

# We do things differently

Communities &  
Neighbourhoods  
Directorate

Annual Report  
2019-20



The year before the pandemic



# Introduction

The Communities and Neighbourhoods (CaN) Directorate of Poplar HARCA are pleased to publish this Annual Report on the occasion of the London Challenge Poverty Week (12-18 October 2020).

The event is co-ordinated by *4in10:London's Child Poverty Network* which says: "The week is a chance for all Londoners to raise their voices against poverty in the capital and show what needs to be done to sort it out".

Through this report, we want to share some of the ways in which we work with our residents, local communities, partners and all those who care and want to be involved, to tackle poverty. We do things differently from the way a typical social housing provider does. In Poplar HARCA, through CaN, we believe in engaging and enabling our residents to take up opportunities and learn the means to address barriers to happier, healthier and more stable lives.

We were finalising plans for the new financial year when Covid-19 shocked the whole world. We have highlighted our responses to this unprecedented crisis in the first four months from April 20-July 20 in a separate report.

It is highly likely that we will work through 2020 using a combination of virtual and in-person engagement and delivery. We will have to do so until the pandemic is completely suppressed, a vaccine is found and it is once again safe to work with our residents as we have done in the past.

Things may not be the same, as there might be a "new normal" after all. But, we will continue to put our residents at the heart of everything we do. We hope that this report gives you a flavour of how we try to be part of a bigger sum of efforts to address the lingering poverty in our part of London.

As in previous years, we have highlighted below the financial equivalent of the social value impact generated by our interventions using the HACT - Housing Association's Charitable Trust - model of measuring the social value of community investment.



# Raised income through stable jobs

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Each year, we aspire to get 300 unemployed local people into work especially those very far away from the jobs market.

Our aim is to contribute to the borough-wide, if not London-wide effort to reduce the income poverty rates for families, which are higher in London than elsewhere in the UK – and often highest in Poplar.

In this period, we have successfully supported 323 local people into employment in jobs that ranged from admin, education, retail, healthcare, security, construction, arts, hospitality, cleaning & facilities management, telesales and transport. Unlike supporting those who are job-ready, helping people who face multiple barriers come with huge challenges. It requires creativity and innovation in planning appropriate support and we have been proud of being able to use approaches that yield optimum results.

We took part in Transform and Achieve – a programme supporting people to move into employment through the development of soft skills. This initiative is led by Metropolitan Housing through funding from JP Morgan. We were selected again as the main delivery partner for the Through Care project for young people transitioning from care.



# 323

local people  
supported into jobs

**“I have successfully got a job offer as a Nursing apprentice with Barts Health NHS Trust and I just want to say thank you so much to my advisors for your support and for accepting me into the programme. I wouldn’t have got this far if not for your encouragement.”**

**Mariam Ahmed**

We delivered an exciting 5-week programme aimed at providing both employability as well as support with financial literacy, health and well-being and emotional support.

We continued to support a Women in Health programme for 4 cohorts of women wanting to get into the health sector. We also supported the Local Authority to deliver 3 cohorts for their over 50’s programme. The project consists of providing employability skills, one to one support and a suite of accredited training. We have developed very strong partnerships with Barts Health NHS Trust and this year supported their recruitment and training of 6 cohorts of young people wanting to get into apprenticeship positions as well as entry level jobs for the broader community.

**Advice  
Information  
CV Writing  
Job Search  
Apprenticeships  
Work Placement**



# Increased job chances through training

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Skills training and development is part of preparing people into work. We enhance people's chances of getting the jobs that suit their aspirations by offering them accredited training.

We have helped 489 people achieve at least 1 qualification during the period. We run bespoke ESOL classes for those who need language training. Our model has been regarded as a good model of how ESOL can embed lots of creative ways in which communities can be integrated and inspired.

We launched "Power Up," our Digital Skills for Work Programme for both the unemployed who have been disadvantaged due to lack of IT knowledge and those underemployed who wish to progress into better paid and more stable jobs. Our learners achieved a combined qualification of 563.

# 489

people achieved at least one qualification during the period



**Life Skills  
Training  
For Work  
IT Knowledge  
ESOL Classes  
Digital Skills  
Accredited Courses**

**"A distressed young man with schizophrenia approached me for help last night in the street as he was agitated while waiting for his mother. Thanks to my brilliant training, I felt I was able to respond and assist as needed at the time, without feeling afraid, as well as being able to ask other members of the public to support us. It felt so significant I wanted to thank you all for believing in me."**

**William Law – email to The Hive staff**



# Improved well-being through healthier lifestyles

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We are all familiar with the saying “health is wealth”. Alongside supporting the unemployed and low-income families to raise their income levels, we focus in providing opportunities for improved mental and physical well-being of our residents.

We are determined to help reverse the trend in the rise of the number of local people suffering from obesity from a young age. We want to prevent and stop people developing diabetes, very common among our Asian population. Working through the Well-One Partnership, we have provided information and access to a wide-range of health-related activities to local people.

# 4856

people took part in health sessions atleast once.

ideas  
STORE

**“It’s been great to join in the different exercise sessions right on my doorstep with my son... I especially loved the boxing pop-up because I’d never done it before and the aerobics has made me feel more flexible. My stamina has also increased”**

**Hannah Boyd**

**Yoga  
Dance  
Sports  
Cooking  
Exercise  
Gardening  
Beekeeping**

4,856 people took part in health sessions at least once, held and provided in and outside our Neighbourhood Centres. These include: yoga, keep fit exercises, dance classes, cooking training, gardening activities including beekeeping and other initiatives to protect the environment, mindfulness sessions, martial arts/boxing for children and young people, various sports for all ages, singing, and therapeutic arts activities.

Last year saw us get very close to launching our social prescribing tool Poplar Links. Covid has unfortunately halted our work on this but we hope to get it in place very soon so we can improve our monitoring and evaluation of the impact of our health provision on the over-all well-being of our residents.



# Inspired, safer and healthier children and young people

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Young people growing up in poverty are more likely to experience poverty themselves. Our aim is to help reverse this trend through our youth service, Spotlight.

Spotlight helps young people to achieve their potential through access to inspirational activities and individually tailored support.

Last year, 6,210 young people engaged with an exceptional range of high quality programmes and support services delivered in partnership with industry leading organisations and practitioners. From activities such as dance to theatre or football to basketball, young people have been able to learn from world class tutors and coaches broadening concepts of what is possible. Spotlight aims to provide pathways to excellence providing opportunities in arts & sports through initiatives such as launching our own record label or delivering an educational course to boxers aiming to be national champions.

**“Spotlight Boxing has boosted my self-esteem and confidence. It has helped me to push my boundaries and has disciplined me to train hard and strive to the best that I can be.”**

YP, aged 18

young people engaged with high quality programmes and support services

6210



**“I’m so glad that Health Spot is out there. During the lockdown I felt stressed out and was panicking as I wasn’t sure how I would be treated.**

**Health Spot has benefited me massively and they always make sure that I am kept in good health and that it is treated as a high priority”**

YP, aged 17



**Trust  
Sports  
Support  
Creativity  
Inspiration  
Leadership  
Volunteering**

At the heart of our work is the ability to build trusted relationships between professionals and young people; enabling young people to make informed decisions within their lives and take up positions of leadership.

Young people from Poplar, Bow and across London have achieved valuable outcomes that we believe will strengthen their resilience as they embark in their journey towards responsible & prosperous adulthood.

An example of excellence includes a partnership with the local GP Care Network to develop Health Spot, a youth friendly GP service meeting the health needs of our younger community. This model has been designed to make the experience as welcoming as possible for young people booking appointments through a youth worker who is also able to provide support during the appointment.



# Enhanced participation through volunteering

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We have always regarded volunteering as a key ingredient of our work to reduce poverty.

It creates pathways to people's active participation in their communities, in workplaces, and society as a whole. It builds confidence, raises self-esteem and enables people to thrive.

Our volunteering programme offers opportunities for both adults and young people to take up volunteering roles within Poplar HARCA.

We aim to engage at least 250 volunteers a year. In 2019-20, we have attracted 343 of whom a third were young adults wishing to gain experiences to prepare for the world of work. Feedback from a sample of the hundreds of local people who helped us carry out this year's work confirm the value of volunteering.

**Tutors**  
**Helpers**  
**Coaches**  
**Champions**  
**Organisers**  
**Befrienders**

# 343

local people engaged  
in volunteering



**“My time as a Youth Support Placement Volunteer with Spotlight helped build my experience working alongside young people. The opportunity to engage and interact with the most vulnerable ones has directly helped me to gain my new role as a Teaching Assistant with Zen Educate”**

YD, 21.

**“Volunteering as part of Spotlight’s Youth Empowerment Programme helped build my confidence massively. As a result of this confidence, I applied to join UNICEF UK’s Youth Advisory Board, and successfully gained a place”**

SK,18.

**“I have been very well-supported as an ESOL volunteer at Poplar HARCA. I have recently applied to go on the training course for ESOL Teachers as I am now ready to become one. I am thankful to the PH volunteer co-ordinator who kept me updated with training and employment opportunities”**

Arisa Jannat, ESOL Support Volunteer.



# Strengthened links through events

Poplar HARCA believes in the power of closely-knit communities working together despite differences in backgrounds, age, gender as well as social and economic status.

We create opportunities where people can mix, share stories, learn new things from one another, help each other and gradually build neighbourly relationships.

These are steps towards creating communities that strive for social integration. When people link up, they weave a network that creates a sense of belonging and a place where prospects exist for people to improve their life chances.

**Religious Feasts**  
**School Streets**  
**Celebrations**  
**Cook-Offs**  
**Concerts**  
**Festivals**

7257

local people attended  
community events

**“It was really inspiring to see people of all ages and backgrounds get involved and join in the fun... I’d like to see more of these kinds of events in Poplar – just simple pop ups for all the family.”**

**Lilima Hussain**

The pandemic is changing the way we relate with everyone around us.

To prevent the spread of the virus, we have been forced to keep not just our physical distance from each other but our very important social connectedness. Before Covid, we used to organise social events that enable us to link up with immediate neighbours and others in person with whom we share the same interests as well as celebrate different occasions. We used to mix, shake hands, embrace, and get to know each other, share ideas and views. We meet in annual gatherings for people of all ages, ethnicity, religions, gender and points of view.

Until before lockdown began, we have recorded 7,257 local people attending community events. We hope that very soon, we would all be able to go back to the streets, the community centres’ halls, public open green spaces/communal gardens and other venues to come together and help each other build resilient communities.





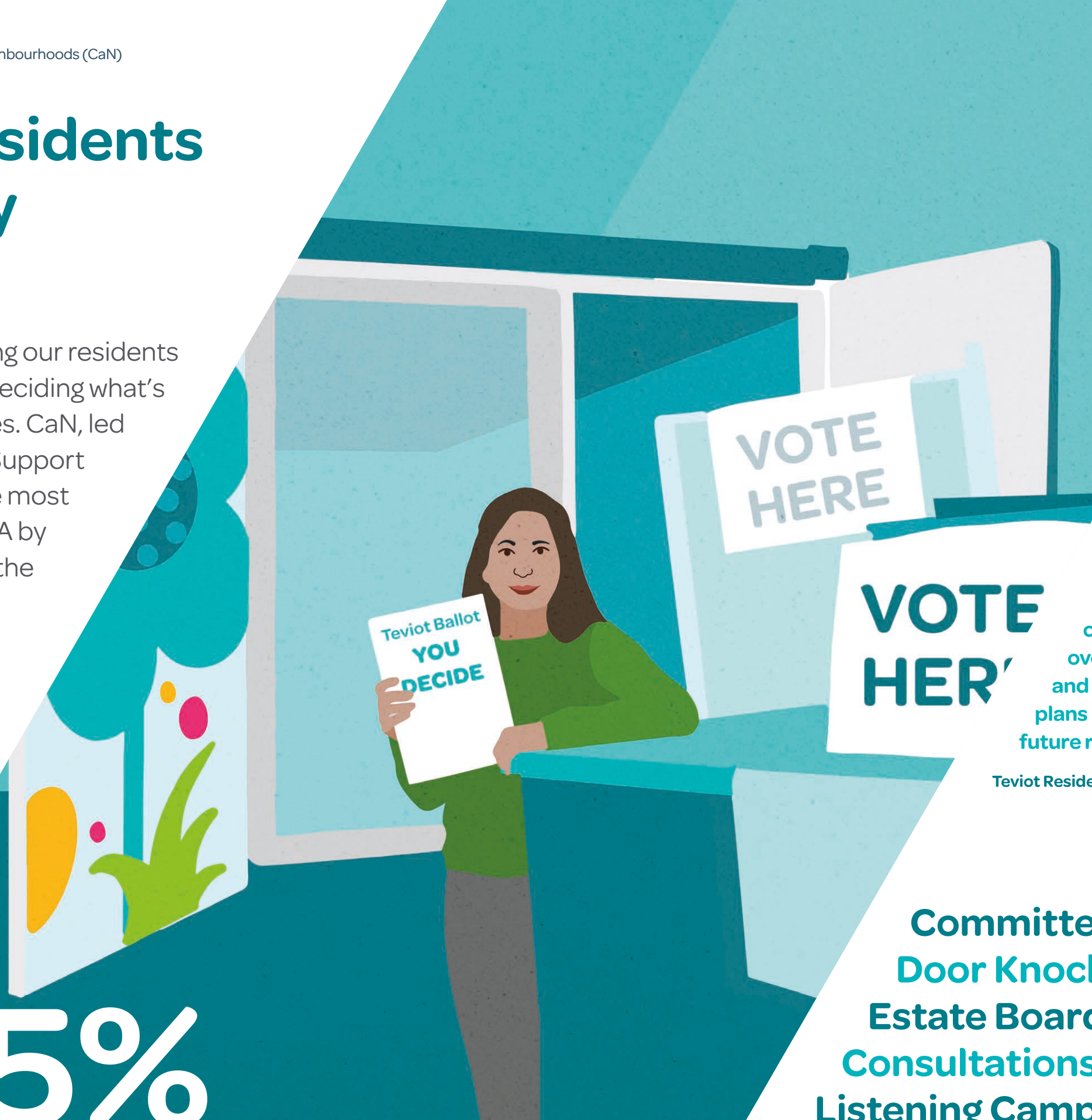
# Empowered residents leading the way

Active participation is key to enabling our residents to take ownership and take part in deciding what's best for them and their communities. CaN, led by REST (Resident Empowerment Support Team) last year delivered one of the most exciting outcomes for Poplar HARCA by securing a resounding "yes" vote in the Teviot Estate ballot.

The focus of the REST team is now on consulting with Aberfeldy estate residents on an exciting regeneration plan for their area which will deliver better homes and a vibrant neighbourhood. Meanwhile, residents of Teviot are actively involved in all aspects of seeing through the exciting plans for their estate.

# 85%

YES votes gathered  
at the Teviot Ballot



"We worked with Poplar HARCA to make sure the Offer was what residents want for the future of their estate. We're really pleased that the community has voted [so overwhelmingly] in favour, and we look forward to the plans becoming Teviot's future reality."

Teviot Residents Group

**Committees**  
**Door Knocks**  
**Estate Boards**  
**Consultations**  
**Listening Campaign**