

# We Do Things Differently A Snapshot

2015-2016



POPLAR **HARCA**

Communities And  
Neighbourhoods Directorate

# Introduction

Welcome to this year's version of **We Do Things Differently**, the Annual Report produced by the Communities and Neighbourhoods Directorate. It has been designed using the latest Poplar HARCA brand. We have also added a few pages to this edition to briefly introduce the rationale for why the Communities and Neighbourhoods (CaN) service exists.

## Why?

**No-one in Poplar should be disadvantaged because of where they live.** Our residents have lower incomes, less employment and worse health than most other parts of London and this situation has not changed since the historian Charles Booth first mapped poverty in London in the 1890s.

**Low rents through social and affordable housing are vital to reducing poverty, but many of our residents live in poverty despite low housing costs.** The nature of needs-based lettings, and the growing pressure on social housing, means that **a significant proportion of our residents will require support in order for them to live healthy and prosperous lives.**

**Although London's economy has been generally successful over the past twenty years, not everyone has benefited and the incidence of poverty has not fallen.** Income poverty rates for children, working age adults and pensioners are higher in London than elsewhere in the UK – and often highest in Poplar. **Poverty is particularly concentrated in households with dependent children and among Black, Asian and ethnic minority and disabled Poplar residents.**

As a result, London is an increasingly polarised city. On the one hand, it has seen a major growth in earnings, with significant rises both in the number of those earning high salaries, and in the amount they earn. However, this leaves those on low incomes or without employment increasingly far behind.

**Poverty costs us all** – the lost life chances for our residents, lost taxes and additional benefit payments, the drain on public services such as the NHS and Police to address the issues that poverty creates, and the depressing fact that young people growing up in poverty are more likely to experience poverty themselves.

**The services that CaN provides are about changing poverty in Poplar for the next hundred years. We will co-create opportunities so that poverty no longer stops our residents from achieving their potential and that we end the generational cycle of poverty in Poplar for good.**

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## How?

Our greatest asset is the people who live in Poplar – that is why our work can only be achieved with the support and active involvement of the residents and communities of Poplar. Whatever we do has to put our residents at the heart of change. It doesn't mean that others can't help – we need experts, activists, people with different experiences, people who care and who want to be involved – we all have to work alongside residents and local communities if we are going to make positive and sustainable changes.

Disadvantage rarely occurs in isolation. Many of our residents face three or more issues at a time in areas such as education, health, employment, income, social support and housing. Services that should help often struggle to address multiple problems

because they are set up to deal with only one. This fragmented approach ignores the way different issues connect with, and exacerbate each other and it quickly loses sight of the person or family who is facing them. **We believe in providing a broad range of services that residents can move between and our focus is on the person as much as the issue.**

Increased employment is a key priority for Poplar. GPs tell us that the best way of improving the physical and mental health of many of their patients is to find fulfilling, paid work for them. Whatever our opinions of welfare reform, we also know that working is a way of stopping the application of the benefits cap. The income received is likely to support the local economy which in turn will

support more local businesses and more local employment. Our employment and training programme is one of the most successful in Tower Hamlets, although we also understand that its success is related to the network of complementary services delivered by the CaN team that build the confidence, social skills and well-being of our residents.

Volunteering is an essential element of a thriving and successful community. Those who volunteer to help others also help themselves, and their wider community, through creating strong social bonds that protect us all. We develop and run services in a way that involves volunteers in all aspects of our work and our aim is to build the most successful volunteering community in London.

A connected community is one that can resist the pressures of extremist and violent ideologies and find other ways to resolve grievances and injustices within our society. We work to bring all sections of the community together through public events, celebrations, inter-generational services, strong links with faith groups and tailored youth and community programmes. We value and celebrate diversity and believe that bringing different perspectives together through our services builds more robust, tolerant and successful communities.

Social infrastructure has a major role to play in supporting Poplar's housing growth, making residential areas more attractive and maintaining sustainable neighbourhoods and communities. We work to create and support high quality social infrastructure alongside new development opportunities in East London enhancing health, childcare, play, education and employment opportunities for Poplar residents.

We want to inspire young people and deliver a stronger future for them. Spotlight aims to be the leading creative youth destination in London, providing outstanding opportunities for discovery, growth and inspiration.

It's not only about young people. Our community centres provide space to learn, create, socialise, get healthy and find help when our residents need it.

**Our previous reports have shown the breadth of CaN services and sometimes the numbers can hide some of the human outcomes of our work. The case studies in this report provide an insight into the enormous difference that CaN services make to the lives of local residents and how services and partnerships have to work together to help individuals in need.**

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**A connected community is one that can resist the pressures of extremist and violent ideologies**



We have engaged  
**767**  
new volunteers  
in 2015–16

## Clare's story is typical of the experience of many volunteers at Poplar HARCA.

Clare came to us as she had not worked for some time since the birth of her second child. She wanted to become a volunteer to build up her confidence in the workplace and refresh her skills. Clare helped with administrative tasks and also at local events and she showed great skill working with children. Our team encouraged Clare to apply for a job at a local primary school and she was successful at the interview. Clare still helps us with special events and festivals.

**175**  
local voluntary  
organisations  
supported

**4,838**  
users of  
neighbourhood  
centres

**89%**  
of our  
neighbourhood  
centre users rate  
our provision as  
excellent

## The following example shows how our centres and our partners work with residents to provide services that meet local needs.

Our ballet classes at the St Paul's Way Centre are oversubscribed and have lots of parent involvement. The classes were started through a chance meeting with Zohra from the Leopold Estate. Zohra had been unemployed for some time and, at the time, was lacking in confidence.

She was passionate about dance however, and Zohra and one of our partner organisations, Leaders in Community, decided to start an under-12s ballet class to enable Zohra to build her confidence and get back into teaching. Zohra's commitment and motivation saw the class grow from just 3 members to over 20. The classes also offer support to parents and families including referrals to our employment and training services, courses at the centre and more.





We have supported  
**268**  
residents  
into jobs

**Tasnima was one of those individuals and she wrote to us to tell us about her journey.**

If I could describe the Community Works for Health Talent Pool Programme in one word it would be "lifeline". As a graduate, I thought I would have my career all planned out. However, as I left university, I wanted a career change and ended up out of employment for months. One thing I was sure of was that I wanted to work within the healthcare sector. As I searched for employment within the NHS, I understood that it was difficult to be considered for administration vacancies as most were advertised internally. This coupled with a lack of work experience made me realise I needed help. This is where the Talent Pool Programme came in.

What I needed were skills and experience that I could apply within the working world, within the NHS. The programme equipped me with qualifications from Health and Safety to Mental Health Awareness. The team at Poplar HARCA worked hard to prepare me with vital skills such as writing a CV, supporting statement for NHS applications and presentation skills. They were there to give me a confidence boost and really built the foundation which I could work upon to gain employment.



**20,736**  
people  
attending events



**940**  
residents have  
completed one or more  
accredited training  
courses to prepare for  
employment



**15**  
community food  
growing gardens  
maintained  
with one becoming  
a hub for all the  
gardening  
groups



**Limborough Green** which hosts the Chelsea Flower Show winning garden donated by Morgan Stanley, a food growing section, a community green house and a community training kitchen funded by the Postcode Lottery.



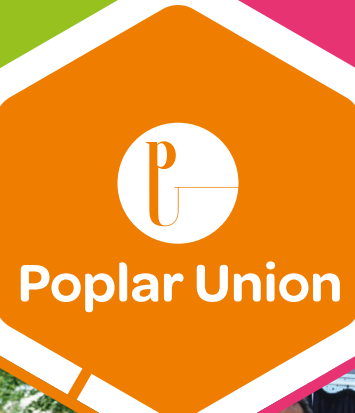


In 2015, our Resident Empowerment Support Team (REST) launched Listening Campaigns, a model to conduct community research in neighbourhoods.



**110**  
local social enterprises supported

**2,830**  
young people engaged in Spotlight



**88%**  
of young people accessing Spotlight reported an increase in confidence and self esteem as a result of their participation

Our brand new community neighbourhood centre next to Bartlett Park and the canal is opening soon!



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