Fearon Community Association

Annual Report 2025-26

A message from the trustees

It has been a milestone year for Fearon Community Association. It marks the end of our 5 year National Lottery funding but also the announcement of a continuation grant for the next 4 years.

This is combined with the recognition from the NHS of the work we do at Fearon Hall, with the capital investment we have received to make much needed and long wished for improvements to our home.

These significant awards, in conjunction with our ongoing relationship as a strategic partner of Charnwood Borough Council are a reflection of the hard work and commitment of our staff, volunteers and partners since our strategic revisioning which began in 2017.

The year 2026–27 and beyond is looking very exciting. As well as the proposed planning and construction work to the Hall, our ambition is to become even better at listening, learning and acting on what we hear. By combining the experiences of our community with good-quality evidence, we can make better decisions, strengthen our services and demonstrate the difference we make.

There will be challenges. Embedding new ways of working takes time, particularly in a small organisation where staff, volunteers and trustees already have many demands.

We look forward to sharing that journey - and the results - with you when we meet again next year.

Financial outlook

For the year ending 31 March 2026, total income remained broadly in line with the previous year. Although income from the café declined, this was offset by an increase in grant funding.

Expenditure increased in several areas, most notably rent, wages, gas, accountancy and freelance support. As a result, the charity recorded a deficit of £14,207 (subject to auditors' confirmation) against unrestricted reserves.

Looking ahead, we have secured new National Lottery funding for the next four years and been awarded NHS England capital funding for improvements to Fearon Hall. This will help provide a strong foundation for the year ahead and a return to surplus.

Balance Sheet
As of 31 March 2026

		2026		2025	
Fixed Assets		10,310		14,014	
Current Assets	Debtors	21,640		12,868	
	Cash	1,094		1,123	
	Bank	176,787		93,519	
		199,521		107,510	
Creditors	Due within 1 year	35,082	164,439	22,004	85,506
Total Net Assets			174,749		99,520
Provisions for Liabilities and Charges			1,889		2,770
Total Assets Less Current Liabilities			172,860		96,750
Unrestricted Funds			76,557		90,794
Restricted Funds			96,303		5,986
Total Funds			172,860		96,750

Full accounts available on request

funded through
National Lottery East Midlands
people's health trust
Charnwood
COMMUNITY FUND
NHS Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland

Reducing loneliness and isolation

Fearon Hall continues to be a place that helps to reduce loneliness and isolation by offering welcoming spaces for people to meet, build relationships and feel part of the community. Providing regular and accessible opportunities through our Café in the Hall, social meals, craft and creative groups, wellbeing walks, men's activities, support groups, partnerships with like-minded organisations, community events and a range of informal opportunities for conversation and connection.

The Hall helps many people feel less lonely, more connected and more confident in leaving the house and taking part in community life. It is a place of routine, safety and belonging. Feedback suggests that people valued being able to attend a space where they feel welcomed, known and accepted. For some, regular attendance has shown to lead to increased confidence, friendships, better wellbeing and greater willingness to seek support in a trusted environment.

Regular activities

We continue to deliver a weekly programme of regular activities, including facilitated arts and crafts, knitting and sewing groups, walks, exercise classes, gaming groups for men and those with nuerodiversity, gardening and other wellbeing-focused sessions. These activities help create routine, connection, creativity and a sense of belonging for participants.

We currently run 32 regular weekly activities based out of the Café in the Hall and we have had 11,192 visitor sign-ins to the café this year (note that as a guide roughly 1/3 of people don't actually sign-in!).

The Café in the Hall

The Café in the Hall remains the heartbeat of the Hall. Open Tuesday to Friday and the first Saturday of the month, it continues to provide a safe and welcoming space where people can access healthy and affordable food, social connection and informal support, a regular Grief Café every Thursday, Good Grub subsidised lunches every Wednesday and breakfasts every Friday, community social meals and themed food events.

"I really don't know what I would do without the support from the Hall. Just having a safe space to come to and talk to someone about what is going on at home has made me feel less lonely."

Café user



Improving health and wellbeing

We have strengthened our aim to improve health and wellbeing with access to good food through The Café in the Hall and our regular Tuesday Surplus Groceries Supermarket; weekly physical activity with our low impact workout session Music, Movement, Wellness. We also encourage small local enterprise by being home to regular sessions for boxing, pilates, dance fitness and classes in Feldenkrais movement.

We are creating a trusted environment where people can seek help without stigma and provide both formal and informal opportunities for support. Including counselling-related activity, grief support, partner-led wellbeing sessions, and signposting.

We continue to be home to the Communities Food and Wellbeing Hub who provide access to healthy food options and local GP led sessions that help people to manage chronic conditions.

The Hello Help Hub at Fearon Hall

Working with the NHS Mental Health Neighbourhood Lead for Charnwood, we have created The Hello Help Hub - a weekly drop-in every Wednesday afternoon. It's an open-door, one-stop place for help, health and wellbeing that aims to provide easy access to support. Bringing together multiple agencies under one roof, we provide a safe space for friendly chats, practical help and advice on issues such as housing, employment, debt, benefits, and mental health. Through early intervention, we aim to ensure people get the right support at the right time. Helping to prevent deteriorating mental health, reducing isolation and improving general wellbeing. In the first 5 months of operation we have seen between 40 - 70 people attending for help each week. Find out more at **fearonhall.org.uk/the-hello-help-hub/**

"I had no idea that this support existed, they even helped me get the right benefits which means I can now afford to feed the kids and not be in a constant state of anxiety."

Service User



Building skills, qualifications and confidence

Volunteering

Volunteers continue to play a key role at the Hall. We currently have 16 volunteers supporting many aspects of delivery, including café activity where we provide training in food hygiene, help in delivering community groups, setup and pack down, meet and greet on reception, gardening, monitoring and peer support.

We have seen people build confidence, develop practical and interpersonal skills, and take on meaningful roles in the community. For some, involvement provides structure, routine and purpose. For others, it created a stepping stone into training, qualifications or wider community leadership.

Our volunteers range from those that live with the help of support workers to those that are in retirement and want to keep some structure in their lives.

Education

We are home to Loughborough College ESOL classes which run four times a week throughout termtime, for those who's first language is not English. We hosted The King's Trust Teams Programme twice this year. A 12 week personal development course offering work experience, practical skills, community projects and a residential week, for young people who are not in employment, eduction or training to develop skills and confidence needed to get a job or progress into further education or training.

One attendee of the King's Trust, having completed work experience in our café during the programme, is now a weekly volunteer. Our café manager has designed a training programme for him where he is further developing skills as he applies for catering job roles.

"Volunteering in the café means that I now have a purpose. I feel proud that I can work the till and make and serve drinks. I'm mastering a cappuccino."

Volunteer



Increasing social cohesion

We have created a trusted, inclusive, welcoming environment open to a broad range of local people and communities. Fearon Hall is a place for everyone that continues to be a centre where people from all backgrounds or those who may otherwise feel excluded or marginalised can come together and participate safely and confidently.

This is reflected in the diverse number of groups who continue to use the Hall on a regular basis. Anand Mangal is a South Asian women's group who meet weekly and also run a monthly community lunch. Our Phillipino and Ukrainian communities hire the Hall for social events and we hosted the voting for the Romanian elections. We are please to support the work of Loughborough Town of Sanctuary and the Asylum and Refugee network who offer support through provision of guidance to services, translations, clothing and food.

We are proud supporters of Loughborough Pride and have become their home to allow them space to organise their events for the year and our arts group was involved in the making of the Pride blanket. We also host several other LGBTQ+ groups.

We continue to support International Women's Day through our partnership with Equality Action, Anand Mangal and Brahma Kumaris and hosted special events on the day where we had 75+ people enjoying dance, meditation, food and community arts curated by our arts lead. Attendees spoke of the power of the day and subsequent mindfulness and meditation sessions have taken place as a result.

"We don't care who you are, what you are. Love is love."

Sewing group attendee


PRIDE
we all need LOVE
LOVE
EQUALITY

Strengthening partnerships

A key strength of our offering from Fearon Hall is partnership working and facilitating delivery of other services within a safe and welcoming space, that improves wellbeing and addresses mental health needs within our area. This collaborative approach alongside our 'open door' policy often engages those who historically don't connect with local activities and statutory services. These partnerships help extend reach, strengthen referrals, share resources, deliver joint activity and create a more joined-up response to community need.

Fearon Hall, as the common hub, serves as a vital connector between residents, services, and opportunities. Assisting groups to interconnect and recognise joined up working, benefits of scale and collaboration, supporting partnerships working out of a shared space and delivering joint activities and stronger referral pathways.

We continue to work with many partners across, VCSE, statutory organisations and the recovery community to deliver activities and services. From acting as their home, putting on regular activities, events and training or delivering The Hello Help Hub.

“The mental health support sessions offered every Wednesday created a safe and supportive space for those in need.”

Asylum hotel housing officer



Developing and growing our activities

We continue to develop and grow our own activities programme. Our Wednesday community arts delivered more than 10 themed courses, each running for 4 - 6 weeks. Designed in response to community feedback, the programmes provided inclusive spaces to build relationships and reduce isolation through low-cost creative activities that support wellbeing. Sessions explored themes including self-care, sustainability, hidden disability, and belonging through creative activities such as stitching, knitting, drawing, printing, and expressive writing.

Everyone attending valued the opportunity to learn alongside people they might not otherwise meet. Creating a culture of increased confidence in challenging ableism and prejudice while supporting one another as allies.

Our activities build connections between people from diverse backgrounds, increasing understanding and reducing prejudice - including students, professionals, and residents from areas experiencing significant deprivation. They encourage discussions of important issues including wellbeing, inclusion, and hidden disability and promote skill sharing with participants teaching each others crochet, embroidery, and other creative skills.

They enable volunteers and participants to engage on a more equal footing through shared creative activity and increase confidence among participants and a shift from passive attendance to active co-creation.

Project highlights included Loughborough Pride Blanket, Our People Tree for the All Saints Christmas Tree Festival and the development of a Team Charter centred on kindness, respect, and inclusion.

"I've gained the confidence to join the art group. I don't feel judged and people accept me when I get a bit overwhelmed or excited. I've learnt lots."

Arts group attendee



Listening to our community

We have strengthened inclusion, accessibility, and meaningful participation across all areas of work. We have invested in co-production and shared decision-making, ensuring all Hall users can actively shape services and outcomes.

In engagement activities, participants emphasised feeling welcomed, heard, and able to influence decisions. Combining audits, lived experience, empathy work, and co-production has strengthened our understanding of barriers and improved inclusive design practice. Our work has centred on understanding user needs, and embedding community influence into decision-making. Consequently we have developed practical tools, built staff and volunteer capacity, and created new structures for participation.

Service users consistently express strong support for Fearon Hall. This year marked a shift from gathering feedback to sharing decision-making power. Co-design has enabled community members to move from consultees to active contributors. While resource-intensive, it has produced deeper insight and stronger ownership, with growing confidence to embed participation long-term. This meaningful participation has improved decisions, challenged assumptions, and led to more inclusive, effective services.



"Fearon Hall should remain welcoming, practical, accessible, and community-led."

Common community response

Data collection and monitoring

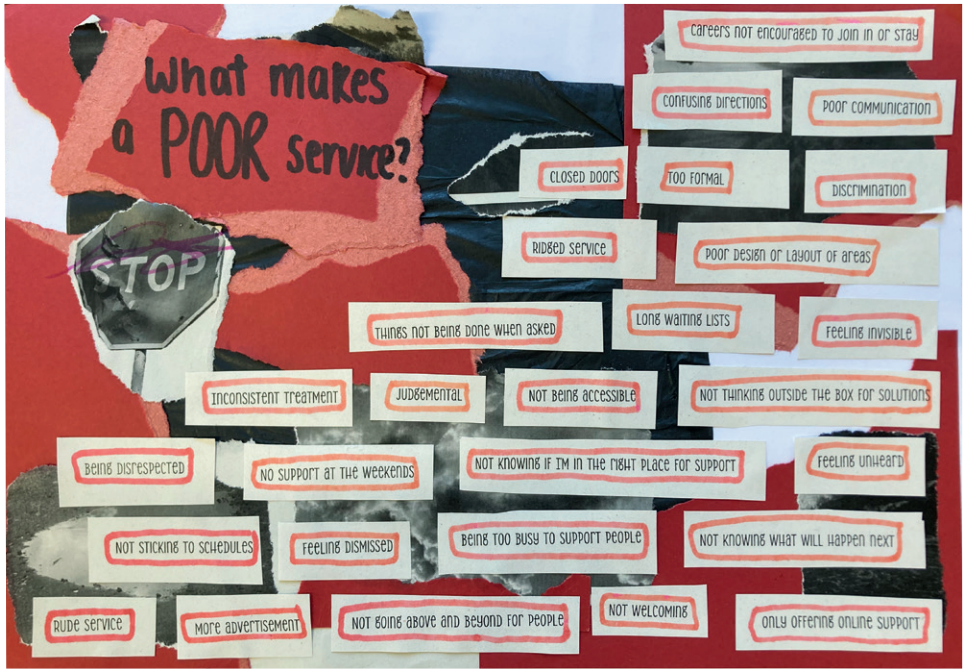
Over the year we have significantly strengthened our approach to data collection, monitoring, evaluation, and learning. We recognised the need to move beyond activity tracking to a clearer understanding of reach, experience, and impact across individuals, communities, and partners. We have developed a framework suited to a small organisation, balancing ambition with practicality. This enables us to capture both immediate outcomes and longer-term change. This data framework covered five layers of impact:

- Inputs: community needs, assets, and context
- Outputs: activities, engagement, participation
- Outtakes: experiences, feedback, satisfaction
- Outcomes: changes in confidence, behaviour, wellbeing
- Organisational impact: wider and long-term change

This approach distributes evaluation across staff and volunteers, building internal capacity and embedding a culture of learning. We have developed a Service Blueprint mapping user journeys, delivery systems, and success measures; introduced observational research to complement surveys and better understand participation, demand, and barriers; joined the Arts Council England Impact and Insight Toolkit for training, benchmarking, and evaluation tools; strengthened mixed-methods evaluation combining quantitative data with lived experience insight. We have received positive recognition from NHS engagement and communication colleagues for the quality of our research approach.

Evaluation methods increasingly double as participation tools, enabling reflection, idea-sharing, and influence over decision-making. Ensuring people are active contributors rather than passive subjects of data collection.





"I love the opportunity to get involved and I feel my views are being heard."

Co-production Group member

The Future Fearon Project

In December we were delighted to announce that Fearon Community Association had been awarded £925,000 from NHS England to develop the community spaces at Fearon Hall. This capital investment will allow us to make significant improvements to the Hall. Including a lift and new toilet block as well as internal remodelling to make the Hall more accessible. This will enable us to expand our community programming, increase access to mental health and wellbeing services through our Hello Help Hub project, create new opportunities for local engagement and improved facilities for community use through entertainment, events, social gatherings and room hire.

Fearon Hall has long served as a safe, inclusive space for residents of East Loughborough, offering opportunities for learning, social connection, and wellbeing. This partnership represents a major milestone in the NHS' and Fearon Community Association's commitment to building resilient, healthy neighbourhoods. It is also significant recognition of what we have achieved at Fearon Hall over the last ten years.

The Future Fearon Project is the name we have given to this exciting undertaking - from our initial public consultations in February through development of the plans and subsequent construction which we hope will start in 2027.

Visit **fearonhall.org.uk/the-future-fearon-project/** to keep up-to-date with the project developments.

THE FUTURE FEARON PROJECT





Looking ahead

Using data to strengthen our community

This year we have taken some important steps forward in the way we collect and use data to shape what we do. The really exciting part, however, is what comes next.

We will move beyond simply measuring what happens within the Hall to understanding who visits us, how they participate and the wider difference our work makes in people's lives. Moving from retrospective to evidence based reporting to inform decisions as they happen.

New standards, guidance and practical tools will help project leads and delivery partners collect useful information at the point where it arises. Reducing unnecessary paperwork and administrative effort whilst gathering more granular user feedback.

This will allow us to track changes over time and listen more consistently to the people who are impacted by our services - from activities to the café, wellbeing services to room hire.

We are already seeing what this approach can achieve. For example our Community Travel Options and Policy working group, bringing together residents, Hall users and the Board, has helped us better understand how people travel to Fearon Hall, and the impact of different behaviours on users and neighbours. This has created a stronger foundation for designing fairer and more sustainable solutions.

We want this learning to be shared. Through public meetings, working-groups, critical friends and special advisers to the Board, we will continue to bring different voices into decisions about the future of Fearon Hall.

The National Lottery Community Fund

We are delighted to have been awarded further funding from The National Lottery totalling £499,548 over the next four years. This will contribute towards core running costs allowing us to maintain our programme, services and community activities. Users of the Hall will continue to experience improved wellbeing, stronger connectivity, a greater sense of belonging and increased trust.

The award will also fund a new Quality and Evaluation Manager post. Developing our data practices and helping us turn our ambitions into everyday reality.

Charnwood Borough Council

We are proud to continue as a strategic partner of Charnwood Borough Council. Our Strategic Partner Agreement has been renewed for another two years (2026-28). This recognises our long-term alignment of the strategic aims of both the Council and Fearon Community Association in the provision of community wellbeing and service delivery.

Our partnership with the NHS

We are excited that The Hello Help Hub project has generated significant national interest. Not only because of the benefits for individuals within our community but also for the capital funding awarded by NHS England to make improvements to Fearon Hall. This brings both challenges and opportunities.

We need to ensure that our plans meet the needs of all stakeholders - Hall users and staff, our landlord, our neighbours and our funders as well as regulatory planning committee requirements. All whilst keeping the Hall open and delivering during building works. No mean feat.

However, the rewards are enormous. Enabling us to develop and extend the range of services, activities, available spaces for hire and opportunities for all members of our community, as well as creating an accessible, flexible, sustainable resource for the future.

Our hopes are that we can secure planning and start building works in 2027.

Fearon Community Association
Fearon Hall Community Centre
Rectory Road
Loughborough
LE11 1PL
T: 01509 230629
E: office@fearonhall.org.uk
fearonhall.org.uk

Charity Number: 1130457
Company Number: 6852232

FCA
Fearon Community Association

Fearon Hall
Community Centre

The urban village hall in the heart of Loughborough

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