



QUEEN'S CRESCENT COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Annual Report
2022 – 2023



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CEO's Introduction



Overcoming the unprecedented problems posed by the pandemic, fuel and the cost-of-living crises, has certainly had its challenges over the past year. Our resilience has been a testament to the unwavering commitment of the QCCA team, volunteers and the steadfast support of our community.

Our older people's service, youth service, food-bank and advice and advocacy service emerged as a beacon of strength. In the wake of the pandemic our older peoples service saw an influx of people accessing our service, reducing social isolation and improving their physical and mental well-being. We take pride in the fact that the revival of fitness activities and the monthly social lunches, fostered a sense of community and support. The 'Covid and Beyond' film, is a testament to our journey, showcasing the profound impact on the lives of our members, which you can watch on our website.

The Healthy Families project, now in its seventh year, continued to offer a unique blend of activities that resonate with our diverse community. The engagement of disadvantaged families, with a focus on our diverse communities, exemplifies our commitment to holistic family well-being. The testimonials speak volumes about the positive impact on families, physical health and mental well-being, and the bonds created within our community.

Our nurseries, a cornerstone for early childhood development, have thrived; in spite of the challenges posed by parents moving out of the area due to unaffordable housing costs; resulting in four other local nurseries closing in the same year. We have seen a steady increase in enrollments, enabling us to invest in the infrastructure and building on our nurturing environment for our little ones. Both Caversham and Holly Lodge nurseries have weathered the storm, expanded their reach, contributing to the communities' well-being.

The pandemic and its aftermath have highlighted the inequalities our communities face, whether it be racial, health or financial, resulting in fuel and food poverty and the widening health inequalities in Camden. We've learned that our work is not just about recovery but about providing a holistic service to our community.

We are preparing for the future with a renewed sense of purpose. The forthcoming seven-year business plan is our compass, guiding us beyond 2030. Aligning our priorities with Camden's vision, we aim to fortify our role in the community.

Exciting discussions are ongoing for a purpose-built youth and sports centre on the Dome site. We envision a sustainable future, exploring renewable energy options to propel QCCA's headquarters towards carbon neutrality.

As we face the challenge of securing continued funding, particularly for the older people's and youth service, we are grateful for the unwavering support from all those organisations and individuals that fund and support QCCA. Their support has been invaluable, and we hope will continue as we navigate the competitive funding landscape.

This report encapsulates our achievements and the spirit of resilience and unity that defines QCCA. Together, we have weathered storms and emerged stronger. The coming year holds promises of new collaborations, impactful projects, and a continued commitment to building a more connected community.



HEALTHY FAMILIES

Transforming lives, one family at a time

During the past year, our free Healthy Families programme, engaged over 500 unique users, improving the health and wellbeing of women, families, and children. Healthy Families provides a distinctive blend of free activities for various age groups. Members cherish the opportunity to partake in Zumba classes, while children enjoy multi-sport activities and supervised play in a soft play area. The Dome, is able to accommodate diverse groups simultaneously, offering a unique and engaging experience. For many, it's the only time in the week dedicated to self-care, away from childcare responsibilities.

Healthy Families also embraces and celebrates the diversity of our communities, with 400 participants being from diverse communities. These communities often have difficulty in accessing mainstream sport and other activities, for cultural, religious or other reasons. We are therefore proud that Healthy Families has become a beacon of well-being, fostering fitness, community bonds and improving mental health. The programme's success is a testament to its unique offerings, impactful partnerships, and the unwavering support of participants.

Going forward, this vibrant and inclusive initiative, remains committed to empowering families, one joyful and health-conscious step at a time.

Programme activities included:

Family badminton
Women's yoga

- ✓ Outdoor family football
- ✓ Men and boys' multi-sport
- ✓ Family and women's yoga
- ✓ Women and children Zumba
- ✓ Family picnics on Hampstead
- ✓ Heath Nordic pole walking sessions
- ✓ Family fun days with Heath Hands
- ✓ Women's Nordic pole walking on

Hampstead Heath

Achievements



- Exceeded projected diverse participation, with nearly three-quarters of women being diverse.
- Successfully delivered 21 women's Nordic pole walking sessions and 12 family fun days.
- Collaborated effectively with Heath Hands, demonstrating the power of community partnerships.

The impact of our Healthy Families programme



of adults feel physically fitter



report improved health for their children



note enhanced parent-child relationships



experience improved mental health



feel less isolated



gained confidence & formed new connections and friendships



"Children are so happy to see their mum having fun, smiling, and enjoying the activities together. What a joy!"

"These sessions make me bond better with my children."

"Thank you to the amazing QCCA and The Dome staff."

The impact of the Healthy Families programme also:

- ✓ Encourages families to access open spaces like Hampstead Heath and Golders' Hill Park.
- ✓ Giving those living in overcrowded conditions the opportunity to experience these beautiful areas, which they did not know about.
- ✓ Fostering a healthy relationship with Hampstead Heath's volunteering charity Heath Hands, enabling practical support and creative collaboration.
- ✓ Establishing a unique bond between QCCA staff and members through hands-on activities.

Demographic breakdown



Women
60% of attendees were women



Children
40% of attendees were children



Older people's service

Our older people's service has achieved significant milestones, successfully rebuilding activities, such as chair-based-exercise, reflexology and yoga and the monthly social lunch club. The impact on physical and mental well-being was particularly pronounced, as many members experienced declining fitness levels and endured the mental strain of limited social interactions during lockdowns. Thank you to our funders, Masonic Charitable Foundation, City Bridge Foundation and The Mercers' Company.

The OPS journey during and after the COVID-19 pandemic has provided valuable insights. The experience highlighted the depth of poverty and need within the community, exacerbated by local service cuts and the shift to online platforms, disadvantaging those without digital access. The OPS response was to provide acute care for this age group. Including offering free activities and supporting members with essential needs such as food during difficult times.



The OPS takes pride in the resilience and generosity of its members, with 21 individuals aged 65 and above volunteering following support from QCCA. Additionally, the 'Covid and Beyond' film funded by City Bridge Foundation has been a source of pride, vividly showcasing the positive impact of OPS activities on its members.

The funding from our stakeholders was instrumental in the growth and consolidation of OPS services. The core group of regular users has flourished, forging meaningful friendships while improving physical and mental health.

ACHIEVEMENTS

66

People reported improved physical health

208

People reported increased independence and confidence

181

People reported return to normal life

The figures reveal a pro-rated impact from a 2022-23 survey sample of 58 service users (18% of total unique users) aged 65+. The survey indicated positive outcomes in:

- > improved physical health (65%)
- > enhanced mental health (56%)
- > increased social connections (93%)
- > a restored sense of normalcy (81%)

“

I am 75 and have been attending QCCA for over a year following severe illness. It is fantastic I have made new friends gained new confidence joy and love of life. Yoga has really improved my health and wellbeing. I have loved the outings, nature exhibitions and old architecture. All good for the soul. My life would be bare and isolated without QCCA. Mary, the over 55s coordinator is so kind, helpful and very creative in arranging new things for us to do. I would not be here without QCCA.





Food-Bank

Due to the continuing cost-of-living crisis, which saw food inflation for the poorest increase by 15% (Office for National Statistics), energy poverty 'eating or heating' and debt has hit those living in poverty the hardest.

Coupled with this delays in benefits and the increase in Section 21 eviction notices, has also had a negative impact on people's mental and physical illness.

Against this background, we weren't surprised that so many of our service users told us that the food-bank was still a lifeline to them and their friends and neighbours.

We also have to give a big thank you to everyone in the local community, who generously continued to donate food for those less fortunate than themselves.

The service also saw an increase in the number of families supported from the previous year and in total the service supported 145 households, supporting 310 individuals. While not every family used the service on a weekly basis, the service saw, on average 55 service users per week.

ACHIEVEMENTS



Households supported by the foodbank



Individual beneficiaries



Christmas hampers produced

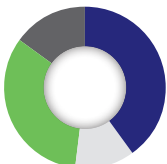
Advice and Advocacy

Our work in the food-bank put us directly in touch with users who had complex issues beyond food poverty. We were able to refer them to our advice and advocacy service. We received funding to employ two part-time advice workers, Belinda Rodgers and Khadija Naib. Khadija is a qualified interpreter, speaking six languages. Given the diverse make up of our communities, she was able to provide an invaluable translation service for those that do not speak English or for whom English is a second or third plus language. We saw service users with increasing complex issues due to the cost-of-living crisis.

We supported 91 unique users, many who had more than one issue, dealing with 123 issues in total. Issues included, council tax, housing benefit, Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Personal Independence Payments, (PIP), debt, homelessness and private rented sector, disrepair and eviction notices (Section 21) notices. The reasons for the increase in Section 21 notices was due to the government lifting the ban on private landlords serving notices during lockdown. This ban was lifted on the 1st June 2021.

Achievements

Universal Credit	Successfully supported 18 clients, including helping them use UC's online journal, liaising with Job Centre Plus and supporting them in applying.
Personal Independence Payments	Successfully supported 15 clients with filling in PIP forms, liaising with Department for Work and Pensions.
Employment and Support Allowance	All 13 applications or challenges made were successful.
Local Authority Hardship Grants	26 were successfully applied for.
Housing Benefit, Council Tax - Debt	57 repayment plans were successfully negotiated and 6 council tax bills successfully challenged and amounts amended.
Homelessness	Three people were successfully housed.
Employment	Two people were supported into employment.



Sessions held

- 40% of advice sessions – welfare benefits
- 12% of sessions – debt
- 33% sessions – housing
- 15% sessions – health and mental health

**WE ALSO HELPED
ARRANGE
1 FUNERAL AND
1 PET BURIAL**



Youth service

In response to the evolving landscape, QCCA recently underwent a comprehensive evaluation of its youth service. This was prompted by the COVID 19 pandemic, the looming cost-of-living crisis and severe funding cuts. The evaluation unveiled issues of social isolation, school closures, and shifts in family dynamics for our young people, as well as vital workforce issues and other challenges. The profound impact of the pandemic on children and young people, especially in relation to their mental health, has driven an increase in membership and attendance at our youth service.

Adapting to Change

The QCCA youth services team, recognising the need to adapt to new working methods, has successfully navigated the complexities of delivering system and service change in these challenging circumstances. Sustained improvement in our service hinges on fostering a skilled and dedicated workforce. While the recent draft of our youth strategy exhibits promising signs, a significant opportunity for strategic change remains to address ongoing workforce challenges.

Our new youth service manager, who assumed the role in July 2022, has played a pivotal role in ensuring the effective running of core and individually funded projects. Contributions to QCCA's broad business and charitable objectives have been marked by developing new funding streams and applications aligned with compliance standards, all achieved in collaboration with the senior management team.

The Dome

The Dome, in the heart of queen's crescent, is for our disadvantaged young people. Operating 348 days a year from 9am to 10pm, The Dome offers free sports and holiday clubs, conducted in collaboration with our youth charity partner, Gospel Oak Action Link Youth Club (GOALYC). It also continues to enrich the lives of young people. Beyond the above, local organisations, including the French school, College Francais Bilingue de Londres and the charity theatre group Quite Quite Fantastic, utilise the Dome's versatile space.

Over the past year, our success has been quantifiable, with 661 unique visits from young people aged 8-19, representing a remarkable 155% increase in membership. This includes continuing successful sports and team development initiatives for younger age groups and the introduction of targeted new initiatives for older cohorts.

A focus group, comprised of 19 young people provided valuable insights into the impact of our youth service:



"(The Dome) Mentally brings the mood up."

"This is the best place in QC (the neighbourhood). Keeps you engaged, very welcoming staff (and) loads of variety."

"It takes people off the road for a few hours. A few hours can change your life."

Our in-person youth club and sports programme at The Dome have seen an impressive, 8,223 attendances, spanning activities such as senior youth club sessions, a music studio, a junior youth club, girls-only youth and sports group, junior and senior football sessions, gym sessions, kickboxing, junior basketball and cricket clubs, mentoring, trips, and holiday clubs.



YOUTH SERVICE SUCCESSES

Surveys conducted in April 2023 with 79 young people yielded insightful results:

Over half find The Dome the only place for youth clubs and sports in their area.

75%

Agree there are enough activities at The Dome

66%

Engage in 30 minutes or more of physical activity at The Dome each week

63%

Enjoy sports sessions at The Dome

For youth aged 8-12, our after-school clubs Focus on enrichment, fun, and outcome-focused projects related to healthy eating and gardening. This approach develops socialising skills and ensures a minimum of 2.5 hours a week dedicated to improving physical fitness.

The popularity and success of our holiday clubs with GOALYC, offering essential free hot meals, sports Activities, creative art sessions, and trips. Underscore the critical need for providing space for physical activity. The Dome emerges as a vital haven in a community where 80% of residents live in high-density social housing.

Our senior youth club (ages 13-19) has been a platform for ambitious and accessible programmes, including the Off The Hook 10-week boxing and mentoring initiative in partnership with (GOALYC) and The Metropolitan Police. Our Focus on addressing inequalities and supporting minoritised young people has resulted in tangible outcomes:

13

Senior youth club members engaged in volunteering.

15

Young people took positive steps in education or employment.

8

Young people applied for work, education, or training placements.

In a borough marked by deprivation and where children in the most deprived areas are twice as likely to be obese, The Dome serves as a beacon of health and well-being:

88%

of young people play sports at The Dome

71%

have tried a new activity at The Dome

66%

engage in 30 minutes or more of physical activity weekly

22

young people reported improved overall health and wellbeing

73%

enjoy sports sessions at The Dome

2

individuals have successfully quit smoking

Beyond physical well-being, The Dome provides a safe, constructive space, diverting young people from potential exploitation and gang involvement. Workshops by external partners such as Let Me Know, Brook, and Camden Council on weapons awareness, healthy relationships, grooming, sexual health, and sexual exploitation reinforce our commitment to holistic development.



Notably, our youth service manager launched a campaign addressing sexual harassment, underscoring our commitment to creating a safe environment. The results of our recent survey speak volumes:

92%

of young people would invite their friends to The Dome.

74%

either agree or strongly agree that they know youth workers and can seek help.

93%

rate the support offered by youth workers at The Dome as good or excellent.

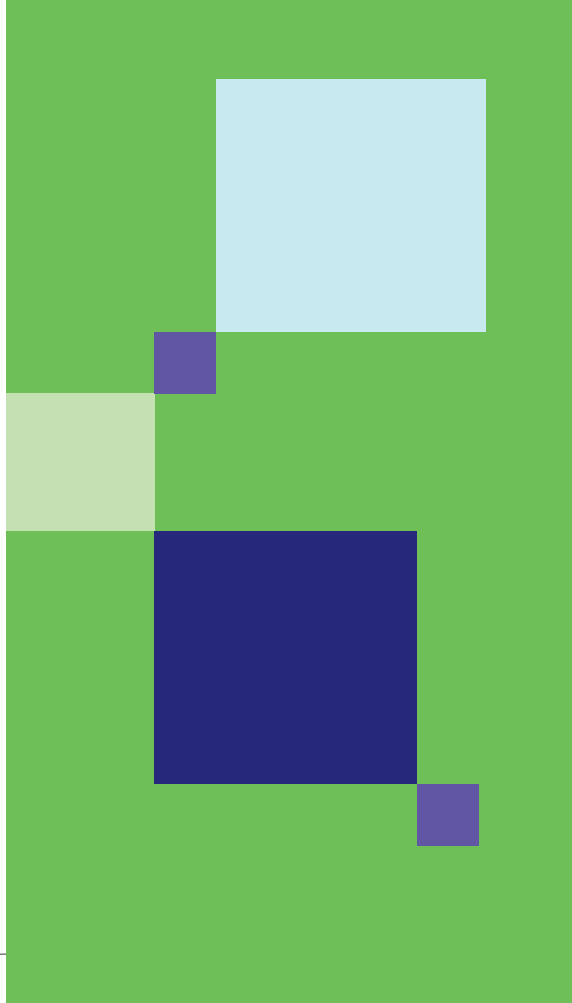


The Dome – Camden Council's consultation

Following Camden Council's public consultation on the redevelopment of West Kentish Town Estate and improvements to queen's crescent, a number of proposals were put forward for the Dome. These included rebuilding it outside of the area. We anticipate more consultations in 2023-24, with QCCA and GOALYC firmly advocating for the Dome to remain rooted in its current location. We commit to extensive dialogue with the council, community members, and young people in the upcoming months, seeking their valuable input and perspectives on the Dome's future.

The journey of the Dome continues. In the spirit of collaboration and resilience, we embark on a new chapter dedicated to ensuring that the Dome remains a cornerstone of queen's crescent, fostering community spirit and empowerment.

In closing, our unwavering commitment to the youth of queen's crescent remains steadfast. The past year's challenges have only strengthened our resolve to adapt, innovate, and continue the transformative journey we have embarked upon. We thank our dedicated team, partners, and stakeholders for their invaluable support. Together, we shape futures.





Under 5's services

Exploring the Enriching Journeys:

Caversham Nursery: Unveiling Potential

Caversham Nursery saw an increase from 35 to 38 attendees throughout the year. We held a families/ end-of-year graduation to celebrate children transitioning to school nursery or reception class. The theme was 'butterflies', butterfly eggs were bought for the children. The children then watched the eggs grow into butterflies (entire process including caterpillar, cocoon) which were released at the party.

Our Halloween party gave children the opportunity to dress up and have their face painted by a parent who volunteered their time.

For our Christmas party, the children performed a musical play called 'An Elf Day' which all parents were invited to. We also started a weekly yoga session for the children which is music- and story-based.

Funding:

We received CLIF (Camden Local Inclusion Funding), this is additional funding for children that need more support to cover the cost of additional staff or resources. Caversham continued to work with IIT, (Inclusion and Intervention Team), and specialist SEN (Special Education Needs) support/trainers, who provided training for the staff on 'bucket time' and 'special time' activities, enhancing the participation of children experiencing learning barriers.

Case Study:

One child was non-verbal (preverbal) when they started attending Caversham nursery. Overtime with the support of IIT and the nursery staff, we began using Makaton signs to communicate with them, plus the use of PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System). Due to our support they were offered a place at Kentish Town Church of England school.

STATISTICS



3

children entitled to 15 hours free childcare for 2 year old



5

children entitled to 15 hours universal free child care for 3 year olds



5

entitled to 30 hours, (universal and extended childcare) for 3 year olds



1

child entitled to 15 hours universal childcare, plus 15 additional hours topped up for the Camden enhanced offer

Holly Lodge Nursery: A Culinary and Educational Haven

Nestled in the heart of Highgate's Holly Lodge estate, Holly Lodge Nursery continues to cultivate a strong community connection.

Staff have continued to foster great relationships with parents, through an inclusive 'whole family' approach. This approach has successfully earned recognition from parents who appreciate the quality care their children receive. This has resulted with some parents registering their second babies with us. This attests to the trust and satisfaction parents feel regarding the care provided by Holly Lodge.

Holly Lodge has held several events that ensures our nurturing approach is unique to each individual child and involves parents, staff and children. Parents express enthusiasm for Holly Lodge events and eagerly anticipate future gatherings.

Pivotal to our success is the continuous personal development of our staff. This investment ensures that our team has the necessary knowledge and skills to remain at the forefront of early childhood education practices.

Our funders





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