

The Peek Project

A Gannochy Trust #CharityStory



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As we look to build on the legacy of our founder A.K Bell - one of the great philanthropists of his time – The Gannochy Trust continues to invest in a wide range of local projects that not only address poverty and disadvantage, but also seek to improve wellbeing, health and opportunity, especially for young people.

Our latest #CharityStory shines a light on PEEK, one of several Scotland-wide charities to benefit from Gannochy Trust funding. Based in Glasgow, the charity focuses on providing opportunities and broadening the horizons of young people through a programme of education and outreach activities.

The Gannochy Trust became involved in PEEK back in 2011, supporting an innovative project called Peekenders, a life changing initiative which helps disadvantaged kids set goals and aspirations for their future. Giving young people the structure to set their own agenda has proven helpful in advancing their development and building self-confidence.

More recently, The Gannochy Trust also helped fund a new initiative called ‘Be the change,’ which is about giving young people a platform to voice their opinions and drive an issue forward in their community.

Michaela Collins, CEO of PEEK said: “We’ve seen some inspiring youth led projects through ‘Be the Change’. Recently, one of the youth teams wanted to tackle racism in their community. They responded by developing a comic which highlighted the issue in a way that kids could relate to. The comic was distributed to local schools and has been a real success. Another group campaigned for free sanitary products for young women in schools. These kinds of projects empower young people, giving them a voice and building their self-esteem.”

PEEK-A-CHEW

Like many local charities, PEEK was unable to continue providing many of its core services during the Covid lock down. Michaela faced the difficult choice of furloughing staff or taking PEEK in a different direction. She chose the latter and almost overnight, transformed the operation from youth development to delivering free meals to people across the city. And so PEEKACHEW was born.

Michaela said: “It was a sliding doors moment for us a charity. To continue providing our core services was impossible, so we had to find new ways to make a difference. Once the schools closed, we could see that kids were being denied their right to free meals. They were coming to us hungry and struggling to access support in the normal way. We had to do something and quickly came up with the idea of delivering healthy, nutritious meals to people’s doors through PEEKACHEW, our mobile food truck. It was a complete U-turn for us, but it was about responding to what people needed at the time.”

PEEKACHEW was originally planned for launch in Spring 2020, but due to the pandemic, PEEK launched it earlier than originally planned. The funding for PEEKACHEW originally came from Glasgow City Council’s participatory budgeting pilot in May 2019. The pilot was an innovative scheme where the community vote on which local projects should receive funding. PEEK won the grant and spent the first portion on a new delivery van decked out in the charity colours. They ran a competition asking school kids to name the van and within a matter of months, it was delivering up to 500 meals a day. The meals were lovingly prepared in a kitchen in a nearby restaurant using fresh, local produce, and staff were retrained and given tools to work from home. As a front-line service, many were putting their health at risk, but it was that or people going hungry.

Michaela said: “Between March and December 2020, PEEKACHEW delivered 322,779 meals as well as essential items to families who were really struggling during this period, particularly refugees who didn’t qualify for support from local authorities, such as free school meals. It was also a critical resource for people who had lost their jobs and families, with no recourse to public funds. We also provided educational support to help parents prepare healthy meals for the family, including workshops and recipe

guides. It was a vital service at a desperate time.”

By July 2020, PEEK slowly began to resume its core play, creative arts and youth development services, setting up play sessions, 1-2-1 workshops, creative arts classes and family cook out sessions, where kids learnt to cook outdoors on a campfire. They also began providing fresh fruit and vegetables for families. It was tricky time as access to public spaces was limited, but as always, the charity found a way.

PEEK have been quick to recognise and respond to a community need, showing great resourcefulness and flexibility. The plan is to return to full service by Spring 2021, but with Covid still very much with us, PEEK remains open to new opportunities.

Michaela Collin’s story

Michaela’s connection with PEEK has spanned an entire lifetime. She was only nine when she first came to the charity as a source of support and education, and she has been a part of the set up ever since. After her parents separated at a young age, Michaela went to live with her grandparents and over time, took on the role as their carer, particularly for her grandfather who was registered blind. It was a tough time for Michaela, eventually leading to her dropping out of school at the age of 15. During those early days, gang violence was widespread across the Glasgow Schemes, as rival gangs competed for territory. The violence often spilled over into schools, so PEEK was about creating a safe haven where children could come together without fear of harm.

At 16, Michaela was offered an apprenticeship as a youth worker with the charity. Her first-hand experience meant she could easily connect with young people and it wasn’t long before she became a youth leader. This was a time when Michaela could not only give something back to the charity that had supported her, but also develop and grow as a person.

Over time, Michaela worked her way up the organisation, fulfilling all the roles and learning every aspect of youth development delivery. In 2018, her career came full circle when she was appointed CEO. Michaela said: “I feel like PEEK is my family. In the early days, the charity looked after me, so I feel like I owe them a huge amount. It is a privilege and an honour to be leading the organisation and have the chance to make a positive impact on young people’s lives. I live by our philosophy which is that you may not be able to change the attitudes of adults, but you can with kids. This drive for change, for a better life for young people is what motivates me, and PEEK as an organisation.”

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