

# APPLE COLLECTIVE

## Addressing Poverty with Lived Experience

### APPLE COLLECTIVE'S ACHIEVEMENTS 2020-21

This report details APPLE Collective's work October 2020-September 2021. The report begins with a summary of the highlights of our year as a Collective and continues offering a summary of how APPLE members have met the objectives agreed with our Funder, Joseph Rowntree Foundation. The report includes quotes from members of each of our sub-groups and a summary of their achievements over the last year.

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### WHO ARE THE APPLE COLLECTIVE?

We are the APPLE Collective - a national collective of individuals and organisations who have experienced or are experiencing poverty.

Our aim is to create a sustainable, grassroots network across the UK to raise awareness of poverty, reduce stigma and work together with others to eradicate it.

We work collaboratively with allies to use our voice to affect change and we invite groups that have experience or are led by people who are experiencing poverty to join us and become part of the APPLE Collective.

Our Values: As part of the APPLE Collective we;

- Create a supportive space for the coming together of individuals with direct experiences of poverty to build relationships of trust and mutual understanding.
- Build the capacity of individuals with direct experiences of poverty to share their insights through peer support, training and knowledge sharing.
- Work together at a national, regional or local level to promote the voices and influence of those with lived experience of poverty on the decisions that impact them and to raise awareness of and reduce the stigma associated with poverty.
- Respect the dignity of people from all backgrounds and actively seek to promote equality and diversity in our work.

Our Campaign Partnerships:

- Operation WiFi
- Good Things Foundation. Leave Nobody in the Dark Campaign.

For more information on the APPLE Collective, visit our website at: [www.applecollective.com](http://www.applecollective.com)

# APLE'S HIGHLIGHTED ACHIEVEMENTS OVER THE LAST YEAR.



## CAMPAIGNING ON THE DIGITAL DIVIDE.

Over the last year the APLE Campaign to [address the digital divide](#) has gained traction and has taken action in a variety of setting to amplify the voices of people with experience of Poverty. APLE Collective members have published a [briefing paper](#), hosted a [Webinar](#) seeking to find solutions to the Digital Divide and published an accompanying [fact sheet](#). In the last year APLE Collective members have written [blogs](#) about the APLE Digital Divide Campaign hosted by [Church Action on Poverty](#), [Just Fair](#), [Good Things Foundation](#), [Policy Press](#) and [Community Organisers](#). APLE Collective members have published a book '[Socially Distanced Activism](#)' with Policy Press about the work of the Digital Divide Campaign and hosted a [webinar book launch](#) chaired by [Baroness Ruth Lister](#), president of the Child Poverty Action Group.

### Campaign Asks.

In the short term we believe that steps can be taken to tackle this digital divide by:

- Encouraging the telecommunications industry to lift the data caps on pay as you go and rolling pay monthly tariff.
- Making mobile 'hot spots' available free of use and accessible to all.

### In the longer term we ask for participation, voice and connection.

- We ask for free Wi-Fi for Low Income Groups.
- The opportunity to discuss how people with lived experience of socio-economic disadvantage and who directly face this challenge of digital division are able to ensure support packages to build skills, knowledge and confidence are designed to best effect.

APLE Campaigning on the Digital Divide has involved writing to MPs, meeting online with MPs and linking with key partners such as [The Good Things Foundation](#), [Operation WiFi](#) and [Local Trust](#) to amplify the voices of people with lived experience of poverty within wider campaigning on the digital divide. Our work was recognised by the [UK Parliament Awards](#), as Digital Campaigner of the Year. A full hyper linked list of campaign actions are listed below.



## DIGITAL DIVIDE KEY CAMPAIGN DATES 2020-2021

**14.9.20 + 15.9.20** APLE ONLINE Frimhurst Gathering.

**15.12.20** Action Planning ONLINE

**14.1.21** Meeting Siobhain McDonnagh, APPG Data Poverty. Digital Divide Campaign.

**February.** Letters to 13 MPs and SMPs sent re: Digital Divide Campaign.

**4.2.21** APLE met with Local Trust and agreed to collaborate on research re: Digital Divide

**5.2.21** Ruth Lister 'Poverty' Book Launch – APLE Question Asked and response from Panel.

**10.2.21** Building a Human Rights Base out of Poverty. APLE member contributors; Thrive, ATD Fourth World, RAPAR.

**11.2.21** Meeting with Kevin Keith – Data Poverty to share campaign.

**25.2.21** APLE DIGITAL DIVIDE BRIEFING PAPER

**19.3.21** APLE Contribute to Community Organisers 'Post Pandemic Road-Map' Event

**19.3.21** Meeting Jack Brereton MP (Expert Citizens)

**25.3.21** APLE Win UK Parliament Awards Campaigner of the Year.

**26.3.21** APLE Contribute to Community Organisers 'Post Pandemic Road-Map' Event

**1.4.21** Meeting Rachel Maskill MP (LIFE) – Meeting Cancelled by MP

**23.4.21** Meeting MP Carol Monaghan (PTC)

**23.4.21** APLE WEBINAR. Workshops by APLE Collective, Hartlepool Action Lab, Frame Collective. Panel Discussion: The Good Things Foundation, APPG Left Behind Neighbourhoods (Local Trust) APPG Universal Credit (Turn2Us)

**24.3.21** Meeting . Matt Vickers MP Stockton South 24.3.21

**27.4.21** APLE Presentation at BPI Conference.

**28.4.21** APLE Presentation at BPI Conference

**5.5.21** APLE BEST PRACTICE TACKLING DIGITAL DIVIDE FACT SHEET

**11.5.21** APLE Presentation ARVAC Conference

**14.5.21** APLE Contribute to Local Trust funded research on Digital Divide.

### APLE Month JUNE

**8.6.21** APLE Contribute to Communications Plan on Local Trust funded research on Digital Divide.

**15.6.21** APLE Presentation at Libraries Connected Conference

**23.6.21** APLE Policy Press Book Launch.



# INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY 17TH OCTOBER.

The International Day for the Eradication of Poverty gained a lot of traction and the APLE Collective twitter takeover of the JRF Account was a real success. APLE members held a variety of events from poetry workshops to online spaces of solidarity to light up the UK Map with the voices of lived experience.

APLE Collective members and allies created a digital map of all the events and activities occurring for International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, over 55 events were marked on the map, lighting up the UK Map with the voices of people with lived experience of poverty. The map was also marked with twitter support so that solidarity of voice could be shared across the UK.

APLE Collective members produced ten videos from APLE members which shared what it feels like to be heard. These videos were published on the APLE Website and tweeted throughout the day.

Five Blog posts were written by APLE Collective members sharing events that they held, such as Thrive Teesside wrote a blog about the launch of Thriving Women a Poetry anthology for International Day for the Eradication of poverty. Expert Citizens wrote a blog about personal lived experiences of poverty reflecting on what the day meant to them.

APLE Collective worked with partners to amplify the voices of people with lived experience of poverty. APLE Collective took part in a Twitter Takeover of the JRF account using the hashtag #IDEP2020. The top tweet from this takeover reached 22,000 impressions using the @jrf account. APLE Collective also tweeted throughout the day from the @aplecollective account increasing twitter followers by over one hundred. Our top tweet for International Day for the Eradication of Poverty gained almost 10,000 impressions from the @aplecollective account.

APLE Collective also worked with Challenge Poverty week co-hosting a poetry workshop and built a new partnership with re-thinking\_poverty. who blogged and hosted the APLE Videos on what it feels like to be heard.



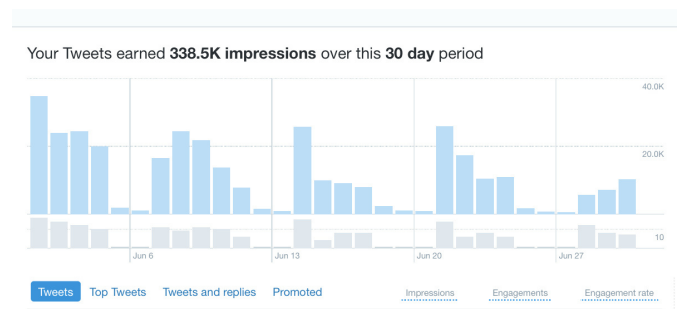
## APPLE MONTH 2021

APPLE Month was introduced this year as a way of celebrating the work of APLE Collective members and as a time to draw together, build membership solidarity and share ideas.

APPLE Month has a twitter hashtag #APLEMonth2021 and began with reflections on how we have developed as a Collective before highlighting the work of each of our individual APLE members.

The month continued by highlighting the APLE Digital Divide Campaign, promoting the APLE 'socially distanced activism' book launch. APLE Month concluded with a residential meeting of APLE members at Frimhurst Family House in Surrey hosted by ATD Fourth World.

During APLE Month, Twitter followers increased by 120 and our top tweet from the @aplecollective account gained 12,000 impressions. APLE Collective members published seven blogs reflecting on APLE Month.



# PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES - FRIMHURST & PARTICIPATION ONLINE

Throughout the year APLE Collective members have met weekly on Zoom. The first meeting of each month has been a formal feedback session from each sub-groups and the other meetings have been informal networking meetings. These meetings have had an open attendance approach to offer a relaxed friendly welcome to new members and to share our work with each other. Sub-groups have met regularly throughout the year taking a variety of participatory and discursive approaches to their work planning.

It has been central to the APLE Collective's participatory values that our work remains participatory. Individual sub-groups have used a variety of participatory approaches online such as padlets, jam boards and creative poetry sessions. As a whole Collective it has been important to stop, reflect and discuss our action plan and future activity using participatory approaches. In December, the whole Collective met on Zoom for a Christmas Action Planning party, where we refocussed ourselves on our action plan using participatory approaches, working with artist John Dorsett to help us visualise our Action Plan. Participants of this session were sent a participation pack in advance that included post it notes, hot chocolate sachets, felt tip pens and Silly Christmas glasses.

In June, towards the end of APLE Month, Collective members met in person at Frimhurst Family House in Surrey, hosted by ATD Fourth World. Members that couldn't travel were involved via large Screens within a live Zoom meeting. The two day residential included a range of participatory activities including a campaign planning 'river of life' activity, an interactive Action Plan Giant Poster and a reflections and ideas book. Meeting and interacting with each other in person and in Zoom groups using participatory tools was an important way to review governance documents, reflect on campaign successes and on actions moving forward.



## SUB-GROUP WORK.

**APLE Collective work within four sub-groups; Communications, Campaigns, Governance and Learning Together.**

### COMMUNICATIONS.

APLE Collective members have taken the lead on managing and developing the APLE Website and Twitter Account, increasing APLE twitter followers to over 1600 and increasing engagement with the APLE Website.

APLE Collective members have coordinated the APLE Blogs publishing sixteen blogs about a range of APLE Collective work from International Day for Eradication of Poverty, APLE Month, The Digital Divide and lived experience voice.

**"Sometimes be hard to speak up if you don't have confidence. At the beginning, I would not say 'boo to a goose', the nerves would have kicked in. For communications, our peer support is really important. When I saw others with more experience speaking out, I saw them speak naturally from the heart or from the head.**

**I learnt from others not to be ashamed by what I say and the experiences I share. I learnt to give voice to other people's struggles and suffering and also share from my own experience; but at the same time I've also learnt that you should only say the things that you are comfortable with."**

### CAMPAIGNS.

The campaigns sub-group have focussed on campaigning on the digital divide. The work of the sub-groups has included research for fact sheets and briefing papers, stakeholder mapping and participatory campaign planning alongside writing to MPs, meeting with MPs, liaising with APPGs and presenting at a wide range of conferences. The detail of the work on the Digital Divide Campaign is listed above.

**"Being part of the APLE Campaigns sub- Group has been inspirational. The collective effort and skills that lead the Digital Divide Campaign was so effective at highlighting and challenging the real issues that poverty brings and engaging people in strategic positions with the problems and potential solutions.**

**It seemed all about speaking out and asking to be listened to. I witnessed the power of the collective voice and how, if we come together, we can challenge inequalities and help create change, brilliant stuff!"**

# GOVERNANCE.

The governance sub-group worked on the themes that emerged from the eight participatory conversations about APLE Collective values and the APLE September 2020 Governance meeting to draw together a formal APLE Collective governance document. This governance document was shared with APLE members and agreed in December 2020.

The governance group worked with the learning together group to develop a governance workshop which was delivered at Frimhurst Family House residential in June to ensure that APLE Collective members were aware of and understood APLE Governance arrangements.

**"Governance may not be the most exciting topic for everyone - but it is the foundation and the framework that can allow APLE to develop and flourish. It is the bricks and mortar to our family and without it we may be at risk of crumbling. Our governance group has evidenced true collaboration, working hard and showing commitment when thinking through some complex and tricky scenarios.**

**We have stretched ourselves, considered things that may have been out of our comfort zone and smiled when our governance document was completed. This is not the end of our journey - now our guiding principles and processes need to actually mean something. We will reflect and check in with existing members, allow new members opportunities to understand and feel part of the Collective and we will ensure our governance arrangements help ensure APLE stays committed to its core values"**

# LEARNING TOGETHER.

The Learning Together group have worked to develop participatory ways of sharing learning within the APLE Collective. They worked using padlet to create and develop the APLE Welcome pages, which make up the introduction to APLE Collective, alongside an online personalised welcome.

After developing the welcome pages APLE members worked with the governance sub-group to develop a workshop which shared and developed APLE Collective members understanding of the APLE Governance Agreement.

**"We have loved working together this year, delving into the digital landscape to improve APLE. Spread across the UK we have come together and worked on developing the APLE Welcome pages, so new members of APLE can get a more personal welcome from us online. Shared learning through workshops to all members are what this group has done and is striving to do more of in the near future. "**



# APPLE OBJECTIVES

APPLE Collective members have worked tirelessly to meet the objectives set in our funding agreement with Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Despite the ongoing challenges of lockdowns, restrictions inhabited by the Covid-19 Pandemic, participatory online and when possible in person work as continued to address poverty with lived experience. This section of the report summarises how APLE members have met our objectives.





# OBJECTIVE ONE: THE RELATIONSHIPS AND PARTNERSHIPS OF APLE ARE STRONG SO THAT THOSE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE ARE HEARD AND REPRESENTED.

**This objective aimed to increase the membership of the APLE Collective and to build working relationships between partners and organisational membership groups.**

In line with this objective members of the APLE Collective increased from eight in 2020 to eleven members. APLE Collective members are now made up of eleven member organisations; Thrive Teesside, ATD Fourth World, Expert Citizens, Dole Animators, RAPAR, Poverty Truth Community, Hartlepool Action Lab, Community Organisers, LIFE, Starting Point, Single Parents Rights Group.

The numbers of members actively participating in the APLE Collective Zoom meetings has increased over the last 12 months and regularly sits at ten members attending weekly. APLE Collective made the decision to meet weekly, with the first online meeting of the month being an opportunity for sub-group feedback and other weekly zoom meetings to be networking. The four sub-groups developed over the last year have regular working meetings and with each sub-group having 8-10 members from a range of APLE member groups.

In term of building its external communications, APLE have continued to develop our website adding a welcome page and several tabs connected to APLE Communications, Campaigns and APLE Month. The APLE Collective twitter account has been increasing in profile attracting some high profile followers such as Philip Allston. There has been an increase in Twitter followers from 1200 in September 2020 to over 1600. APLE Month in June was an especially successful month on Twitter with our account reaching 338 thousand impression in June 2021. In terms of building its internal communications, APLE have developed a closed face-book page as an informal communication space for APLE Collective members as well as a google drive account for sharing documents and collaboratively editing documents.

An Appreciative Enquiry evaluation was completed in Autumn of 2020 with the existing eight APLE Collective members to reflect on quality and depth of working relationships and value membership. The report summarised the appreciative enquiry online survey and telephone conversations held with APLE Collective members discussing the role of APLE members, the highlights of 2020, the challenges of 2020 and their thoughts on how to take APLE Collective into 2021.

## **OBJECTIVE TWO: APLE MEMBERS HAVE CO-DESIGNED STRONG PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES FOR THE NETWORK AND MEMBERS HAVE A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF THEM.**

**The aim of this objective was to Improve and consolidate the APLE Collective governance arrangements, which would lead to improved and better informed decision making procedures.**

In turn this would lead to members feeling that they are able to influence the work of the Collective. In the Autumn of 2020 a sub-group met to develop and formalise the APLE governance document. This document was based on the information from a series of participatory governance sessions held in the summer of 2020 which were drawn together at an online two day gathering in September 2020 in collaboration with graphic designer Dan Farley. By December 2020 the governance sub-group has developed a formal governance document and had shared this across members of the APLE Collective for review. The governance document was formally agreed at the APLE Collective Christmas Action Planning Session in December 2021. The governance document is regularly reviewed and discussed most recently with APLE Collective members at Frimhurst residential meeting during APLE Month to ensure that it is still meaningful and representative of APLE Collective's values.

## **OBJECTIVE THREE: MEMBERS OF THE APLE COLLECTIVE HAVE INCREASED KNOWLEDGE AND IMPROVED SKILLS SO THEY ARE BETTER ABLE TO INFLUENCE AND AMPLIFY ACTIVITY OF THE GROUP.**

In terms of training, the APLE Collective learning together sub-group have facilitated a working group to develop the Introduction and Welcome to APLE Collective which is a combination of website resources and online welcome meetings. A governance learning together workshop was held at the Frimhurst residential meeting in tandem with a facilitated online workshop. This was attended by 16 participants in total. Other learning together opportunities attended by APLE Collective members have included Talking About Poverty Training, facilitated online by Joseph Rowntree Foundation, attended by 5 APLE Collective members and a Community Organising Taster Session attended by 4 APLE Collective members.

The digital capacity of APLE Collective members has been improved over the last year, using funding to purchase data and devices from Joseph Rowntree foundation available in 2020. APLE Collective now regularly have a mixture of paid and volunteer members attending each weekly meeting and leading sub-group meetings.

## **OBJECTIVE FOUR; APLE HAVE INFLUENCED CAMPAIGN ALLIES, THE GENERAL PUBLIC AND POLICY DECISION-MAKERS TO TAKE ACTION AND SUPPORT THE CHANGE THAT THEY WANT TO SEE.**

**Over the last year APLE have continued to develop and amplify the voice of APLE members and people living in poverty across full geography of United Kingdom.**

APLE Collective have increased the profile of the work of APLE, working with APPG Universal Credit, APPG Left Behind Communities. APLE Collective have contributed and been acknowledged internationally within reports by Human Rights Watch and Centre for Human Rights and Global Justice, NYU School of Law. APLE have contributed and been acknowledged in large participatory research project on Data Poverty led by Local Trust.

APLE have presented at Bristol Poverty Institute, ARVAC Conference, and Local Trust Conference. APLE have published a briefing paper and fact sheet on the digital divide and led a webinar attended by over 50 practitioners focussed on solutions to the digital divide. APLE have collaboratively written and published with policy press a book about the digital divide and held a webinar book launch attended by 40 academics, VCS groups and other publishers.

APLE have continued to work with campaign partners Good Things Foundation and Operation WiFi, recently developing a piece of partnership work with Good Things Foundation entitled the Data Lab. APLE have collated all this work on our website which is testament to the growing recognition and increased participation from stakeholders to campaign around this theme. We have continued to increase the number of allies who will support the campaign work of the Collective. We have continued to work with journalists, a good example of good practice around this is our work with re-thinking poverty who hosted our 'what does it feel like to be heard' videos on their website and our recent partnership with Fair by Design. The highlight of our campaign work in 2021 has been winning the UK Parliament Awards for Digital Campaigning.



**@APLECOLLECTIVE**



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