

KOALA COMMUNITY HUB

Impact Report

Summer 2023



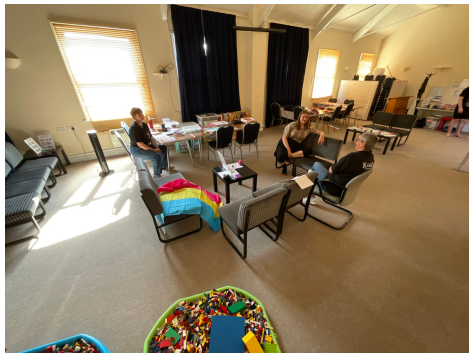
About us...

Koala Community Hub is the community-focused provision for the autistic-led charity, More Education.

Alongside our education offering 'Koala Academy', the charity is focused on improving autistic and neurodivergent people's lives - through education, training, peer support and community enablement.

This is achieved through offering a sensory-safe, trauma-informed and demand free physical space where our community can interact with their peers and other professionals.

Koala Community Hub currently offers both in-person and on-line peer support groups for all ages, parents and carers where a diagnosis is not necessary to access our services.



Story so far...

As we draw to the close of our second year of operations, the hub continues to be a lifeline for many neurodivergent people and their families.

Koala sessions are often over-subscribed with our peer support groups for Toddlers, Kids, Teens, Adults and Young Adults all proving extremely successful. Our LGBTQ+ and boardgame groups are also proving popular within the community.

This year has also seen the commencement of an exciting Adult Mentorship pilot, professional and parent neurodiversity training as well as the commencement of outreach work with other local organizations.

Our co-production project, with Hampshire and IOW ICS, has developed a self-advocacy training programme that it is hoped will be used throughout Hampshire and possibly further afield. This project has gained a lot of interest nationally and is something we were very proud to be part of.

Our first youth social action project, #iWill, was funded by Sovereign Housing and the National Lottery and was a fantastic way to bring young people together to create new social opportunities for their peers.

Our online Adult and Parent sessions have also proven an important area of support for those who are not yet ready to join the hub in person.

Story so far...

The success of last year's sensory fundraising project has seen us able to open a new 'moving' sensory room, as well as updating our quiet room and providing a designated gaming area.

We now employ a small team of staff who manage the peer support groups, provide admin support for form filling and oversee the management and governance of the charity.

However, without our volunteers, the hub would not exist. Our volunteers provide in excess of 90 hours a week of their free time and this support is intrinsic to our success. Many of our volunteers are autistic, neurodivergent or have learning disabilities and we are also very proud of our teen volunteers - many of whom could never imagine themselves being able to speak to a room of people, never mind help to run sessions.



Our Achievements

200

An almost 200% increase in the number of young people, adults and parents supported in 2023 (compared to the last 6 months of 2022)

2249

places booked for peer support attendees in first 6 months of 2023, compared to 1169 in the second half of 2022

22

committed volunteers, including 3 Teen volunteers

90%

neurodivergent volunteers

30

face to face peer support groups a month

2

online peer support groups a month

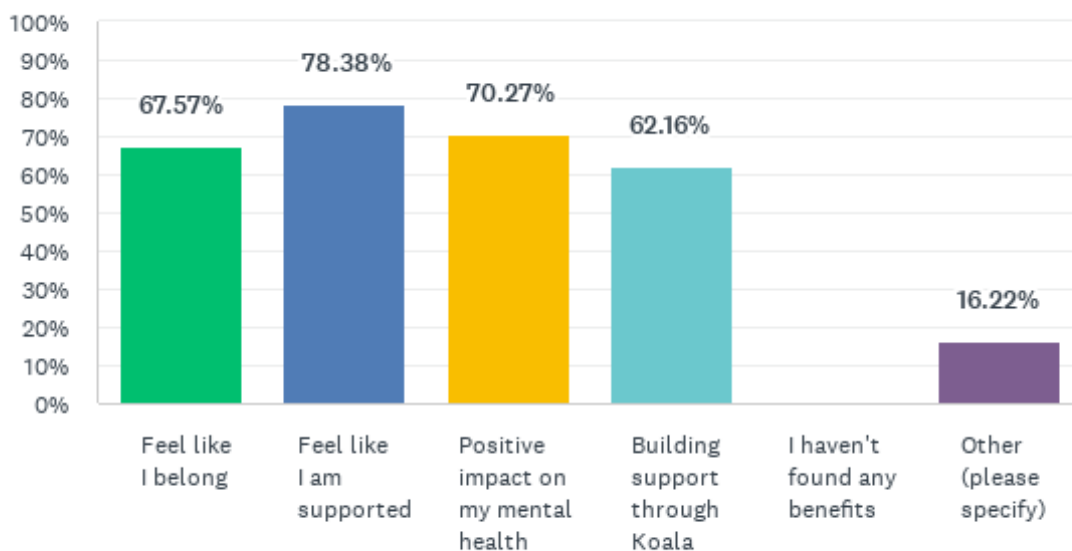
Community views

We encourage comments and suggestions from our communities at all times but also conduct regular surveys.

This year we conducted separate surveys for our general community and our young people. Whilst we have always understood our impact, we appreciate that this is not always something that is easily understood without quality impact data.

In our general survey (open to all of our community but mainly over 18s) we asked about the benefits they'd found attending Koala. We also asked our community for general thoughts about our offer.

Since becoming part of the Koala Community, what benefits have you found?



Community views



Community Feedback

“

I love Koala. Discovering the group has been one of the best things to happen to me in the last year and has drastically changed my life. I am learning about myself and building a community that will allow me to do things I never thought I could.

Adult Attendee



Community Feedback

“

Attending koala allowed me to understand my daughter's behaviours better and allowed me to meet like minded parents who were going through the same journey as me.

Parent Attendee



Community Feedback

“

Koala is absolutely outstanding and such a lifeline to my family. It a safe comfortable environment where they can truly be who they want to be and be accepted.

Parent Attendee



Community Feedback

“

My mental health is affected by many things but coming to Koala Club, as we call it, is an absolute haven.

Adult Attendee

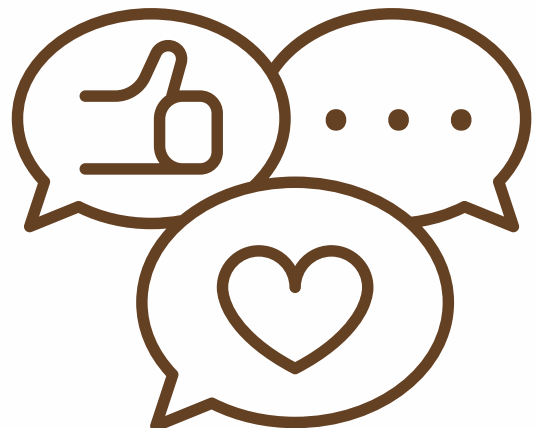


Community Feedback

“

Through being a part of the Koala Community, I feel like I've learned more about myself in the last 2 years as well as being more comfortable around others in our community than I had previously since it's become my normal. I feel like I have a family that supports me and accepts me for who I am and, in turn, have found something I'm passionate about sharing in order to help others.

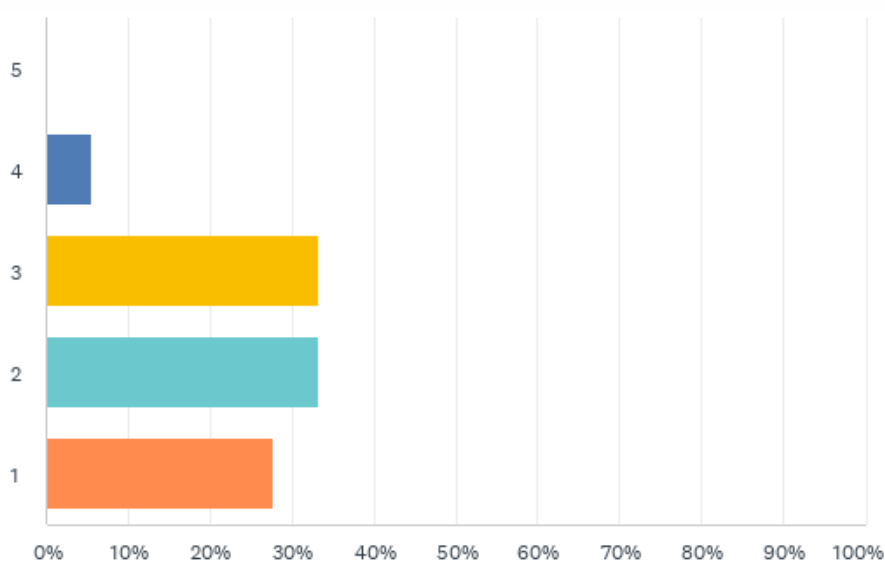
Adult Attendee and Volunteer



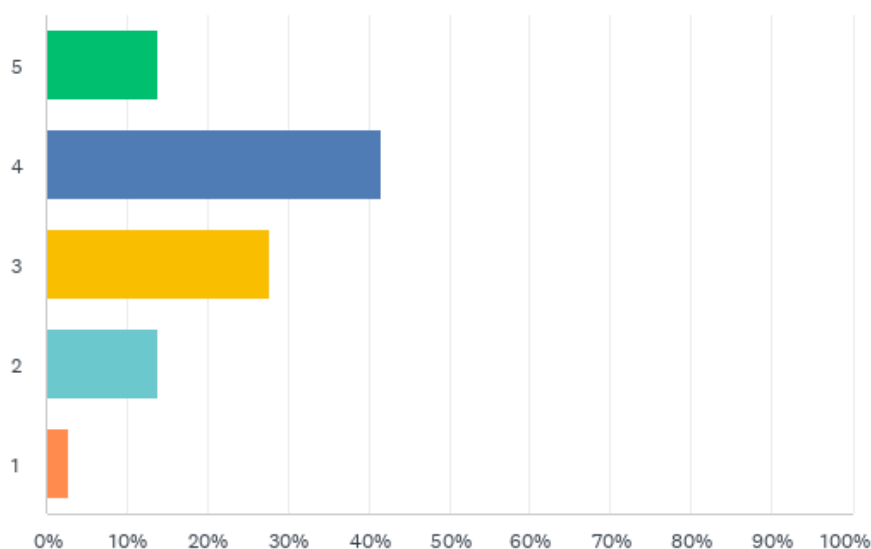
Community views

We also asked our over 18 community questions about their mental health before and after engaging with Koala.

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being poorest and 5 the highest, where would you have scored your mental health before you engaged with Koala?



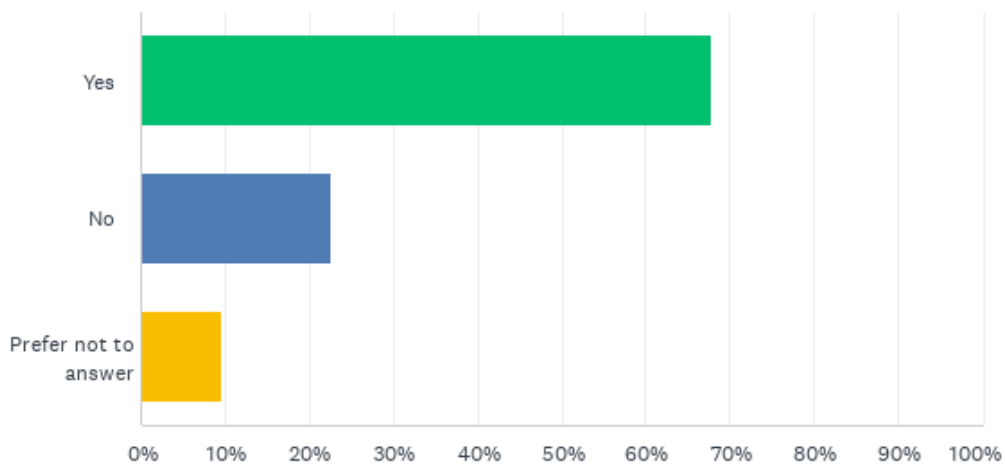
On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being poorest and 5 the highest, where would you have scored your mental health since engaging with Koala?



Community views

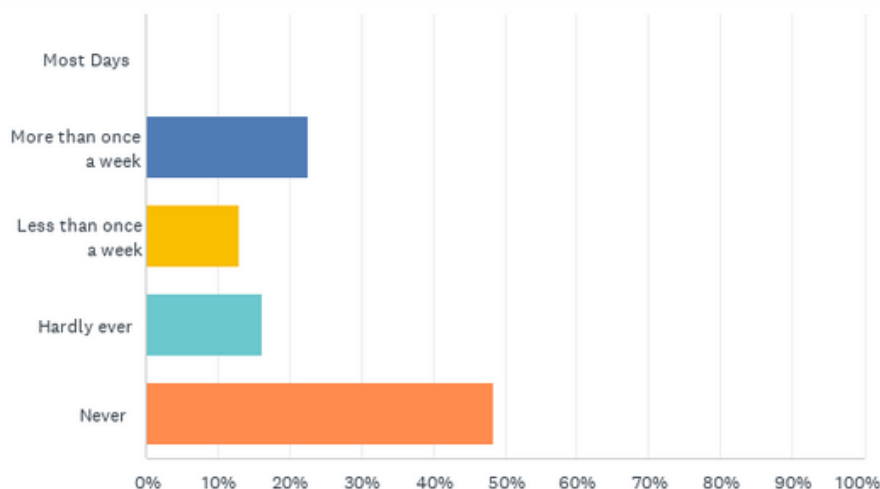
We felt it was important to ask our under 18 participants for their views this year. We asked questions around their general participation in the community and their feeling of belonging both in and out of Koala.

Have you had any night in the last week when you struggled to sleep because you were worrying?



These responses tend to suggest that anxiety is a common co-occurring condition within our community and especially among our young people.

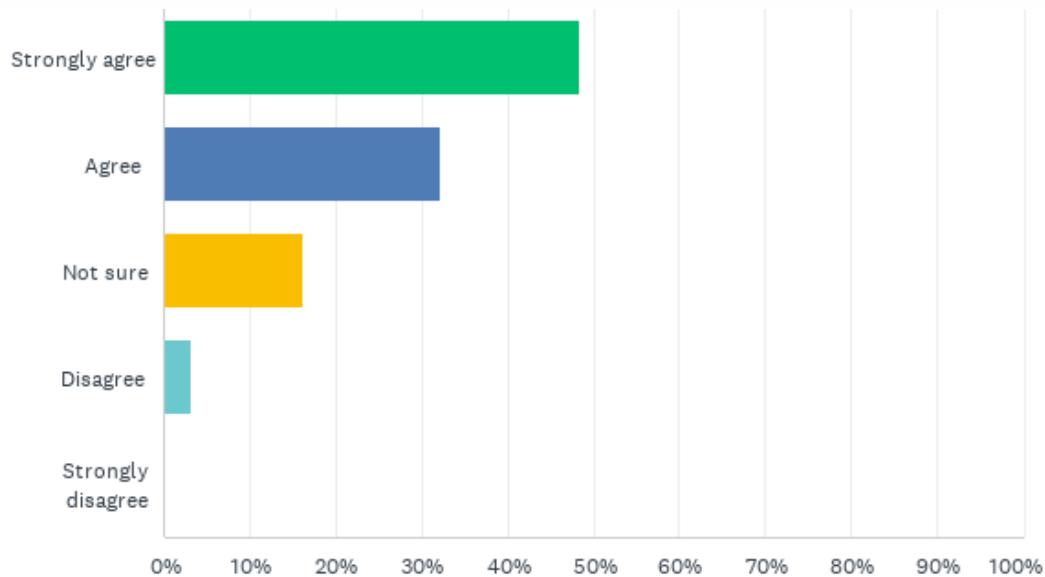
How often do you go to other youth clubs like scouts, guides and after school clubs (Not Koala)?



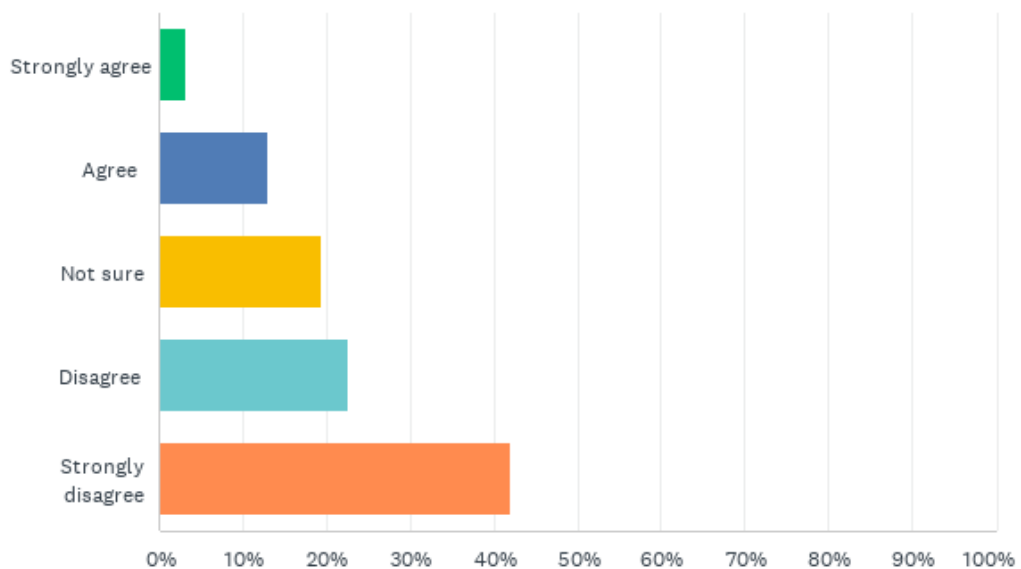
This suggests that a large proportion of our young people cannot participate in other social opportunities.

Community views

I always feel like I fit in when I'm at Koala



I feel as though I always fit in when I am NOT at Koala



These responses show why Koala is so important to local young people - the ability to feel connection and belonging is so key to our mental health.

Community views

We also asked our young people for their general views on Koala.

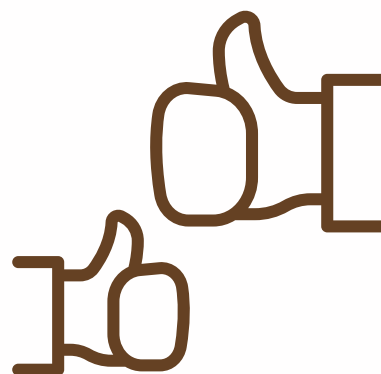


Community Feedback

“

Koala has help me and many people amd im sire they will help people for many years to come.

Teen Attendee




Community Feedback

“

I love coming to Koolas because I can be myself and feel accepted as I go through teenage development with special needs challenges.

Teen Attendee

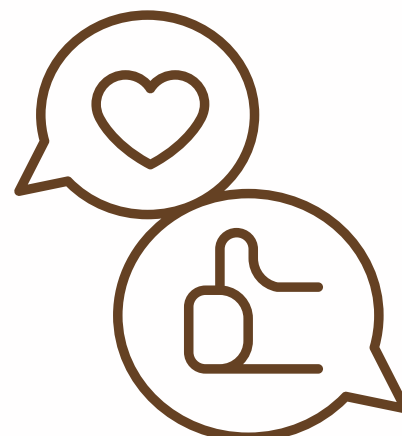


Community Feedback

“

I feel that the people at Koala are the only people that understand me that aren't my family.

Young Adult Attendee



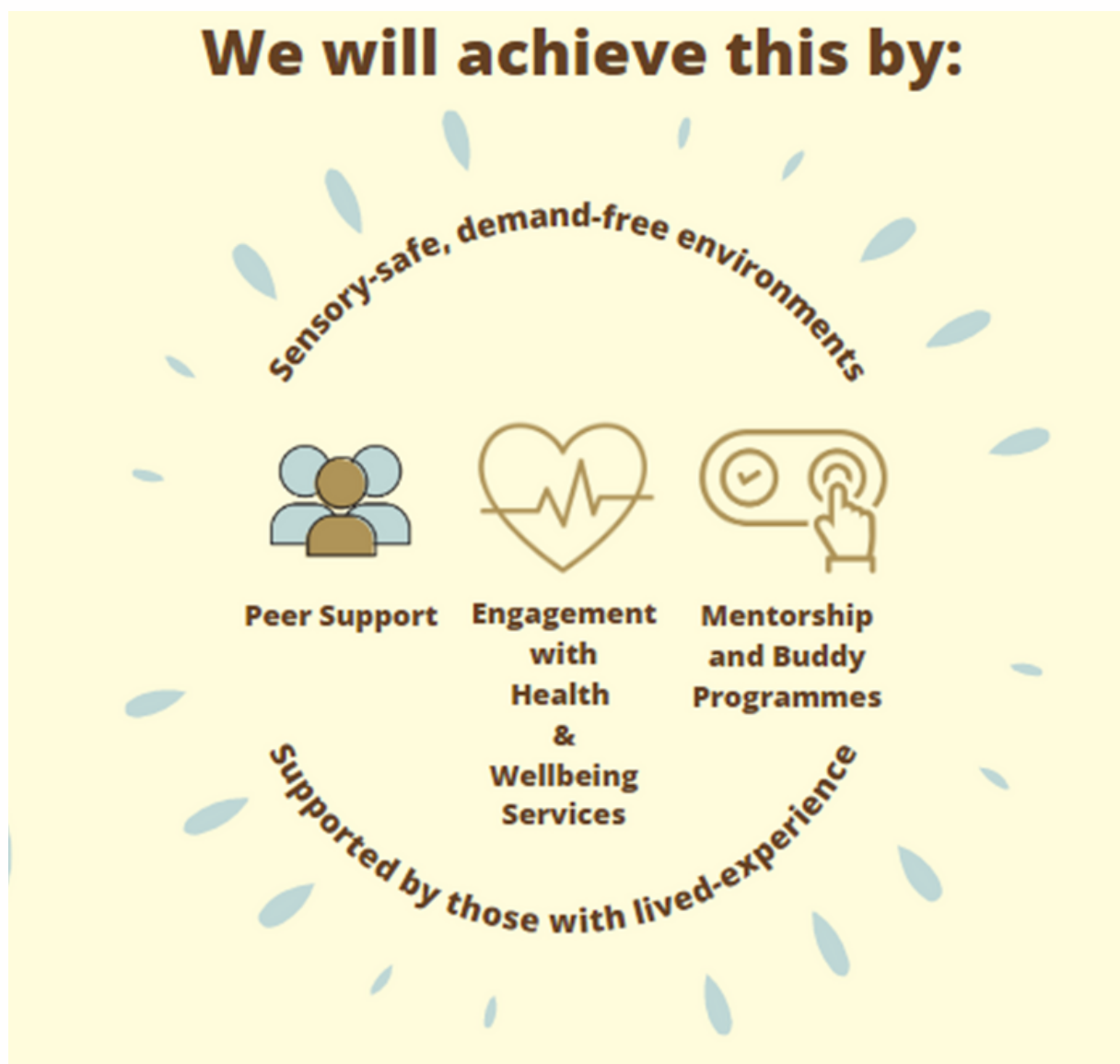
Koala's Three Goals

Koala currently work towards three clear goals within our community. These goals were co-produced with our community.



Koala's Three Goals

In order to achieve these goals, we will continue to focus on the following approaches:



Future Plans

We will continue to enable the local autistic and neurodivergent community to engage effectively with health care, wellbeing support and other community-based offerings through our mentorship programmes.

Not only will these programmes continue to relieve the pressure on local mental health services, but will also support and mitigate pressure on schools, college and GP services. Our outreach support will also be developed in the coming period.

We will continue to build relationships with local PCNs, schools, colleges, local authorities and charities.

Our recently developed self-advocacy training will be adapted for our younger community so that we can support everyone to gain confidence in advocating for their own needs.

We hope to offer an online community, through a Discord server and plans are currently being developed to fund this - ensuring that those who cannot physically access the hub are not isolated.

Koala's training offer will continue to develop and we are now actively engaging with a number of schools to offer support, guidance and training. We have also worked successfully with other local charities to provide their staff with the knowledge and strategies to effectively support their neurodivergent clients.

We hope to lease our own building in the coming year and we will also be developing a clear and robust sustainability strategy, ensuring that we are operating for future generations.

Contact: hello@moreeducation.co.uk

Website: www.moreeducation.co.uk

Facebook: [koalahubandacademy](https://www.facebook.com/koalahubandacademy)

