Thank you for taking the time to read this report. We are passionate about what we do and very proud of what we have achieved over the past year. Allergy UK is the leading patient charity for the allergic community. We play a central role in raising awareness of the causes and impact of allergic disease, and advocate for better knowledge, improved services, and increased resources.

This report describes everything Allergy UK has achieved over the past year and informs our future priorities. Over the period, we faced many challenges, not least recovering from the COVID pandemic which impacted every aspect of our work but, despite that, has also been an exciting and hugely rewarding year for Allergy UK. Coming out of the pandemic, we have laid the foundations to strengthen and expand work in several key areas including campaigning, lobbying government, supporting volunteers and fundraising. We are also putting resources into new activities that the allergic community have told us are important.

These include, engaging young people, and providing training and support for the catering sector.

Last year, we commissioned the largest-ever attitudinal survey towards allergies in the UK. The survey sought to gauge the attitudes and sentiment toward allergy sufferers and uncovered previously overlooked psychological impacts, such as anxiety, depression and a sense of desperation. This forms the basis for our forthcoming national awareness campaign ‘It’s Time to Take Allergy Seriously’ which aims to educate the public on how far-reaching the consequences of having an allergy can be for the quality of life of those who are affected.

We want to take this opportunity to say thank you to our partners, volunteers, board members and staff team, who continue to provide support and trust in what we do. Without them, none of this would have been possible.

Carla Jones, CEO
40 million people in the UK have one or more allergic conditions

(Allergy UK Survey 2021)
Allergy UK is the only patient organisation that supports all areas of allergic disease, covering respiratory, skin, food, eye, venom and drug allergies, including anaphylaxis. We continue to play a vital role in providing information, advice, and support, based on up-to-date evidence on best practice, for people affected by allergic disease and their wider family and social networks. The breadth of our work is extensive.

Our Vision

Our vision is ‘no one should die from allergy’

We believe in our vision that ‘no one should die from allergy’ - and we will continue to work towards this and provide support for all those living with allergy in the UK.

Over the past year we have become more actively engaged in campaigning, advocacy, and lobbying to change legislation. However, despite our dedicated efforts and hard work we clearly have a lot more work to do. No one should be dying of allergy because of a lack of wide scale public knowledge and misunderstanding of this disease.

Our Mission

Our mission is to ensure ‘everyone in the UK takes allergy seriously’

Our new campaign ‘It’s time to take allergy seriously’ is intended to shine a light on the debilitating challenges and fatal consequences that can come with living with allergy. The long term campaign will focus on raising awareness of the lived reality of those who are affected by allergies across the whole spectrum of allergies; respiratory, drug, food and skin. Its aim is ultimately to instigate a shift away from a singular individual responsibility towards a more collective, public responsibility for managing allergy. We believe this is only truly possible, once all corners of the UK – from the public to the healthcare system, government, business, schools and universities - start to take allergy seriously.
Our values

Our values underpin how we operate to effectively deliver our vision and mission.

Committed: The allergic community is at the heart of everything we do
Effective: We make a difference to the lives of those living with allergic disease
Collaborative: We work together with others to achieve shared objectives in an open, honest and caring way
Respectful: We respect the expertise of others and share our expertise through collaboration
Transparent: We are open and transparent in everything we do
Listen: We listen to our stakeholders and value their views

Our goals

Our goals define the work Allergy UK undertakes to achieve our vision and mission.

Research: to have the most up-to-date knowledge and expertise on allergies and the allergic community
Empower: by ensuring those living with allergies are informed about how to tackle and manage their conditions
Educate: the wider society on the impact of living with allergies
Influence: the government and stakeholders such as the healthcare community and public institutions to better serve the allergic community
We believe that it is important to learn from those living with allergic diseases to help shape and inform care and treatment innovation, and ultimately to find cures for allergies. It is important to gather ‘real world’ evidence and scientific data to better understand the impact of allergic diseases on people’s lives. The knowledge and expertise acquired by Allergy UK are used to inform the services we provide, the public awareness campaigns we undertake and overall strategy for the organisation.

Allergy has been referenced as a ‘global epidemic’ by the World Health Organisation, underscoring that our role in understanding allergy and supporting allergy sufferers is more important than ever.

Yet, knowledge about allergies and how they can affect people is constantly developing which emphasises the importance of keeping abreast of changes and developments in the lived experience, against a scientific and healthcare backdrop.

In June 2021, Allergy UK commissioned a two-part research programme to gain a better understanding of the realities of living with an allergic disease. It also sought to gain an insight into how well the public understood and recognised allergies. The research reached a total of 7,000 people in the UK.

We believe it’s time for the UK to take allergy seriously and 76% of adults in the UK who responded to our omnibus survey agreed with us.

What this research study has highlighted has not only informed our campaign, but it has also given us incredibly valuable insights to drive every aspect of our work. It told us about the experiences of people living with allergies, from healthcare provision to day-to-day life; it told us how parents care for their children with allergy and their fears and anxieties about their children; and it told us how others perceive allergy.

Over the coming year we will be undertaking further analyses, and publishing the research which we will use to lobby and campaign for better healthcare provision for people living with allergies. We will be working with schools and service industries to improve the care and service provision for people with allergies, and we will be publishing the first-ever Patient Charter for people living with allergies.
The evidence we have gathered from our major research study is powerful in capturing the immense challenges of living with allergy. Parents from the allergic community who we surveyed told us:

• 65% of parents want specialist allergy nurses in GP surgeries
• 64% of parents want allergy services in hospitals, GP surgeries and local pharmacies
• 63% of parents want quick tests to identify allergy
• 65% say their child has felt discriminated against in a restaurant, because there was nothing they could safely eat
• 72% of parents feel that sometimes their children’s allergies are not taken seriously

Our Omnibus survey on public perceptions of allergy revealed:

• 61% of those surveyed would like government to do more to help people with allergies
• 76% of those surveyed agreed that people should take allergy seriously
‘I felt completely lost with what I should or should not be doing. To talk to a person, rather than scrolling through websites, was a huge support. I just want to take the opportunity to say, Thank you!’
Empowering

We firmly believe that an educated and informed allergic community is the key to tackling this disease. Providing advice, information and education remain at the heart of what we do.

Our Helpline
Our Helpline is one of the most important services that we provide to the allergic community. Over the last year, the Helpline was an even more invaluable resource, at a time when Covid-19 placed a massive strain on the NHS, limiting access to healthcare professionals.

The Helpline assists our community by providing telephone and online advice, and managing access to our dietitian service. The Helpline is a great support, especially to parents struggling with children who have allergies or suspected allergies and been unable to get adequate medical advice. Previous research shows that an allergy such as a cows milk allergy, can take an average of five visits to a GP before it is diagnosed in a child.

We have seen a significant increase in the number of enquiries made via our web chat and email facilities
Helpline Support for Children with Allergies

Most parents who contact the Helpline are in despair after approaching their GP or Health Visitor numerous times. They are desperate for our help and we often have to guide them from a position of frustration and confusion, to one of informed action. This can be through referrals to the in-house Allergy UK clinical team or private clinicians, and providing them with the information needed to confidently take the next step towards securing treatment or managing their child’s condition.

Types of calls about children with allergies:

- 40% food allergy
- 15% eczema
- 11% anaphylaxis
- 15% covid
- 10% asthma
- 7% medicine allergy
- 6% urticaria

The average length of a call about children's allergies is 15 minutes.

The Dietitian Service

Accessed through our Helpline, Allergy UK's Dietitian Service is an innovative and much-needed service to streamline those children highlighted as having symptoms suggestive of allergy, and who may be at risk of an allergic reaction, into an effective diagnostic pathway for timely diagnosis and optimal management. Most callers have a high degree of worry, as they feel they have been unable to have their concerns listened to, or they are unable to get tailored advice. Calls can take up to 60 minutes which is far beyond what the NHS offer in a standard appointment. Over the past year, we referred 229 children under five who have not been seen by an allergist or a dietitian, into the privately funded dietitian service where dietitians support the families with dietetic support.

A further 91 children were seen by the in-house dietitian service. These families were supported with dietetic advice and information about accessing further support from the health service.
‘The dietitian undertook a thorough assessment regarding the reaction and my daughter’s history and general health. She was able to provide invaluable advice regarding the potential cause of the problem and really made me feel confident about the situation and know what to look for if a similar event occurred. She was very patient during the appointment and I felt supported and listened too.’
Cow’s Milk Allergy Resource Pack
In March this year we launched a new resource pack for parents whose child has been diagnosed with cow’s milk allergy.

Around 2% of babies have a diagnosed cow’s milk allergy and research has shown that parents are anxious about the condition and want more information about the future well-being of their infant.

The pack, designed as a Roadmap, tackles the challenges of feeding and caring for children with cow’s milk allergy step by step. It focuses on eight key milestones from diagnosis and management through to the stage when a child might outgrow the condition, providing practical advice and information along the way.
Helpline Support for Adults with Allergies

Adults with allergies make up most of our calls and the nature of the calls are wide-ranging. The majority tend to need an answer to specific questions such as advice on private referrals, information about treatment and medication availability, rights in work or help managing their allergies day to day. The longer calls from adults with allergies are those with multiple allergies, urticaria and the newly diagnosed. These callers benefit from the emotional support we can give as well as the practical.

Types of calls by adults with allergy:

- 11% other
- 4% eczema
- 3% urticaria
- 18% food allergy
- 5% drug allergy
- 22% seasonal rhinitis
- 7% annual rhinitis
- 9% anaphylaxis
- 2% chemical sensitivity
- 10% contact allergy
- 9% Covid-19

Translation Cards

One of our most popular services is the translation cards and travel information we offer. These allow those affected by allergy to travel with confidence and the reassurance that they can effectively communicate their allergies in another language.

The service was still relatively busy during this period, despite travelling numbers still being low due to Covid travel restrictions.

We currently offer translation cards in 35 languages

We had 524 requests for our translation cards

Top 5 Languages: Spanish, Greek, French, Portuguese and Turkish
Resources for patients and their families with allergy

In 2021, Allergy UK launched its new website. Initially, visits to our website dropped but as we entered 2022, visits steadily increased month on month to over half a million for the year.

Our online resources are becoming increasingly popular with all audiences. One resource which is especially popular is the Allergy House, a virtual interactive home, which allows visitors to explore common allergy risks that can be found in the home, and how to manage them.

In this period, there were 8,638 visits to the Allergy House. The plan is to expand the spaces, rooms and information available over time.

Endorsed Products

Recognising the benefit of having an allergy-friendly product directory, Allergy UK, via its trading subsidiary Allergy Research Limited, runs two product endorsement schemes; the Allergy UK Seal of Approval and the Allergy UK Allergy Friendly Product initiative. The Seal of Approval scheme involves strict scientific testing of products submitted. With products ranging from bedding to baby wipes, air purifiers to allergy-friendly apparel, having our Seal of Approval helps signpost products which are either known to reduce allergens or are of benefit to the allergic community. Our Allergy Friendly Product scheme reviews products to assess if they are allergy friendly compared to standard products that can be found on the market.

We currently have 227 live licences for product endorsements covering a vast and varied range of product types which benefit those who suffer with allergies, compared to other standard products available on the market.
Allergy Information and Educational Resources

Communicating complex clinical information in a clear and easy to understand manner is a fundamental part of the work we do to keep our community informed and safe. The factsheets are produced in house by our clinical team with external reviewers.

Factsheets reviewed and updated:
- Sesame and seeds
- Shopping and cooking for restricted diet
- Mustard
- Balsam of Peru
- Eczema in children
- Allergy to cosmetics
- Allergic rhinitis and hayfever
- Asthma
- Wheeze in childhood

New Factsheets:
- Clinical trials factsheet
- Coping with atopic dermatitis as an adult
- Atopic dermatitis: triggers and allergens and irritants
- New treatments for moderate to severe atopic eczema:
  - Biologic therapies
- Chronic spontaneous urticaria
- Difficult to treat allergic rhinitis and asthma (type 2)

New Leaflets:
- Food allergy: Top 10 facts
- Chronic spontaneous urticaria: Does it rule your life?
- Allergic rhinitis, hay fever, and asthma
- The mental health impact of living with atopic eczema
- The 4A’s of anaphylaxis

80,269 downloads of resources
81 factsheets free of charge
13 updated factsheets
5 new factsheets

Factsheets and leaflets for patients and their families produced in 2021/22 include:
Allergy Alerts

Our Allergy Alert scheme has sent out 72 ‘alerts’ over the past year informing the public when there is a risk due to incorrect labelling or cross-contamination. We are informed by the Food Standards Agency, or sometimes the food retailer, and we alert the public via our website, social media and directly by alert emails from our database which is tailored to the allergy in question.

This invaluable service can be life-saving!

Educational videos

Over the last year, we have also produced a series of videos and podcasts including:

- Living with chronic spontaneous urticaria (csu)
- Caring for a baby’s sensitive skin
- Emollients and steroid treatments for children
- Emollients for adults
- Bathing and showering children with eczema
- How to cope with atopic eczema
- Applying topical treatments
- Biologics and new treatments
- Exploring the challenges of living with eczema
Educating

Allergy UK is committed to improving awareness, knowledge and skills in the allergy sector. Our aim is to help advance knowledge and understanding of allergic disease which will lead to faster diagnosis and effective treatment. Over the past year, we have developed and delivered a range of resources to enhance knowledge and change practice across society, including the general public, health, social and other professional audiences.

Healthcare professional resources

We provide a range of resources specifically aimed at improving the knowledge and learning of healthcare professionals. These dedicated resources include videos, podcasts, the masterclass programme, and the bi-annual publication Allergy Today.

The popular Allergy Masterclasses series continued throughout 2021/22, building on our engagement with healthcare professionals and also offering a tailored session on allergy for pharmacists.

Complementing the masterclasses, the clinical team also developed the Allergy Insights podcasts series on:

- Impact and Management of Atopic Dermatitis in adults with guest speaker Clinical Nurse Ann Joy
- Managing Atopic Dermatitis in infants with guest speaker Professor Anthony Bewley
- Biological Therapies and New Advances in Atopic Dermatitis with guest speaker Professor Carston Flohr

The Audio Visual resources created exclusively for healthcare professionals were accessed 642 times.

In addition to the new resources we created for patients and healthcare professionals, a limited selection of resources were created exclusively for a healthcare professional audience. These were:

- A response to long covid and low histamine diet
- Birch pollen allergy webpages
- Advances in the treatment of severe atopic dermatitis for hcp

In total the new online resources created to reach an HCP audience were downloaded 15,616 times.
Allergy Today Magazine

Our bi-annual publication Allergy Today provides healthcare professionals with the latest news, information, and research findings on allergic disease. Over the past year, we have featured articles on asthma and allergy, immunotherapy, atopic dermatitis, and the psychological and physical impact of peanut allergy.

Schools

There has been a longstanding unmet need in schools for clear and practical guidance on how to develop and implement allergy policies which recognise children at risk, including measures to minimise the risk and define what constitutes adequate training for school staff. In collaboration with Anaphylaxis Campaign and the British Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology, Allergy UK developed the Model Policy for Allergy Management in Schools Guidelines which complement the Department for Education’s generic statutory guidance. (Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school). These Model Policy Guidelines have been put together to support school staff to recognise the symptoms of anaphylaxis, administer adrenaline early and encourage a whole school approach to allergy management. With around 20% of fatal anaphylaxis reactions in schools occurring in children with no prior history of food allergy the development of this clear and supportive guidance is a crucial step forward in preventing future deaths while pupils are at school.
Our Youth Engagement Programme

We know that young people have a tough time dealing with their allergies. Navigating all of the normal issues young people face with growing independence, relationships and progress through the education system, when managing an allergy is difficult. Last year, we decided to do more to ensure that young people are better equipped with the right tools to educate, empower, and support them through these specific pathways.

Last year we secured funding and laid the foundations for the ambitious and exciting Youth and Allergies Project – a Youth Engagement programme that enables young people to partake in the co-creation and co-production of all projects and activities designed to support their needs.

We seek to promote a culture of ‘Powerful youth for a powerful and safe environment’, a space for young people to ‘Make, Do and Be Yourself’ – to encourage a sense of respect, belonging, learning and development, friendship, and togetherness amongst young people living with allergy and those without allergy in the UK. Watch out for exciting developments in 2022!

Over the Wall – Virtual Camp in the Cloud

In September 2021, Allergy UK partnered with national charity Over the Wall to deliver an innovative virtual ‘Camp in the Cloud’ for families and children living with allergies. Over the Wall supports young people facing serious health challenges through camps across the UK. This free camp was open for families with children aged 8-17. The camp was designed for the whole family to take part in engaging and entertaining online and real-life activities, with the goal of promoting inclusion and allowing campers to gain confidence and self-esteem. In 2021, 25 families attended and feedback from the experience was really encouraging.

‘This day has really been so helpful for our family and our daughter. It has provided me with an opportunity to meet other parents in the same shoes. Living in a small village, this has been our first allergy community experience. Watching her today has just been heart-warming, engaging with other children and realising she part of a community much bigger than just her.’
Influence

Allergy UK believes that for too long allergy has remained a poorly recognised and sometimes misunderstood health condition. Every day we hear stories from members of our community that support this discouraging picture. We are committed to changing this through our lobbying and advocacy work, and by helping to drive forward advances in the diagnosis and treatment of a disease which affects a growing number of the UK population.

Working for Change
Allergy UK has a vitally important role in ensuring that the lived experiences of the allergic community are heard, acknowledged and taken seriously. Over the past year, we have continued to be the voice of the allergic community to influence change, and our It’s Time campaign is gaining support from a range of ambassadors who have engaged with our cause across the UK. We continued to promote educational programmes across sectors to influence change and awareness of the needs of the allergic community and, through the launch of our Patient Charter in 2022, we will begin a meaningful dialogue with the government and leading politicians.

Public Affairs
Over the past year, Allergy UK has stepped up activity in a number of important areas to ensure the allergic community is heard by the government and decision-makers. Some early wins include producing a ‘myth-buster’ document for parliamentarians about allergy and meetings with parliamentarians to present our key objectives and to build a working relationship.

We are also gaining support from politicians through our Parliamentary Champions, who promote the work and represent Allergy UK in Parliament. Last year we recruited Louie French Conservative MP for Old Bexley & Sidcup, Labour Peer Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick (Margaret Ritchie), and Jon Cruddas, Labour MP for Dagenham & Rainham. Further discussions with decision-makers across the UK are ongoing.

National Allergy Strategy Group
Allergy UK is an active and lead member of the National Allergy Strategy Group (NASG) which is an alliance of healthcare professional groups and patient charities. In October 2021, the NASG, in collaboration with the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Allergy, published ‘Meeting the Challenges of the National Allergy Crisis’ a comprehensive report to highlight that allergy services have been neglected for too long. The report makes sensible, achievable recommendations for change including training more doctors to be allergy specialists, increasing the number of consultant allergists and improving knowledge of allergy within primary care.
On 26th October 2021, representatives from Allergy UK, together with families who live with the challenges that allergic disease brings, joined representatives from NASG at the headquarters of the Department of Health. The report was presented to Gillian Keegan, MP, Minister for Care and Mental Health “on behalf of all those who live with the challenges of allergic disease.” Since presenting the report Allergy UK, with NASG partners, have had several meetings with the Minister and Officers from the Department of Health to discuss the needs of the allergic community and seek ways forward to address these.

Press and PR Work
Our Communications team liaises with journalists and broadcast media researchers on a daily basis, to provide information for news stories, and print and broadcast features on the topic of allergic disease. Working with our Clinical team, they provide information and data which helps to raise awareness of allergy, and of the work of Allergy UK, to a wide audience of the general public, people living with allergic disease and their families and healthcare professionals.

A key milestone in Allergy UK’s Press Office calendar is Allergy Awareness Week which runs twice a year, in April and October. For the launch of our Spring Allergy Awareness Week in April 2021 we partnered with Kleenex for a press campaign focusing on the impact of living with hay fever. Holly Shaw, our Clinical Advisor, took part in a radio day reaching over one million listeners through the interviews. Furthermore, during peak grass pollen season we secured 8 regional broadcast opportunities which allowed us to amplify our message on how to manage hay fever symptoms and reduce their exposure to pollen to a much larger audience.

The Allergy UK team also attended and presented at conferences during 2021/22 including the Allergy Conference in October 2021 and the British Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology conference 2021.

Social Media Presence
Our social media presence is a vital resource for the allergic community, providing up to date information and allergy news. It is also a useful tool for understanding and listening to the allergic community’s needs. Our social media presence and engagement continues to increase, demonstrating the growing need for people to access information on allergy.

Allergy UK continues to manage and moderate a Facebook community group which serves as a forum for those in the allergic community to forge connections and seek peer to peer support.

In November 2021, we launched our Linkedin channel in anticipation of building our voice and authority in relation to allergy in the workplace. In a short time the Allergy UK has acquired 1,123 followers, and the intention is to build on this in 2022/2023.
Fundraising / Income Generation

Fundraising
Like many charities in today’s economic climate, we seek to mitigate risk as much as possible through diversifying our income streams. This income goes direct to providing crucial support such as our helpline and clinical support services for the allergic community. Funding is also raised to invest in initiatives which advance understanding and knowledge of allergic conditions among healthcare professionals, industry and across the public sector to improve the lived experience of people with allergic conditions.

Our four principal revenue streams are:

Endorsements and Licensing
Our Endorsements awards are run by Allergy UK’s trading subsidiary Allergy Research Limited (ARL). All income generated by ARL is donated to Allergy UK to be used as unrestricted funds.

Corporate Partnerships and Sponsorship
In 2021, Allergy UK had 28 established Corporate Partners, an increase of 25% on the previous year. Our Corporate Partners help to fund a range of services such as our dietician service, our healthcare professional masterclasses and aspects of the interactive Allergy UK House that can be found on our website.

Community Fundraising
Allergy UK is very grateful for our legion of committed supporters who regularly participate in public fundraising challenges in aid of Allergy UK. They can be found running marathons, taking on peak challenges and even the odd inflatable assault course to inspire donations to Allergy UK alongside our donors who generously donate on a regular basis.

Trust Fundraising
Trust Fundraising forms the lifeblood of most charities and we actively prospect for grants for initiatives which address a specific project or a recurring need that Allergy UK has identified through our work with our beneficiaries. A 2021 example of such an initiative was the content Allergy UK produced to support World Eczema Day, to improve public understanding of how allergies can trigger and exacerbate atopic eczema.

For every £1 raised 53 pence goes direct to funding our services

For every £1 AUK spends on Fundraising, we raise £4.50 for our charitable activities
Corporate Partners

We have benefitted from the support of Corporate Partners who have helped us deliver new and improved resources to those people most affected by allergy.
We’re here to help

Contact our Helpline Monday - Friday, 9am-5pm:

Call: 01322 619898

Webchat: allergyuk.org

Email: info@allergyuk.org