

Flo's - The Place in the Park

Community Impact



2023/24
Annual Report

Who we are

Flo's - The Place in the Park is a community hub which exists to provide better local ethical opportunities for people to work, eat, play, learn and connect whilst improving equity and protecting the planet.

As a cooperative we are owned by the community and run with community needs at our heart.

What you'll find at Flo's

- A community Cafe which sells delicious food at affordable prices, works with local suppliers and is inspired by cultures from around the world.
- A plastic-free Refill Shop selling essential dry goods, hygiene products and household items.
- A Nature Nursery which places nature at the heart of children's education and wellbeing, whilst embracing diversity and inclusive learning.
- A home for a number of community projects that prioritise equal access to healthcare, food security, education and family support.
- A Community Hub which is a great place to work where we invest in the wellbeing, diversity and development of our people.

Our Purpose

Serving the community

We aim to strengthen the community through embracing difference. We deliver services that add value and bring the community together in our space through partnership and working locally.

We focus primarily on providing support services to people and families who are experiencing any form of social injustice, isolation or exclusion.

Improving equity

Through participatory practices, as both an employer and a community organisation, we seek to understand and overcome barriers to equity for those we serve.

This includes engaging with our co-located partners in health and food-based enterprise to address systemic problems that drive poverty and centring those with lived experience throughout our decision-making processes.

Protecting the planet

We are committed to playing our part in tackling the climate crisis by reducing our carbon footprint, protecting and enhancing biodiversity, contributing to a circular economy and reducing waste.

Our sustainability commitments recognise that all climate action, no matter how small, contributes to protecting our planet.

I always feel at home at Flo's. It's an extraordinarily inclusive space.

Serving the community

Our impact highlights 2023/24

- In response to increasing demand, we opened a new site for Flo's Forest School Nursery at Barracks Lane Community Garden. This site offers space for additional funded childcare hours for local families.
- We undertook a large scale Customer Feedback Survey to gather insight from the community so that we can continue to evolve and meet needs. This feedback is informing our priorities and strategy moving forwards.
- We hosted a Christmas Market for local, independent makers. This free community event was a chance for small, local businesses and consumers to connect to support and our local economy.
- We continue to care for our shared community assets. Flo's main building, Flo's Pavilion and the beautiful Nature Escape (now called 'Kate's Place' in honour of our partner Kate Jury who sadly passed away in 2023) are all under our care. We care for our sites with planetary health in mind, improving biodiversity in the green spaces and making building improvements that reduce our carbon footprint.
- We have continued to share our spaces with other local social enterprises to support the delivery of their service provision and their own expansion. Two local social enterprises regularly use our production kitchen at Flo's Pavilion.
- We've provided a home for 22 different agencies who use our space for meetings and workshops, offering accessible and affordable spaces for agencies and their beneficiaries.



Flo's is such an incredible asset for young families in the area. We have really built a community based around Flo's. It means a lot to local families to have somewhere to go that meets the needs of everyone in the family, provides daily social interaction and builds cohesion within the area. We especially look forward to First Fridays.



Improving Equity

Our impact highlights 2023/24

We attend the Rainbow Families group very regularly and it has been an excellent source of support and community in our son's first year.

- Flo's Cafe has continued to serve families during school holidays by providing free food offers to children, helping to relieve the additional financial pressure families can face.
- Monday Meals at Flo's Cafe offers a weekly free or 'pay as you can' meal option for anyone who may benefit from it, no questions asked.
- Flo's Nature Nursery continued to prioritise families on the waiting list who are in receipt of 2 year old state funding. These families benefit most from flexible, affordable childcare in the local area.
- We continue to host a flagship maternity equity project, Early Lives Equal Start (ELES). This project aims to support women and families in the global majority who may face disparities in access and outcomes during pregnancy and early years. You can read more about our ELES Shared Learning Event later in this report.
- We remain a home for a variety of group activities for families and young children, most of which are free to attend. Our choices to keep these services free to access removes barriers to entry for many families living locally.
- We continue to offer volunteer opportunities and support to a number of individuals who may face barriers to traditional employment. We provide a caring environment for all individuals to gain confidence and practical skills.



Protecting the planet

Our impact highlights 2023/24

- Flo's Nature Nursery continues to place a love for nature and the planet at the heart of its curriculum to inspire the next generation of citizens.
- Flo's Refill Shop has remained open 5 days a week offering a place for plastic free, ethical shopping. A total of 15.3 tonnes of goods were purchased in reusable containers in 2023/24.
- Flo's Cafe uses a vegetarian-focused menu supporting sustainable food choices. We work hard to reduce waste from packaging where possible and support customer recycling on our site. Flo's Cafe also makes use of surplus food and ingredients from local supply chains which helps reduce food waste.
- Our weekly gardening group, led by Flo's Gardener, maintains our green spaces. We hope our green spaces provide a home for nature and support biodiversity around us.

The mere fact that you exist as a local resource is phenomenal. You create a really lovely, welcoming atmosphere and I hope you continue to thrive and be there in our community for a long time.

Our impact highlights in numbers



2,600

Meals served on a free or 'pay as you can' basis at Flo's Monday Meals.



74

Volunteers who have gifted their time, skills, experience and hard work to Flo's this year.



625

Hours incubating diversity-led social enterprises through room hire.



35%

Flo's energy needs satisfied by our solar panels.



173

The number of funded places offered to parents for our pre-school Story Explorers sessions.



1,282

Volunteer hours donated to ensure the smooth running of Flo's Refill Shop five days per week.



350

The number of people who attended a Christmas Day meal in 2023; hosted with our partner organisation OCA as part of our membership of the OX4 Food Crew.



177

Attendances at ELES drop in sessions where women benefited from individualised support, signposting and advocacy during pregnancy and early parenthood.



230

Forest School outdoor learning sessions delivered by Flo's Nature Nursery.



400

Free meals given to children during school holidays by Flo's Cafe.



15.3

Tonnes of goods purchased in recycled containers in Flo's Refill Shop

Spotlight on: ELES Learning Event

On International Women's Day 2024, Early Lives Equal Start (ELES) hosted a community learning event here in OX4.

This event was a chance for health professionals, policy makers, community workers and local partners to gather and share experiences, expertise and knowledge as part of the Early Lives Equal Start project, hosted by Flo's. ELES aims to support mothers and birthing people from the diverse migrant population of OX4, who are at greater risk of adverse outcomes, to thrive in pregnancy and early parenthood.

Over 100 people attended this shared learning event including consultant obstetricians, numerous members of the OUH Midwife team, policy makers and women from the community.

The result was a collectively agreed set of calls to action which have informed the next stages of ELES and solidified the collective, collaborative approach to achieving the project's aims.

The collective calls to actions were:

- Make social determinants of health a priority
- Strengthen partnership working between the NHS and Voluntary and Community Sector
- Allocate resources for more clinic time and translation services that work for midwife teams
- Fund training, development and paid posts for community-based interpreters, maternity advocates and peer-to-peer supporters
- Continue to diversify and train the NHS healthcare workforce for culturally competent and individualised care

There could be solutions through greater partnerships between the community and healthcare systems to improve outcomes for mothers who are from a more disadvantaged background.



‘Profit for purpose’ and our social return on investment

We balance our approach to income generation with our social purpose. Flo's Cafe, Flo's Refill Shop and Flo's Nature Nursery do not exist to make maximum financial profit. These services are key ways in which we fulfil Flo's overall purpose as a Community Benefit Society. We call this ‘profit for purpose’.

The money that we generate through our trading activities helps to fund our projects, programmes and services in the community. This year our trading subsidiary, Flo's Trading, donated its £18,000 profit back to Flo's charity work and projects. This donation, alongside other essential fundraising, funds our work.

The work we do delivers benefits to the community across multiple areas. We use data to measure our impact in areas including children and young people, adult social care, public health and inequalities and climate change. This impact has a monetary value. In 2023/24 we calculate that for every £1 generated at Flo's we have been able to return £3.30 of social value. We call this our social return on investment.

Every £1 invested at Flo's created £3.30 of social value in the community.

£3.30
Social Value
returned to the
community

Your
£1



£2.5m

Children,
Education and
Young People

£835k

Public Health
and
inequalities

£80k

Community
and Safety

£30k

Adult social
care

£6k

Supporting
diversity led
social enterprises



Finances

Continuing our growth, our total income increased this year by 12% to £1.2 million. Our expenditure increased to £1.1 million. £650,000 of income was charitable income and £550,000 was generated through trading activities of Flo's Trading.

Flo's Cafe and Flo's Refill Shop sales income increased by almost 20% in 2023/24.

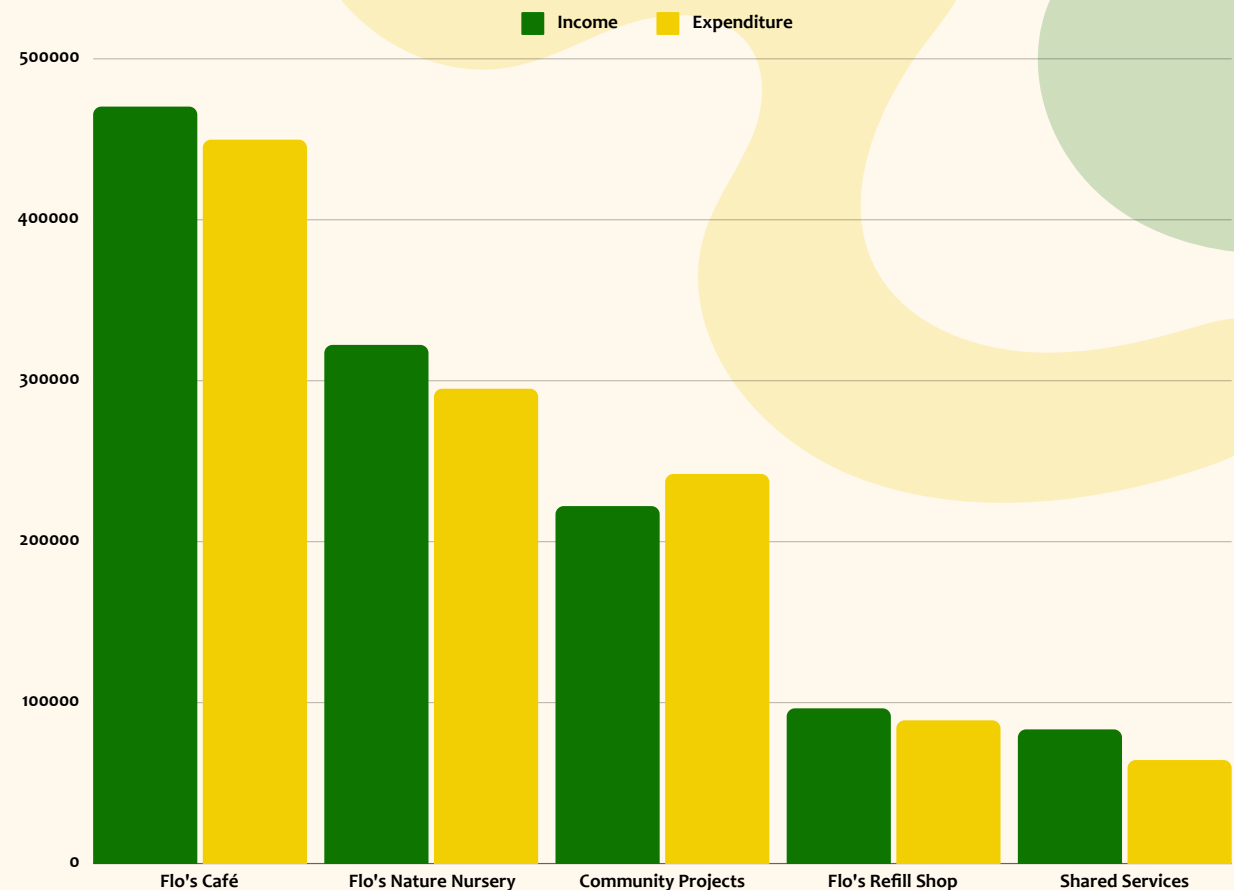
Flo's Nature Nursery income rose by 25%. This was mainly driven by the opening of our new site at Barracks Lane Community garden.

We ended the year with our first ever surplus for Flo's Trading. This money is gifted back to fund our charitable activities.

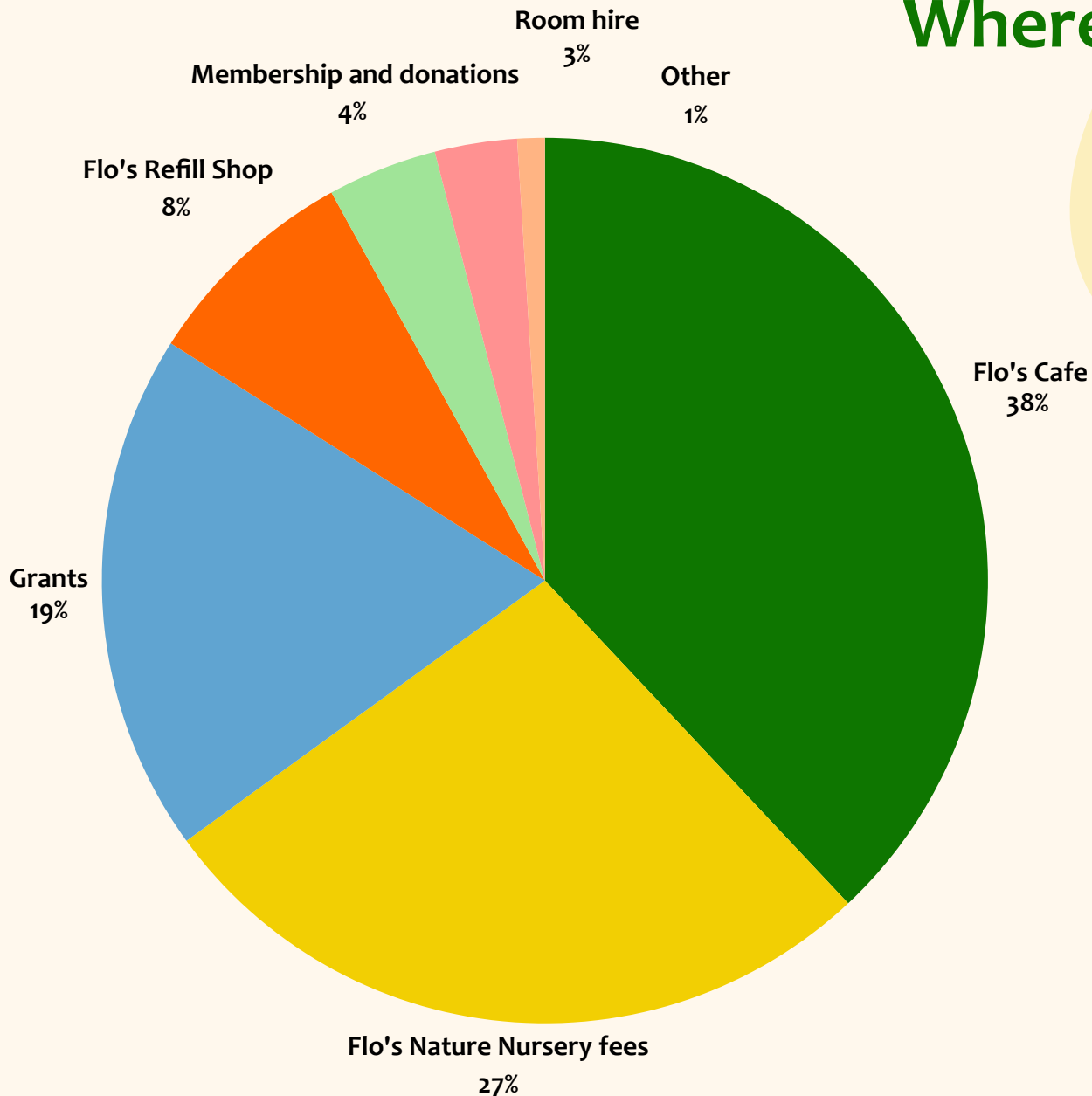
We successfully reduced some costs in the year. Our solar panels are now reducing our energy bill and we're very grateful to Oxfordshire County Council for extending our rent-free period.

Overall our costs increased by 19%. Our largest cost is staff (over 50%). This year we raised salary rates to keep up with rising costs of living and increased the number of jobs at Flo's from 32 to 47.

Income and Expenditure 23/24



Finances



Where our income comes from

Flo's Cafe and Flo's Nature Nursery continue to provide our biggest sources of income at 65% of our total income.

We have a track record of securing grant income from local and national funders such as the National Lottery Community Fund, BBC Children in Need and Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB). Along with others, this income supports a large proportion of our projects in our community.

We are delighted that Flo's Refill Shop continues to increase sales with income increasing 17% from 2022-23 to nearly £100k as more people are choosing to shop local and plastic-free here at Flo's.

We are grateful to our members at Flo's whose regular financial commitment supports our work. We are also thankful for all those in the community who support us with donations at events and in our space throughout the year. Your generosity is what helps to make Flo's the very special place that it is.

Finances

Flo's is proud to be an employer of nearly 50 people. The people who work as part of our team deliver our most important and powerful impact, so it makes sense that our biggest cost as an organisation goes on staff salaries.

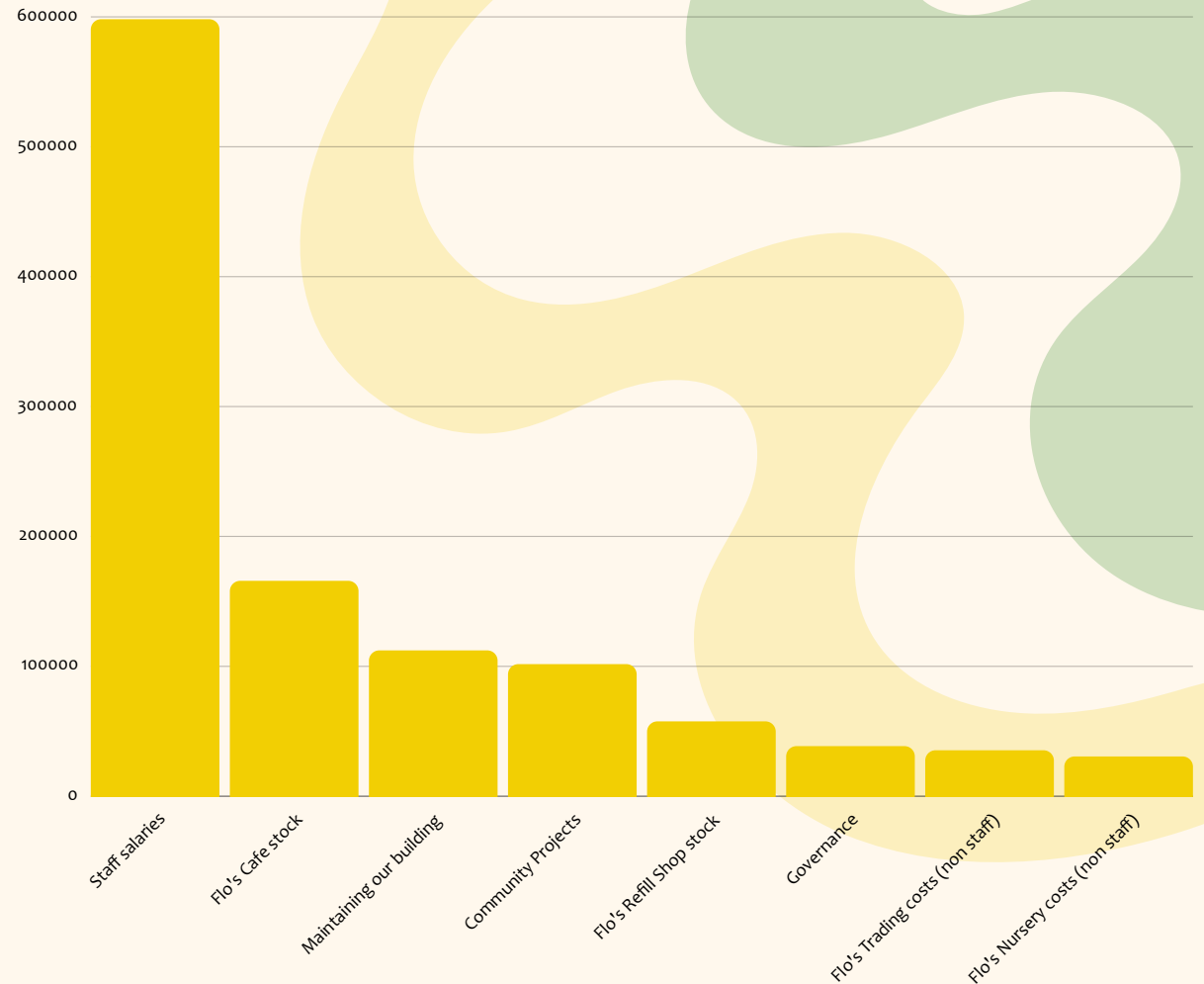
Behind these staff costs are thousands of life-changing human interactions that we value above all else.

Our nursery staff care for and nurture each child, tending to their individual needs, fostering a love of nature and supporting them at important moments of transition.

Our maternity advocates build trusting relationships with new mothers and support them to access housing advice, understand their rights, attend groups and learn about how to care for their newborn baby.

Our Cafe team are the friendly face of Flo's, welcoming people from all walks of life, taking individual needs into account and responding quickly when a child is lost or somebody needs a bit of extra assistance.

What we spend our income on



Our Refill Shop staff train volunteers to develop skills and guide customers through the often unfamiliar process of refilling recycled containers with our range of products.

We also spend a significant amount on maintaining the building, adding value to this community space which is used 364 days per year.

Spotlight on: Flo's Nature Nursery at Barracks Lane Community Garden

In October 2023, after 5 years of dedication to nature based learning in Flo's Nature Nursery, we were able to expand our offer so that more children can benefit from our expertise as the leading nature-based childcare provider in the area by opening a brand new nursery site.

As part of our purpose, Flo's Nature Nursery supports the community by making high quality childcare more inclusive and accessible. The new site, set in a beautiful community garden, particularly caters for parents who are looking for term-time only, fully funded childcare.

Our new site at Barracks Lane Community Garden offers:

- Much needed, additional affordable childcare in Oxford. The closure of multiple childcare settings locally has meant increased demand on already stretched services.
- The ability to cater for children who need 'school hours' only sessions. This means we are able to free up 'all day' places in Flo's Nature Nursery's main site.
- The creation of 3 new skilled job opportunities for local people. Term-time only jobs are very attractive to nursery sector staff, many of whom have children and require time off in the holidays.



Every day is different. Sometimes we help making the fire or chopping wood, measuring, sometimes we choose to build dens, ladders to help us climb trees, make boats for our flooded stream, paint, cut, cook or simply hang around observing nature's actions in silence or while chatting away.



You said, we listened

Listening and responding to better serve our community

There's so much on! Great team, great atmosphere, great ethos and values.

In Spring 2024 we undertook a large scale customer feedback survey. We asked for your feedback on what we are doing well, as well as what you would like to see improve. We've spent time reviewing what was said and working on how we can make some of the changes you would like to see.

1. We've made big changes to our free Monday Meal offering. To make it feel more accessible, to increase choice and reduce stigma, we have made all items on Flo's Cafe menu available on a free or 'pay as you can' basis between 12 - 2pm each Monday.

2. We've installed two new bike racks which have created space for 20 additional bikes. We've also installed two new scooter racks and a permanent bike pump. We plan to create a specific space for outside buggy parking in response to your feedback.

3. In summer 2024, we began a trial of 'Flo's Hatch' to create an additional space for customers to grab coffee or a snack 'on the go'. We hope that this new service will give more choice to customers and help to reduce the waiting times in the main cafe during our busiest times.

4. We've made changes to the range of drinks and snacks that we stock for children so that we can offer more items with a reduced sugar content.

5. In response to feedback relating to evening and weekend events we are now implementing a number of events including continuing/expanding our makers markets, food and live music events, family events and speaker events.

6. We are working on plans to expand available space in Flo's Refill Shop so that we can increase our range to include more of the foods and household items that you have requested.

7. We will be introducing a 'value range' to Flo's Refill Shop so that you can shop plastic-free whilst shopping on a budget.

96%

Would recommend
Flo's as a great place to
eat, shop and socialise*

*data from Flo's 2023/24 Customer Feedback Survey



Volunteering

In the 2023/24 year, Flo's was supported by a team of 74 volunteers who bring their skills, experience and energy to support our work.

I first got involved in Flo's because I was looking for volunteering opportunities. It was an opportunity to get to know people working at Flo's, people that come as customers and to root myself in my new community.

We simply couldn't achieve all that we do each year without the support of our team of volunteers.

Our volunteers come from all walks of life, some are students and young people looking for work experience, others are people who are looking to return to work after a career break, others work part time and want to give something back to the community and some are retirees.

Whatever the reason, there is a place for everyone at Flo's. All areas of our organisation benefit from volunteering, whether it's in Flo's Cafe, Flo's Refill shop, Flo's Nature Nursery or with some of our 'behind the scenes' office based work.

We pride ourselves on being a home for all. We are able to offer volunteering opportunities to people living with hidden health conditions, those who may be recovering from physical or mental ill health, people who are neurodivergent and those who may require a little additional support with everyday life. To support our aim, our team have regular opportunities to take part in training which helps to develop essential skills and understanding for working with volunteers.

In the past year, our volunteers donated 1902 hours to Flo's. The value of this time is equivalent to £23,755 at Oxford Living Wage.

A story from Flo's Volunteering to develop skills, confidence and employability

'Strong social anxiety and isolation have had a big impact on my life. Everywhere I looked I saw limitations. I first got involved at Flo's when I started volunteering in the Refill Shop. I am concerned about the future of our planet – so the customer-facing Refill Shop seemed like the perfect place.

My main tasks involved helping customers with their orders and refilling the Refill Shop. That was enough for me. When I made some mistakes I didn't feel blamed. I valued the routine that a weekly shift commitment provided and slowly gained confidence to work more independently, and talk a bit more with customers.

One day I saw that Flo's Cafe was advertising for new people. Experience in the Refill Shop, and some knowledge of Flo's from the Refill Shop helped me to feel brave enough to apply. It was the first job in my life that I had actually "wanted". Someone decided I was worth giving a chance to and I was offered some shifts.

I now work front of house in the Cafe responding to customers' requests and needs. I am also one of the many faces of Flo's. I enjoy working in the Cafe because I'm learning so much; it really closely meets my personal development needs. I still find parts difficult but I can see many positive changes.

My life has changed for the better very quickly during my time volunteering and then working at Flo's. I find it hard to believe that I now enjoy working in a customer-facing environment that up until the not so distant past I would have completely avoided, even as a customer.

Flo's is more than a job to me. It has given me purpose and hope and identity. I never imagined that I would find a place to fit. I just needed a chance. Flo's has given me that chance. Now everywhere I look I see opportunities.'

**I never imagined that I would find a
place to fit. I just needed a chance.
Flo's has given me that chance.**

Thoughts from our Director and Chair

We are deeply grateful to our staff, volunteers, partners and community members for working alongside us as a leadership team with such dedication. Each of them bring a wonderful diversity of experience, knowledge and skill to help us deliver our mission for and with the local community.

This year has been a testament to our collective dedication and resilience, punctuated by significant achievements and challenges. We've achieved major milestones, such as establishing a second nursery site, expanding our community team, and providing paid work for 47 people. Despite the natural challenges of growth, we have refined our internal systems and proudly met our goal of becoming an Oxford Living Wage employer for the first time.

Sadly, we have experienced three break-ins during the year so have invested heavily in increased security around the building. We have faced increasing running costs and an ongoing cost of living crisis, and we have felt the impact of wider social issues. However, despite these challenges, our resilience has shone through.

Flo's proves to be a source of inspiration for others too. We have hosted visits for cooperative organisations, college groups, international education groups, and even received a royal visit from The Duke of Edinburgh.

As an organisation, we continue to shed light on the often-overlooked

Laura Sewell - Director



Sarah Borien - Chair of Trustees



challenges faced by community members right on our doorstep. We are committed to using our place in the park as a responsive and participatory environment to address these issues. Each day at Flo's presents new experiences for our team, yet our focus on providing a secure, welcoming atmosphere within our vibrant, family-friendly setting remains constant.

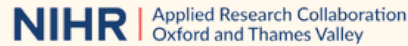
Recalling our original proposal from 2017, which envisioned Flo's as "a welcoming space founded on values of learning, wellbeing, social inclusion, and responsibility for others and the environment," this founding vision continues to blossom into our identity and impact today.

Looking ahead, we will remain guided by our values, our strategy and always turning to our community as our greatest teachers. We believe that the communities facing challenges are also the best equipped to address them, and we are here to facilitate that process, helping to sow the seeds of positive change.

This Impact Report gives a flavour of how Flo's connects with and serves our community, protects nature, and advances equity in OX4. We hope this report captures our efforts and impact.

Thank you for being on this journey with us.

A big thank you to Flo's partners, funders, supporters and friends



- Active Oxfordshire
- All our partners in the OX4 Food Crew
- All our regular hirers including the Motherkind Cafe, OxPip, The Oxford Hub, The Sling Library & the Health Visitors
- Annie Lee Associates Ltd
- Barracks Lane Community Garden
- BOB LMNS
- Brendan and the team at Plainlaw Solicitors
- CAG Oxfordshire
- Charity Mentors Oxfordshire
- Children in Need
- Cllr Dr Hosnieh Djafari-Marbini
- Cllr Charlie Hicks
- Cllr John Howson
- Cllr Lubna Arshad
- Cllr Mark Lygo
- Coops UK

- Dr Brenda Kelly, Carrie Granger, Jenny McLeish, OMVP and others on the ELES advisory group
- Elder Stubbs Allotments
- Florence Park Community Centre
- Gary Grewar
- Good Food Oxford
- Independent Oxford
- Jessops and Cook Architects
- John Caunt and the Step Change panel
- JoyRiders
- Mandala Theatre Company
- National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR)
- OCVA
- OSEP
- Oxford City Council
- Oxfordshire County Council
- Oxford Community Action
- Oxford Community Foundation

- Oxford Food Hub
- Oxford University
- Russell Hager
- Savona Foods
- Stig
- The Midcounties Co-operative
- The National Lottery Community Fund
- The Nature Effect CiC
- The Oxford Foundation
- The Pizza Midwife
- The Oxfordshire Lieutenancy
- Westmill Solar Cooperative Ltd

Thank you to the customers of Flo's Cafe, Flo's Refill Shop and the Parents of children at Flo's Nature Nursery.

With thanks to the staff, volunteers, Trustees and Directors at Flo's.

Thank you for your support



I hugely appreciate having such a friendly and positive space, where I can do some work, grab a coffee, bring friends for lunch and get essentials from the refill shop, all while knowing that the money I spend is going back into supporting the community.

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