



Queen's Crescent
Community Association

Annual Report

2020-2021



Welcome

Welcome to this year's annual report. Like everyone else, Covid-19 hit QCCA hard – but it hit our community harder which is why we reacted immediately to need and never closed. Here, we reflect on what we achieved and what worked well as we plan our future services.

CONTENTS

Chair's Report	3
Fight C-19	4
Youth Services	12
Older People's Services	16
Our Nurseries	20
Thanks	24



Chair's Report

QCCA has always been at the heart of the Gospel Oak community, but over the coronavirus pandemic, it has been the eye of the hurricane.

The staff have all performed outstandingly, enduring challenging conditions for many months. QCCA made the decision not to shutter all its services and this has proved to be a lifeline for so many. This has tested everyone, from staff to the volunteers who stepped in to bring hope at a time of uncertainty and fear.

The newest and most unexpected function of the community centre was repurposing its central hall as a foodbank and food delivery hub. This has never been a QCCA service – much less a core purpose – but as a temporary measure in desperate circumstances, it has been a great success. Hundreds of people have been served, week on week, many accessing QCCA for the first time. One of the challenges as we move out of the initial emergency will be winding down these interim services with what is forecast to be yet more reductions in available funding sources.

QCCA has also been proactive and innovative in preserving as many activities as possible, either by socially distancing exercise programmes or taking its offers online. There has never been such a widespread requirement for advice and guidance, and QCCA has delivered over two hundred sessions.

Alongside the emergency work, more normal work continues. QCCA's partnership with GOALYC has been strengthened and further formalised. QCCA continues to make its case in Camden's regeneration plan for Gospel Oak. In other words, once this gigantic, one-time weather system of a health emergency moves off, QCCA will still be here, planning for the future and – remarkably – better placed than ever to take on all comers.

Lucian Randall,
October 2021



Fight C-19

The UK locked down on 23 March 2020 but for QCCA, it was the start of one of the busiest years we've ever had. **47% of the people we helped this year were new members.**

The pandemic forced us to suspend our usual programmes, but not our work. We developed Fight C-19, an emergency service that responded to people's changing needs and were the only organisation of our kind in the area that never closed.

What started as a way of delivering food, medicines and befriending to our most vulnerable older members became available to everyone. The scale of our services meant we were Camden Council's lead referral partner in the area. By the end of the year, we were also working with Camden and the local NHS as a vaccination and lateral flow testing centre.



FIGHT C-19

Food Services

QCCA's food service has been the backbone of this year's work. In twelve months, we provided **62,265 meal or meal equivalents, supporting at least 662 people with food.** At its height, we were delivering parcels three times a week.

The decision to provide food for the first time in QCCA's history was taken to meet local demand. Older people told us that they didn't know how they were going to shop when they were meant to be shielding. It quickly became apparent that others also needed help, including those with underlying health conditions and families struggling to feed children without free school meals.

Within a few days, we had set up a small food bank in our main hall. Initially, it was run by QCCA staff and programme managers who were unable to fulfil their usual roles due to lockdown, but as demand grew, a bank of 130 amazing volunteers was also recruited. We were also collecting medicine for those in need. Funding was provided by generous trusts, individual donors and Camden Council. We forged relationships with food donation charities to supplement what we bought from cash and carry.



We launched a second strand to our food service in April giving away hot 'Iftar for All' meals daily from outside the centre.



Initially intended as a project for Ramadan, the meals proved so popular with non-Muslims as well as Muslims that we continued it first as 'Supper For All' and later 'Lockdown Lunch'. At its height, we were distributing 750 meals a week. Because we allowed people to take what they needed without question, we supported high numbers of hard-to-reach communities including the homeless and those with mental health and addiction issues. The simple act of queuing for food (albeit at a distance) also became a social focus for people during the darkest days of lockdown. 98% of recipients said QCCA was the only organisation giving them support. 54% said they were getting no support from family, friends or carers either.

In another 'first', we launched a Christmas appeal to provide 'Christmas For All' hampers in December. People were incredibly generous and donated over £5000 to our Just Giving crowdfunding page, with another £5000 fundraised by nearby St Martin's Church. 366 households received the colourful boxes of food, treats and toys, including many asylum-seeking families experiencing their first UK Christmas in a Kentish Town hostel.



Food Services: Figures



62,265 meals or meal equivalents distributed



98% of people collecting Supper For All received help from no other organisation but QCCA.



4,522 Iftar packs distributed in 30 days of Ramadan



662 people supported with food each week



366 households receiving Christmas hampers



130 volunteers recruited

Advice & Guidance

People coming to us for food gradually shared their other problems with us, including the strain caused by furloughing, job loss and debt. With their usual support services either suspended or accessible only by internet or phone, QCCA fundraised for extra resources to offer support.

Emergency funding from the National Lottery allowed us to run advice, guidance and advocacy from September 2020 – March 2021. Sessions were held at the centre whenever possible or by phone and Zoom when it wasn't. In emergency situations, people without phones or internet could come for socially-distanced appointments on chairs outside the centre.



Advice was offered in several community languages, both from our own advice worker Khadijah and the BAME women's charity Hopscotch, who we hosted at our building. In total, 38% of appointments were conducted in a language other than English.

People's situations were complex and multiple, but housing emerged as the main concern (33%), followed by benefits (21%), debt and immigration (16% each). It was satisfying to see gains both small and large. We advocated with councils, GPs and hospitals to get radiators fixed, secure vaccinations and podiatry appointments. We successfully applied to charities for individual hardship grants. 24 clients were triaged to referral partners including three to debt councillors and seven to solicitors.

Advice & Guidance: Figures

-  **221** advice sessions in six months
-  **74%** of all clients were BAME
-  **61** people received advice and guidance
-  **33%** problems housing related

Health Services

After working with Camden Council and Camden NHS throughout 2020, QCCA became an official Covid-19 testing and vaccination centre at the start of 2021.



The Dome building on Weedington Road was chosen because of QCCA's good links with the local black and minority ethnic communities. At the start of 2021, Camden Council found that only 58% of the black community were vaccinated compared to 85% of white British people. By using us as an outreach centre, they hoped to increase that number.

We promoted the services with extensive local PR and even received a video of support from Sir Lenny Henry.

The lateral flow test centre opened in February offering both a pre-booked and walk-in service. In February and March alone it processed 1061 tests.

The first of our one-off vaccination days on 23rd March saw 111 people getting the jab including community leaders from Christian, Muslim and Jewish faiths.

Health Services: Figures

 **1061** lateral flow tests done

 **111** vaccinations completed

Case Study

Before she could get into the small boat to make the crossing from France to England, asylum seeker Fatma was told to leave her walking sticks on the beach.



It was a frightening thing for a disabled woman to do. But as her husband Mohammad says: 'We had two seconds where we thought 'should we choose our things or choose life and get in?' And I knew 100% we would find a solution. And we did. We found you.'

The family 'found us' whilst living in one room in a hostel with their children, a short walk from QCCA. We were able to give them 'Supper for All' meals and food parcels throughout lockdown.

'Having the food has really helped us,' says Mohammad, 'because we only have £5 each a day to live on. And we came to the UK with just our clothes, so we had a lot of things to buy like shoes and dictionaries for the children. The money we saved on food went on them.'

QCCA has supported the needs of each family member in other ways. Our youth service gave the children a laptop during lockdown and we successfully applied for a hardship grant for Fatma's new walking poles.

'Me personally, I get vegetables from you,' Mohammad laughs. 'When we arrived, we were alone, but now we have people. We were afraid about coming here, but not now.'

"I knew 100% we would find a solution. And we did. We found you."

"We were afraid about coming here, but not now."

Youth Services

Young people in Gospel Oak were particularly badly affected by lockdown and our youth services staff worked hard to support them through challenging times. **217 young people took part in our activities over the year and another 100 engaged with us through outreach.**

During first lockdown when schools were shut, we contacted around 100 young people and their families. A key concern was food support for children missing free school meals. We referred 40 families to our Fight C-19 food bank and raised money to provide extra meals for young people, especially over summer and Christmas.

It also became clear that many children didn't have access to computers, cutting them off from school and friends. Our outreach revealed that 80% of parents wanted more online activities from us but at least 40% didn't have access to a computer.



YOUTH SERVICES

Additional fundraising meant that we could provide 46 families with laptops and 13 wi-fi dongles. **With more young members digitally connected, the service increased its online presence.**

Using Zoom and Instagram Live, we ran 31 fitness sessions, a term of whole-year dance classes in three local primary schools and a successful baking course where participants picked up free ingredients from QCCA.

Wherever possible, we took things offline to encourage real-life friendships. Last summer we were able to run an outdoor, multi-sport holiday camp. Young people from Maiden Lane Community Centre and Project NW5 joined us - partners in our Pathways project which integrates young people from across Camden but which was otherwise largely suspended during lockdown.

November 2020 saw the launch of Off the Hook, an exciting boxing initiative with our local youth charity partner GOALYC, the Metropolitan Police, Camden Against Violence and Daileyfit247. The first cohort of five young people got fitter, earned AQA qualifications and engaged with their community - and were spotted on social media by boxing legend Michael Watson MBE, who is now Off the Hook's ambassador.



GOALYC developed many other programmes with us in addition to Off the Hook. Our 15-year partnership went from strength to strength through projects including online fitness and the YES employment initiative. We're looking forward to renewing our formal agreement with them in the next year.

Organisationally, the past twelve months saw significant staff change. Sarah-Jane Elvin took over as youth service manager from Mohammed Walji in August; Frances White became sports development co-ordinator in November and Karolina Ba became employment and enterprise co-ordinator in December.

The new team helped us increase the support we give young women and parents, with the introduction of girls-only youth sessions and more one-to-one family work.



Youth Services: Figures

 **317** total number of children helped (including outreach)

 **87%** of children helped categorised as 'disadvantaged'

 **46** number of families receiving laptops



Case Study

Kelvin had 'briefly boxed once or twice' before coming to Off the Hook but now his trainers think he has 'real potential.'

But discovering a natural sparring talent was just one of the benefits he walked away with from the boxing and engagement course, delivered with support from the Metropolitan Police. 'This has definitely helped me to see the police as people,' he says. 'It's given me a very positive outlook.'

Kelvin joined the 12-week course while preparing for his GCSE's.

Each session was split into two halves. The first combined fitness and boxing workouts in QCCA's Dome sports hall. The second moved to the youth club where the focus was on workshops covering issues relevant to young people's lives. These ranged from drug abuse, knife crime and cyber-bullying to knowing your rights during stop and search. The programme has also had inspirational guest speakers such as former IBO world champion Hannah Rankin and actor Vas Blackwood.



But Kelvin says spending time with local police officers was the thing he's learned most from: 'As a black person, in our community, we don't always have the best outlook on the police. But this has definitely helped me to see them as humans as well.'

"It's given me a very positive outlook."

Older People's Services

When government lockdown meant we had to suspend our usual Forever Young activities, **we found new ways of giving older people the support they needed.**

Many were shielding and scared of getting ill, cut off from friends and family, unable to buy food or access medical services. Loneliness was affecting mental health.

Within days of lockdown, we were providing food parcel and hot meal deliveries, a prescription pick-up service and telephone befriending. This quickly developed into our Fight C-19 emergency programme for the whole community - but the over-60's remained at the heart of what we did.

We conservatively supported over 300 older people across the year, many several times a week. 41% of our new users were older people.



For the first few months of the pandemic, 40 older members were getting at least one phone call a week from older people's services co-ordinator Mary Pierce and her team of 20 volunteers. **This was a vital lifeline for them and an important way for us to make sure they were well.**

Because of the scope of our service, we saw a significant increase in referrals from external partners such as Age UK Camden and Camden adult social services. The Hampstead Wells and Campden Trust funded us to directly support 30 of their pensioners.

By early summer, we were able to re-start some of our usual activities on Zoom. This included chair-based exercise and sessions with our drama group, which was subsequently invited to produce work for the Greater London Authority and Mayor of London's prestigious online St. Patrick's Celebration. When lockdown rules allowed, we invited people back to the centre in groups of six, continuing to stream classes online for people at home. Our BAME older-people's gardening project 'Azmal's Garden' went from strength to strength as lockdown eased, with a second group of young Bangladeshi mums learning gardening from their elders.

Our future work with older people will continue to address the issues left by Covid-19. A survey of 115 older members in December 2020 told us that the pandemic had left them feeling more isolated (46%), more anxious (40%) and less fit (53%).

Many have also lost the confidence to go out again, despite double vaccinations. **Group activities and exercise are a high priority going forward as is support for depression.**

Despite the difficulties they have faced, our members' appreciation throughout the pandemic has been heart-warming. 68% said our support had been very helpful or helpful and 82% said that QCCA was more important to them now than it was 12 months ago. One 82-year-old told us: 'Queen's Crescent was so helpful to me over Covid-19, when I wasn't helped by anyone else.'

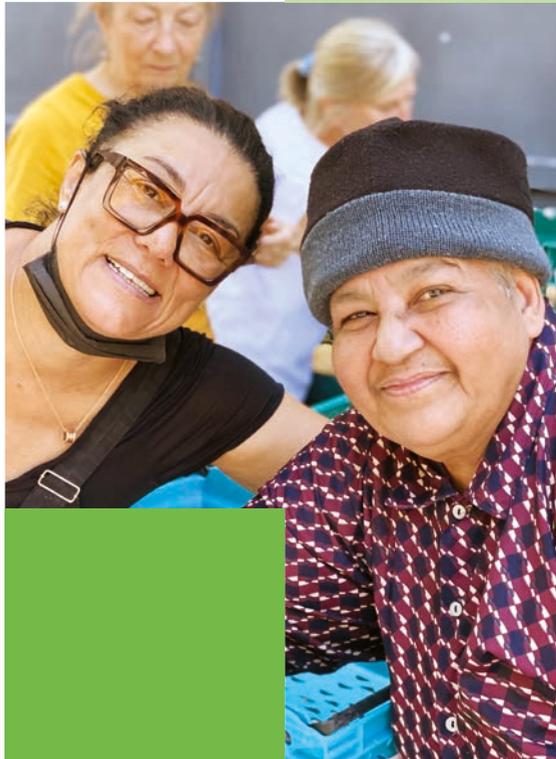


Older People's Services: Figures

82% of older people said QCCA's more important to them now than 12 months ago

62% of older members said QCCA was good for their emotional and mental wellbeing

55% of older members said QCCA activities improved their physical health



Case Study

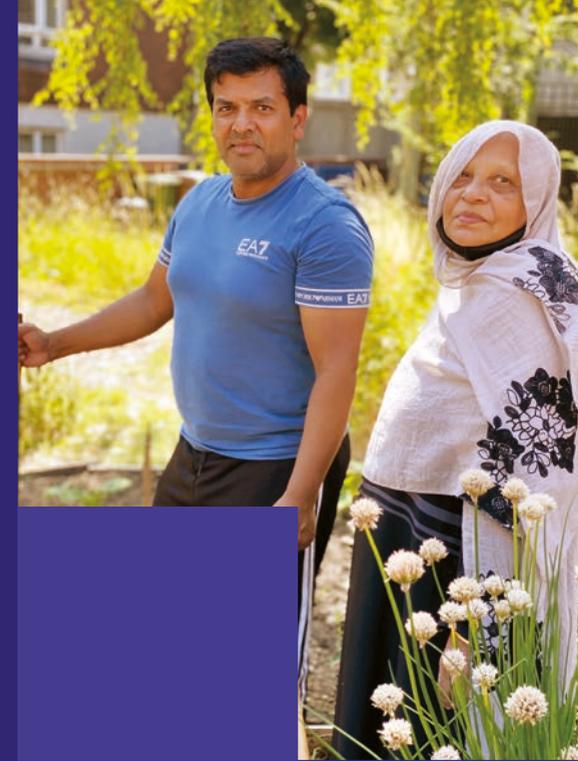
For years, it was just unused land between blocks of flats. But **QCCA has helped an inter-generational group of Bangladeshi women turn wasteland into a wonderful garden, keeping fit and forging friendships during lockdown.**

Originally started by QCCA staffer Azmal Hussain for his green-fingered 66-year-old mum Asia and her friends, the idea of growing tomatoes, carrots, beans and coriander soon caught the eye of the younger women in the community.

But while many of the older gardeners were born in Bangladesh and had learned how to cultivate crops there from their own parents, the younger women – most of whom were born in the UK – didn't have the same skills.

Fast-forward a year and the older women are teaching a new generation about rotation, inter-cropping and shielding younger plants from the wind. And in so doing, they've beaten the loneliness and isolation that's been such a problem for many older people during Covid-19.

"This project is all about bringing people out of their houses, doing exercise and improving their wellbeing."



Rulia, 39, says: 'I don't know much about gardening so I'm pestering these ladies the whole time.' Which makes Rukeya, 61, smile. 'Actually,' she says, 'we quite like being pestered by her. I like meeting all the younger women because they challenge us and we challenge them.'

'This project is all about bringing people out of their houses, doing exercise and improving their wellbeing,' says Azmal.

Our Nurseries

The value of **having two not-for-profit nurseries in the QCCA family** really became apparent during lockdown.

Keeping both Holly Lodge and Caversham nurseries open would have been economically challenging. But by temporarily merging the two into the Holly Lodge site during the early days of Covid-19, we were able to support the children of key workers all the way through, except for a few weeks when government regulations closed all nurseries.

The temporary joint-working also meant we were able to offer places to children attending Le Jardin des Dyvrande Bilingual, a French nursery that rents space in QCCA's main building.



OUR NURSERIES

Holly Lodge

Holly Lodge met a real need during the pandemic, with 100% occupancy across the twelve-month period and attendance during the second and third stages of lockdown at 98%. Despite working to rigorous government health and safety guidelines, it **continued to deliver the government's Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum in a creative and innovative way.**

The day after the first lockdown was announced, staff put together art packs and delivered them to children's homes. Daily sessions on Zoom used singing and stories with props to engage the whole family.

After an initial period where only key worker children were allowed back in person, the nursery re-opened in stages to all pupils from June 2020. In total 35 pupils were enrolled across the year.

Parent engagement became especially important at a time of such uncertainty. Staff shared detailed weekly lesson plans with families and tried to be available to answer questions and concerns. The many thank-you cards and emails we get show that the approach was appreciated. Several mums and dads even offered to give classes, including sessions on yoga, Mayan maths and what it's like working as a doctor for 'Occupations' week.

Alongside the creative and collaborative thinking, staff have maintained a solid focus on basics. Maths, literacy and community have been a priority for children making the transition into Reception during a difficult time. And with lockdown exacerbating issues for some, individual education plans for those children who required one-to-one support became more important than ever.





OUR NURSERIES

Caversham Nursery

Covid-19 had a significant financial impact on Caversham nursery.

Already operating in an area with falling birth rates and more nurseries than Holly Lodge, the pandemic drove capacity down to around 40%, with 21 children enrolled at the end of the year.



For some parents, the decision to withdraw their children was financial. We had a high proportion of families experiencing furlough, job and income loss. For others, it was due to fear of infection. Many took their children in and out as the situation changed.

Whatever the reason, staff worked hard to accommodate personal need while maintaining good relationships and offering reassurance. Strict social-distancing was enforced, with only one family member allowed to enter during drop-off and pick-up times and a reduction in the number of messy play activities to avoid cross infection.



Gradually pupils were coaxed back and we were pleased to gain a total of 16 new pupils across the twelve-month period. Priority was given to those families entitled to free funded hours.

Educational and care standards remained high. The day after the first lockdown was announced, staff put together art packs and delivered them to children's homes.

We ran Zoom sessions during lockdown for those who could not attend in person as well as a hugely successful Christmas musical play. The garden received a cash injection from charity Capital Growth and there was lots of digging, seed planting and playing in the mud kitchen. Next year, there are plans for a vegetable garden.

We also built on our expertise in early intervention with two referrals to Camden's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and Camden Mosaic.

Response from parents and children alike has been enormously positive. Like Holly Lodge Nursery, Caversham has had many touching emails, cards and letters thanking staff for all their help during a difficult year. Two pupils who left to start at schools even returned to Caversham within a few weeks, because they preferred us.

Thanks

The past twelve months have reminded us how generous people are. We'd like to sign off this unprecedented year with a snapshot of a few individuals and organisations who represent the many.

Our local residents and businesses have been amazing. We've had donations from places as diverse as Queen's Crescent Library knitting club, Gospel Oak Football Club (pub quiz) and the London Sound Academy.

Camden's local grant-givers were speedy and generous in their support. Donations from Camden Giving, the Hampstead Wells and Campden Trust and St Pancras Welfare Trust helped every aspect of our emergency work.

We received significant backing from national funders, including the National Lottery, the London Community Response Fund, the Charities Aid

Foundation (CAF) and Children in Need. And all of our existing funders either allowed us to postpone projects or re-allocate spend.

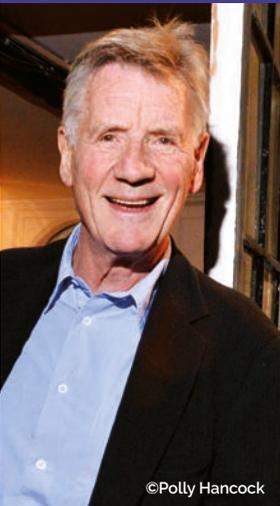
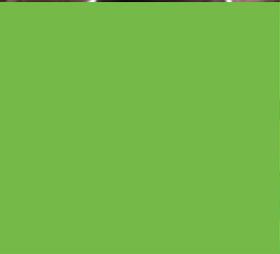
Our food service was supported by so many people and organisations, it's hard to pick out a few. The big guns were stalwarts – the Felix Project and City Harvest– but smaller supporters punched above their weight. Restaurants Punjab Covent Garden and Sizzling Bombay supplied us with food for months as did Andy from Primrose Hill Butchers and the Camden New Journal, spearheaded by the irrepressible Dan Carrier.

St Martin's Church Gospel Oak and Mother Carol fundraised £5000 towards our Christmas hampers.

This year we were also backed by our first corporate partner, investment management firm Neuberger Berman – a welcome endorsement in difficult times.

And finally, a big thank you to the high-profile individuals who advocated for our work throughout the year, including Sir Keir Starmer, Sir Michael Palin, Dame Louise Casey, Sir Lenny Henry and Michael Watson MBE.

We couldn't have done this without any of you.



THANKS

Our Funders

A huge thanks to all of our funders.



Hollick Family Foundation



Queen's Crescent Community Association
45 Ashdown Crescent
Gospel Oak
London
NW5 4QE

0207 267 6635

qcca.org.uk

info@qcca.org.uk

@qcca_camden

@QCCA_ltd

Registered Charity No. 1096655.
Registered CLG: 04393769



qcca.org.uk