anticipated experiencing some legacy effects from the Covid-19 pandemic, which had so dramatically impacted our local communities and we anticipated that our funding streams would come under pressure if the risk of a post-pandemic economic recession materialised.

In the midst of all of the uncertainty, one thing was clear; the management team and coaches remained compassionate, focused and resolutely determined to ensure that when our young athletes were ready to return to the gym and to our schools outreach programme, we would make their experience as positive and rewarding as ever.

As the UK's pandemic measures were lifted and normality gradually returned, so did our members. While the 2021-22 membership levels didn't quite return to pre-pandemic levels, there are strong indicators that they will. Our management team and the coaches did a superb job of rebuilding the competition programme, regenerating the schools outreach programme and raising funding.

While the pace of The Group's recovery from the pandemic was encouraging in 2021-22, we are not complacent. We know that we will face challenges in the coming seasons as a result of factors beyond our control, such as the predicted UK-wide economic recession. But, our team has a strong track-record of facing up to such challenges.

We are very hopeful that in the 2022-23 season we will be able to fully rebuild our teams, rejuvenate our schools programme and re-ignite the aspirations and ambitions of our young athletes.

Our impact in 2021-22

Our impact measurement work helps us to demonstrate our effectiveness and the extent to which we are delivering our mission. It allows us to benchmark how our athletes are feeling so that we can offer them the support and pastoral care they need, and it helps us to show our funders the difference that their investment is making - but it also highlights areas in which we could improve our services and how we deliver them.

Ascension Eagles Theory of Change: our impact

Our mission: "To transform the lives of young people"



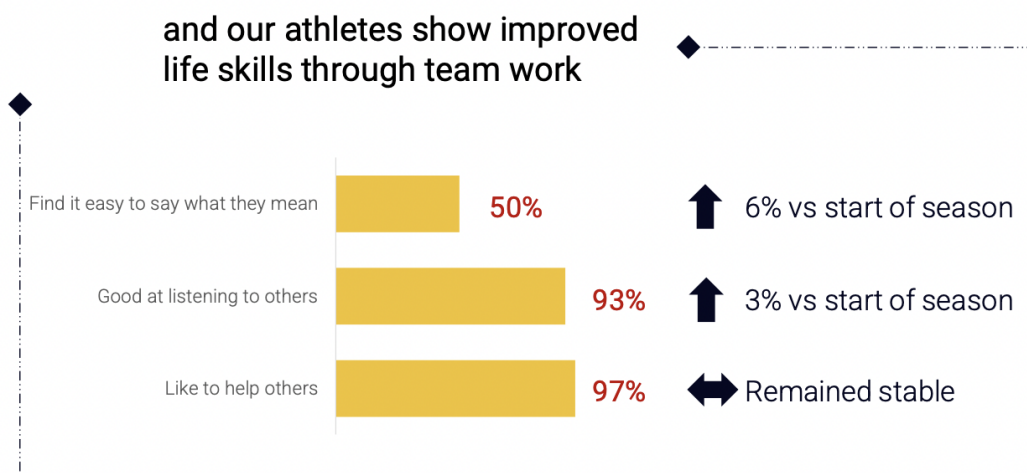
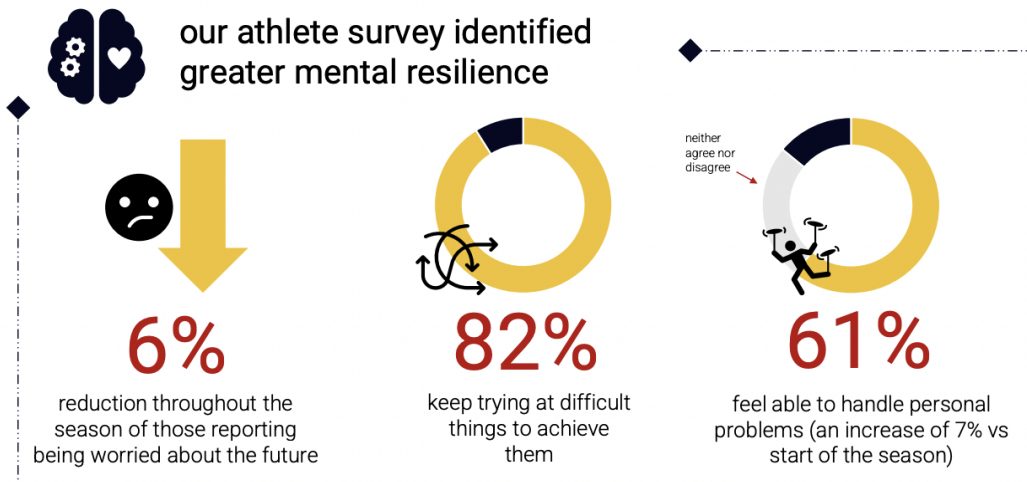
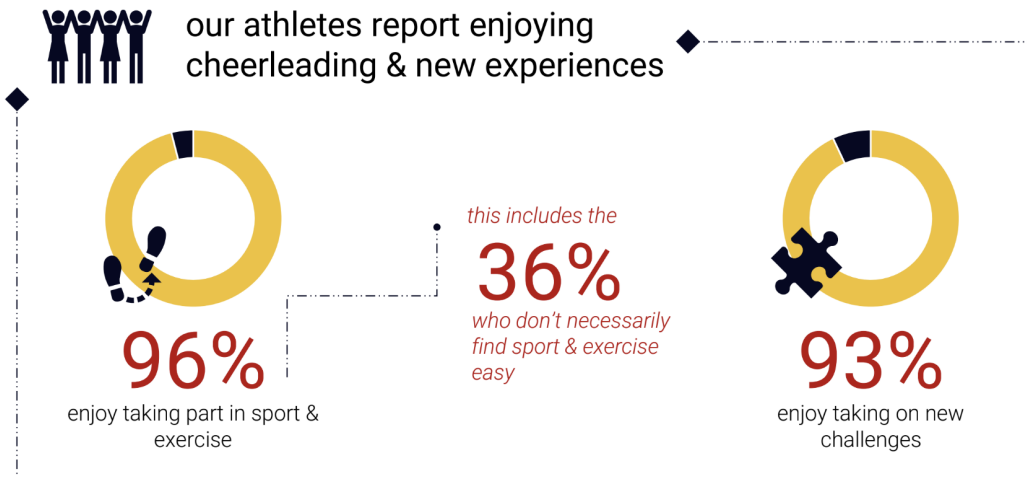
We take a multi-tiered approach to measurement;

- **Athlete questionnaire:** We surveyed our athletes at the start, mid-point and end of the season, using an online questionnaire. The core question-set is centred on measuring our impact on athletes' leadership and resilience skills and the respondent's physical fitness.
- **Observation and assessments by coaches:** These are completed for each of Ascension Eagles' athletes, as well as for the JLT coaches, and for the members of our Talent Central tumble classes. The coach assessments focus on physical fitness, as well as technical cheerleading skills. Coaches also report on participants' time management, organisational and leadership skills.

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- **Parent feedback:** Historically we have also surveyed parents, with the same question-set as for athletes; however we intend to change our approach in 2022-23 to more of a “focus group” style assessment, so that we can gather more qualitative data from parents, to deepen our understanding of our impact.



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Strategic priorities for 2022-23

In last year's report, we said that it will take us more than one season to get The Group back to its pre-pandemic position. There is no doubt that the increasingly challenging economic environment and the 'cost of living crisis' in the UK will create further uncertainty for many people. We anticipate these external factors could impact our operations in 2022-23 and beyond, just as it will affect many UK-based organisations.

Our families face increasing economic pressures from the cost of living crisis - particularly since many of them live in an area facing significant deprivation. We will make sure our services remain as accessible and affordable as possible, so that our athletes can continue to do the sport they love.

To do this, we will need to find new funding to allow us to subsidise membership fees for those on low disposable incomes. We will also continue to look at how we can make our programmes more affordable and attractive to new members by offering new activity programmes which don't require the same commitment or cost as our competitive programme.

We want to rejuvenate our successful schools' programme, because it plays such an important role in supporting young people's physical and mental health, which has become especially important in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

We are aware of the phased introduction of the Charities Act 2022 over the next 18 months. The Board will assess how the new requirements of the Act and the additional recommended non-legislative changes will apply to The Group and what changes we may - or may not - need to make to ensure The Group remains compliant.

In summary, the strategic priorities agreed by the Board and management team for 2021-22 remain unchanged for 2022-23:

1. Make a transformational difference

- We will focus on continuing to rebuild and then sustaining our membership numbers
- We want to ensure our programmes remain accessible and meet the needs of our local young people; in the increasingly difficult UK economic environment, to ensure children do not lose access to the benefits of our programmes we will need to secure funding for our programme costs so that we can offer subsidised places to families impacted by the 'cost of living crisis'.

2. Grow Talent Central

- We aim to grow the income generated by our tumble/recreational classes and hiring out Talent Central
- We are focused on restoring participation in our schools' programme to, at least, its pre-pandemic levels.

3. Sustainability

- We are mindful of an ever increasing focus on sustainability (for example by grant-making trusts) and the need for charities to set out their own position and policies on environmental, societal and economic impacts. We will look at creating an environmental policy in 2022-23.
- In July 2021 we signed a three-year lease for our current premises at Gallions Reach Shopping Centre; however the lease can be broken by either party, at any time, with three-months' notice. Any change in The Group's current arrangements will incur additional costs (i.e. both in terms of set-up and ongoing operational costs). The Board has therefore determined that The Group's reserves should be maintained to contribute to those, as yet unknown, costs, which could be significant. We will therefore continue to explore alternative venues and locations which could provide a temporary or permanent home for The Group.

Outlook for 2022-23 and beyond

As the UK economy faces challenging times, we anticipate that some families in our area will find it financially difficult to continue to participate in our programmes. This impact may continue for more than one season. However, the Board remains confident in the long-term outlook for The Group. The imperatives of young people wishing to participate in

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team sport, together with society's growing need to manage the risks of childhood obesity and a focus on the importance of youth mental wellbeing, remain as compelling as ever.

Our offering has an even more relevant role in a post-pandemic world, helping young people to recover and maintain their mental and physical fitness, and their self-confidence and resilience, after two years of upheaval and isolation. The long-term effects of the pandemic are, only now, becoming fully apparent; our programmes offer a valuable opportunity to support families facing longer-term [impacts on their children's mental well-being, health and social skills](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-surveillance-report/7-children-and-young-people#:~:text=of%20this%20gap.,Disadvantaged,-Children%20and%20Young).

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-surveillance-report/7-children-and-young-people#:~:text=of%20this%20gap.,Disadvantaged,-Children%20and%20Young>)

In the short to medium term we are mindful of the increasing economic pressures on our families – such as rising fuel prices, increasing inflation and parental fears about employment prospects. We will focus on ensuring our services remain as accessible and affordable as possible to help our families weather these potential pressures, so that our athletes can continue to do the sport they love.

We will continue to look for operational efficiencies and ways to reduce our costs. We will also look for ways to generate more revenue by diversifying our income streams to mitigate any impact of reduced external funding.

Funding and support

We are immensely grateful to our supporters for their financial donations. Without their continued support we would not be able to make such a difference to so many young lives. In 2022-23 we were fortunate to receive support from:

The Tuixen Foundation; Gallions Reach Shopping Park; The Jack Petchey Foundation; The Royal Docks Trust (London); abrdn; Newham Council; the East London Business Alliance and Jacqueline Bell-Gam.

In addition to funding and gift-in-kind support we receive from the above organisations, we are also grateful for the support and commitment of our trustees, our members and their families, who volunteer so many hours annually to help ensure that The Group delivers its mission so effectively.

Arrangements for setting pay and remuneration of Key Management Personnel

Key Management Personnel comprise the Trustees and the management team. Trustees are not remunerated in their capacity as a Trustee. The remuneration of the management team is determined by the Trustees' annually in a Performance Management discussion.

Public benefit

The Trustees have complied with their duty in section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 and have paid due regard to public benefit when preparing this report. There are no unreasonable restrictions, which would prevent young people in London benefiting from The Group's services and support offered. The benefit provided to the public is consistent with the aims of the charity. All activities have been undertaken for the furtherance of public benefit and for the furtherance of The Group's aims and objectives as per our Memorandum and Articles of Association. Further detail and public impact of our actions in 2021-22 are included elsewhere in this report.

Financial review

The reserves as at the beginning of the year were £580,382. We recorded a decrease in the year in unrestricted funds from £524,163 to £489,405.

Restricted Funds were unchanged at £56,219.

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Reserves policy

The Board believes that the minimum level of the unrestricted general fund should be the equivalent of six months' usual salaries and other operating costs. This currently equates to approximately £129,000.

The general fund at year end was £129,721. Any significant excess operating surplus at each year end is transferred to the Gym Development Project designated fund, set up to find a permanent home and gym facility for The Group.

Total unrestricted reserves including designated funds and investment revaluation reserve at year end were £489,405.

Preparation of this report

This report has been prepared taking advantage of the small companies' exemption of section 415A of the Companies Act 2006. This report was approved and authorised for issue by the Trustees on 16 January 2023 and signed on its behalf by:



Sue Winston

Chair of Board of Trustees, Ascension Eagles Cheerleaders

Date: 18 January 2023