

Communities and Neighbourhoods (CaN)

We Do Things Differently



Annual Social Value Report
2024–2025

POPLAR **HARCA**



Introduction

The Communities and Neighbourhoods (CaN) Directorate—backed by colleagues across Poplar HARCA—has spent over 20 years weaving a strong, creative, and responsive support network alongside our residents.

The year 2024–2025 has brought both challenges and rewards for the CaN Directorate across our four teams: Employment & Training (The Hive), Spotlight Youth, Community Development & Wellbeing, and the Resident Engagement Support Team. Once again, we worked closely with residents, partners, donors, and funders to co-create impactful responses to our community's evolving needs.



Together, we launched inclusive programmes, inspired and empowered young people, reached out to older residents, and offered life-changing support to vulnerable adults and children. From volunteering and employment support to health sessions, capacity building for voluntary self-help groups, welfare advice, and emergency help like food and energy vouchers—there truly was something for everyone.

In this report, we highlight just a few of the remarkable initiatives delivered by our dedicated staff and volunteers that left a lasting impact. As always, we give massive thanks to all our partners, donors and funders for their unwavering support – both financial and in-kind.

The following quotes capture the spirit of Poplar HARCA—where support is not only available, but also genuinely valued by those who need it most.

“
How time flies! It feels like just weeks ago we were welcoming spring by planting brassicas in the community garden. What a beautiful day that was—smiles everywhere!”

POPLAR HARCA RESIDENT



73
grow beds
repaired



15
gardens
supported
throughout
the year

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“
Luckily, this centre is warm and cosy—just the right place to be while the kids are at school. We learn while we wait, and we save on heating bills too!”

DIGITAL SKILLS LEARNER



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“
There is always something fun to do at Poplar HARCA’s community centres. As family and friends move out or pass away, it’s important that centres are there for us to socialise and find the help we need. They have been a lifeline to many.”

CAROL AND OTHER CENTRE USERS



6

**community
centres run by
CaN**



5

**hubs run by
CaN partners**

The CaN Vision

CaN Services aim to eliminate deprivation in Poplar and neighbouring areas in the next 100 years, removing barriers to residents' potential and ending the generational cycles of poverty.

We are residents and communities-driven, supporting our staff to provide holistic services and fostering partnerships to co-create solutions. Our community centres serve as strong anchors, managed by knowledgeable and trusted staff with lived local experiences. Our award-winning teams—Employment & Training, REST, Spotlight, and Community Development & Wellbeing—are recognised by key stakeholders in the UK and abroad.

We understand that ending entrenched poverty is a long-term effort, requiring decades of hard work. Yet, over the past 25 years, our people-centred interventions have significantly improved residents' lives. Our annual reports, featuring testimonials, case studies and robust social value statistics, confirm our progress. With enhanced resources, we are confident we will make a substantial impact and move closer to eliminating poverty in our communities.



Social Value Generated in 2024–2025

Employment
& Training
£5.6m

Spotlight
Youth Service
£5.2m

Community
Development
& Wellbeing
£5.5m

Total
Social Value
Generated
£16.3m



Employment and Training

Our Employment & Training Service Hub – The Hive – as it is known, is one of the cornerstones of the Communities and Neighbourhoods Directorate.

The awards and recognition that it has received through the years are testaments to its exceptional impact despite its modest size and limited resources. It's a vital support system for residents, engaging with over 2,000 jobseekers and trainees each year—individuals striving to improve their economic circumstances through skill development and meaningful employment opportunities.

With an annual target of supporting 200 residents into jobs, the team also plays a crucial role in preparing hundreds more with the confidence and competencies necessary to pursue successful job applications. The 2024–2025 period brought a mix of challenges and achievements, reflecting the team's resilience, adaptability, and unwavering commitment to our residents.



Supporting Jobseekers

Throughout 2024-2025, the employment & training team has supported 250 people into jobs, most of whom faced multiple barriers to employment.

Funding from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH) Council has enabled us to expand our services, allowing us to assist more vulnerable residents.

A high number of self-referrals came through our drop-in service at **The Hive**, followed closely by trainees in our existing courses, including Hospitality & Catering, Security, and Health Care, many of whom have successfully transitioned into employment.

From September 2024 onwards, we have made our employment support services exclusively available to Poplar

HARCA residents, learners enrolled in our courses, and others involved in special projects funded by the Council or our partner, East End Community Foundation (EECF). This strategic shift ensures that resources are directed towards young people and individuals facing significant employment challenges. Consequently, we have referred many jobseekers to the Borough's Employment Services for alternative support.

Our continued commitment to help individuals in their employment journey is reflected in the heartfelt feedback from a resident.

250

people into jobs

711

achieved at least 1 qualification



I just wanted to say thank you for your incredible support a few years ago. I appreciated it then, but even more now, seeing how much you went above and beyond.

Your faith in me, even when I lacked it myself, made a lasting impact on my confidence and career. I'm now an Integration Officer at Local London, hosted by Redbridge Council. It feels surreal, and I remind myself to appreciate how far I've come. I'll always be grateful for the role you played in my journey.

RESIDENT FEEDBACK



Supporting Learners

Towards the second half of 2024, we have intensified our efforts to assist clients with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

In collaboration with LBTH, we provided training to SEND learners, helping them update their CVs and explore employment opportunities. These learners had secured paid placements and made significant progress. We remain optimistic about their transition into permanent

employment. Additionally, our ongoing support for Poplar HARCA residents and course participants has yielded positive feedback, including from a participant in the Barts Health NHS programme who regained confidence after suddenly losing their job.



I was unexpectedly let go from my previous job, which left me feeling distressed and hopeless. But with your team's support, I've regained my confidence. My career is progressing steadily, and I've even been offered an interview with the Finance Department at Canary Wharf, with the possibility of joining Barts Trust at Band 4.



77
completed
Accredited Digital
Skills Training

847
qualifications
collectively
achieved by
711 trainees



Case Study

From arrival to advancement

Sebastian's story



Sebastian Navarro joined his partner who was beginning a two-year master's degree programme in the UK as a dependant. He was unemployed at the time, facing significant barriers including limited English proficiency and being new to the country's job market.

Despite these challenges, he was confident in his skills and was motivated to find work—particularly in the hospitality sector, where he had previous experience.

One of the biggest obstacles that he faced was the lack of UK-based experience and qualifications. This made it difficult for him to secure employment, even in roles where he had excelled in his home country. Navigating a new culture and regulatory environment further added to the complexity.

He discovered The Hive – Poplar HARCA's Employment & Training Services Hub and their partnership with Well Grounded, which offered a hospitality course including a comprehensive barista training component. This was an invaluable opportunity to gain recognised UK qualifications and enhance his employability. The course not only improved his technical knowledge but also kept him up to date with relevant regulations and standards in the UK.



What stood out most was the post-course support. Through The Hive and Well Grounded, he was connected with Almari Cafe in the Aberfeldy estate, for a trial shift as a barista. Although he didn't secure the barista role due to a mismatch in experience, this connection was crucial. During conversations with the team at Almari, he learned about an opening in the kitchen. Thanks to his dedication and prior kitchen experience, he was offered a position as a kitchen porter.

Starting as a kitchen porter, he worked hard and demonstrated his capabilities. Over time, this led to a promotion to chef—an achievement that would not have been possible without the training, trial opportunity, and introductions facilitated by The Hive and Well Grounded.

This journey significantly boosted his confidence and helped him rebuild his career in a new country. He has gained essential certifications, practical experiences, and meaningful employment, and he continues to grow professionally in the UK's hospitality industry.

Sebastian is very appreciative of all the support that he has received and sends a thankful message:



I am incredibly grateful to The Hive and the Well Grounded team for their guidance, support, and the opportunity that helped me establish a new beginning.



Our learning programmes continue to achieve remarkable success, particularly for vulnerable learners. A total of 711 individuals gained at least 1 accredited qualification in the year. Collectively, they have achieved a total of 847 qualifications, reflecting their dedication and the effectiveness of our trainers and our training approach. Tutors and support staff have played a crucial role beyond academic support, providing learners with energy vouchers, free laptops, internet connections, and food vouchers to help address personal challenges. Many of our learners have been inspired to pursue higher-level qualifications, furthering their educational and professional growth.

One learner praised the clarity and engagement of our training sessions, emphasising how one of our tutors created an interactive learning environment that made concepts easy to understand.

“The course provided valuable insights into mental health and workplace dynamics, equipping participants with essential skills for professional settings.”

To ensure digital access, we have distributed 69 laptops received through the Good Things Foundation, with some devices allocated to SEND learners who lack access to personal technology. We also gifted laptops to learners who are unable to complete their coursework due to lack of a personal device.



69

**laptops/tablets
distributed to
learners**

146

**completed Basic
Digital Skills
Training**

7

**new Digital
Champions
engaged**

Partnerships

We maintain a strong partnership with LBTH, which has resulted in additional funding and commissioned projects as mentioned earlier.

We secured £42,000 to support NEET young people and have been commissioned to deliver employability and digital skills training for residents securing work placements, benefiting 15 participants. Additionally, we provided Digital Skills Training for SEND individuals on work placements with the Council, delivered pre-placement training for residents accepting placements through the local authority, and offered interview preparation training for Somali community members seeking NHS employment. We also partner with the Supported Employment Team to train care leavers in budgeting, self-defense, drama, music, employability, and digital skills.

Barts Health NHS Trust remains a key employment partner, particularly for entry-level Health Care Assistant roles. We presented our work to the Trust's Senior Management team, receiving positive feedback and ongoing support.

In collaboration with Principle Clean (PC), we supported 50 employees, mostly with professional qualifications from abroad, by delivering English training. Caf Rail has been providing employability tips and guest speakers, including recruitment heads, and we are awaiting bid outcomes to collaborate further on community support initiatives.





The East End Community Foundation (EECF) has provided us with over £100,000 in funding for our youth employment support over the next three years. As part of this initiative, we visited a few of their corporate partners who host the young people we support through workshops on topics such as how to use LinkedIn professionally, how to write an effective CV, how to register and use agencies as well as one to one interview practice. We presented our work at the Life Chances programme launch and the EECF Board meeting, receiving positive feedback.

Through our partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), we support claimants transitioning from legacy benefits to Universal Credit with digital skills training at our community centres. We submitted a successful funding bid to support claimants who want to gain NHS entry level Health Care jobs by delivering Health and Care and Mental Health First Aid training.

We also engaged with the Greater London Authority (GLA) in research on employment barriers for Pakistani and Bangladeshi women hoping to raise awareness of the complex issues they face in gaining employment. Key events and additional partnerships have been instrumental in expanding

our reach. We hosted a job fair at the Feldy Centre in collaboration with the Job Centre, facilitating employer connections for SIA course graduates. Additionally, we represented Poplar HARCA at job fairs, including those for NEET young people and individuals with mental health challenges. We conducted digital skills taster sessions at the Feldy Centre during Get Online Week and welcomed international visitors, including the Academie van de Stad, while introducing our work to new Board members.

Further support has come from TED-LLP (Hill Ltd and Poplar HARCA)-Community Chest Fund, which provided £10,000 grant to deliver digital skills training. We continue to engage in borough-wide initiatives such as the Employability Forum and Growth and Economic Development Partnership Board. Additionally, we collaborated with Canary Wharf Group to submit 60 CVs for security officer roles at a new hotel.

To promote our services, we have participated in multiple outreach events, including the John Smith Centre Coffee Morning, DWP outreach events, the Asthma and Lung Outreach Event, Langdon Park School's parent meetings, and the Money Matters event at the Feldy Centre.



Case Study

Syeda's journey into the NHS

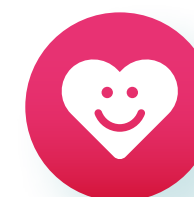
Before joining the Community Works for Health Programme, Syeda had been volunteering for nearly a year while actively searching for employment.

Despite her commitment and enthusiasm, she found her lack of NHS experience to be a significant barrier to securing a role within the health sector.

Syeda was drawn to the programme by the opportunity to gain NHS experience and learn how to craft effective supporting statements – a crucial component of the job application process in the NHS.

Syeda found the course both informative and empowering. She particularly valued the guidance on writing supporting statements and the insights into mental health, especially in the workplace.

The programme had a transformative impact on Syeda's job search. Equipped with a clearer understanding of how to present her skills and experiences, she successfully secured a role in the NHS as a Dementia and Delirium Support Worker.





Syeda found the support from her advisor and the whole employment team both reassuring and constructive. She found them all very easy to approach and supportive in every way.



Having a positive thought process was very helpful in taking a step in the next direction. The guidance about the appropriate role was also helpful.



Syeda is now employed at Royal London Hospital as a Band 3 Support Worker. She sees this as a vital stepping stone to gaining more NHS experience, and she's thriving in a team that supports her personal and professional development.



It's a good stepping stone for NHS experience and the team is very supportive of personal development.



Spotlight Youth Service



5,232
young people
engaged



Spotlight continues to champion young people's voice, creativity, safety and total wellbeing across Tower Hamlets.

With young people leading the way, our programmes and services have expanded to inspire and engage over 5,232 of them in 2024-2025 across arts, music, drama and sports, as well as employability, and other targeted interventions.



Get Creative

More than 370 young people explored their talents and passions through our creative programming.

During the **Easter Programme**, young people teamed up with our partner R-Urban to design and construct bird boxes, now proudly displayed in the local community. **Fashion Innovation** flourished through a partnership with Dr Cloth, where participants learned crochet upcycling techniques—merging sustainability with style.

Our **Youth Theatre** team brought “Lost Island” to life, a heartfelt production navigating exam pressures and the journey into adulthood. Creativity also shone during the **Games Room relaunch**, where young people collaborated with artist Olivia Rose to design a vibrant mural that now welcomes all visitors. Winter culminated in **Winterfest 2024**, an inspiring showcase led by young people across music, theatre, and visual art. In music development, we

introduced 1:1 guitar and drumming sessions, that enabled some participants to work towards their music grades free of charge.

A major highlight was our **Motion Capture Workshops**, where youngsters examined themes of serious youth violence and youth mattering through performance and digital art, in partnership with Theatre Témoin and Queen Mary University. We were thrilled that our **Community Heroes Mural project** won the Young Tower Hamlets Arts Group Award—recognising the power of youth-led public art.

We will continue **The Apex** artist development programme and support young people in planning a **10-year Spotlight Festival** in 2025-2026.

370+
involved
in creative
programmes



Case Study

Malak's journey

Building Confidence



Malak joined Spotlight at age 10, initially introduced by a friend.

She was quiet, withdrawn, and hesitant to participate in group activities or socialise with peers. Her lack of confidence was evident, as she often struggled with her lyric writing and beat-making, expressing frustration over her perceived lack of progress.

When opportunities to showcase her work arose, Malak would shy away, citing shyness and feeling inadequate. Despite these challenges, she consistently attended sessions, receiving encouragement from staff, and slowly began to engage more through various programmes, including 1-to-1 mentoring, boxing, and music sessions, which helped her build resilience and self-confidence. Over time, and now aged 18, Malak's involvement grew significantly. During the summer, she actively participated in almost all creative programmes, performing at the Spotlight's 10th year anniversary

Festival, being in the Spotlight Documentary, and taking part in open mic sessions.

Malak's confidence has enormously increased as she has become more sociable which has improved her wellbeing. Malak smiles more now and appears to be healthier. Her lyric writing, production and freestyling has improved remarkably. Malak is actively working to improve more on her stage presence and is showing eagerness to do so.

She now confidently shares her work at the end of each session, often inspiring younger members. Malak's progress is marked by notable achievements, including co-producing beats with another young person, collaborating on the Spotlight 10-year anniversary festival, and successfully completing a Bronze Arts Award. She has achieved significant personal growth and new found leadership within Spotlight.



“ I think good youth work is listening to young people and listening to what they want in their services. ”

MALAK, 18 YEARS OLD



Get Active

Our sports programme saw over 800 young people participate in dynamic physical activities designed for fun, fitness, and skill-building.

New sessions in **Basketball**, **Dodgeball**, and **Calisthenics** proved especially popular. Adventurous outings included **Climbing**, **Foot Golf**, and **Go Ape**. **Fit Club workouts** meanwhile were further energised by a live DJ.

Limehouse Boxing Academy celebrated success at the **Horsham Show**, with young boxers bringing home winners' trophies.

We also grew our partnership with **Steel Warriors**, delivering specialised calisthenics and fitness coaching for NEET YPs.

We launched **Spotlight Skates**, giving young people brand-new skateboards from o3e charity, and inclusive sports sessions led by **Independent You** engaged 73 young people with SEND in multisport activities.

800+
involved in
dynamic sports

65

regular
attendees to
Girls' Club



142

appointments
made for
Healthspot

Health & Wellbeing

Youth health remains central to our mission. Throughout the year, Healthspot has recorded 142 appointments, with 45 young people served at Langdon Park alone.

Mental health initiatives deepened as 15 young people co-produced content and events with **Mental Health UK**. We selected our third cohort of 70 **Wellbeing Ambassadors**, who were trained and accredited. We received a total of 116 applicants from across 10 schools.

Campaigns like **"N2O: Know the Risks"** reached 30 participants, and **Fit Club** supported 27 youth in improving their physical and mental wellness. The **Girls' Club** grew to over 50 participants, with standout sessions tackling VAWG, boxing fitness, and a collaboration with the **Women's Inclusive Team**.



10

local schools
involved in health
ambassadors'
programme

70

new wellbeing
ambassadors
selected and
trained

Youth Voice, Volunteering & Employability

Through its innovative work with the Youth Empowerment Board (YEB), Spotlight has developed a regular cohort of young people as strong leaders and advocates for their peers for issues that matter to them.

In the year, **18 new members** joined the YEB, connecting and engaging directly with leaders and decision-makers. They participated in high-level meetings with LBTH councillors, the Canary Wharf Group, and professionals across sectors. They also contributed to the **Metropolitan Police Service's (Met) new Children's Strategy** and represented Spotlight at Queen Mary University and multiple borough-wide events. Projects included youth-led policy reviews, mental health research, and the evaluation of digital communications affecting young people.

Volunteering has also helped young people build career pathways and important community links.

Throughout 24-25, a total of 33 YPs took up volunteering roles, six of whom developed **social justice Zines** at an event in Cody Dock. **Twelve YPs** completed employability training including CV workshops, mock interviews, and application guidance.

Success stories included: **6 completed** the Well-grounded Barista Course (Level 2); **1 secured** a formal apprenticeship; **3 NEET YPs** referred for SIA licensing; one received full accreditation and **2 hired** as youth work coaches through Department for Work and Pension (DWP), one of whom has since secured permanent employment in youth work.



33

**YPs took up
volunteering
roles**

18

**new members
joined the Youth
Empowerment
Board (YEB)**

Detached Youth Offer & Targeted Interventions

In early 2024, our detached youth teams recorded 684 attendances from 214 young people, including 149 new contacts.

A total of **37 accredited outcomes** were achieved across SIA, Food Safety, and other qualifications. Interventions included trips to Go Ape and Foot Golf, and targeted **Nitrous Oxide workshops** in response to school referrals. At **Phoenix Heights**, 42 YPs participated in regular focused sessions, furthering trust and access to support.



I enjoy going to Eastside because I can chill out with my friends and have fun playing games. I also like the youth workers at Eastside, and I speak to them when I need advice and guidance and every time I attend. I also stay out of trouble as the youth workers remind me and my friends about being positive role models.

BAILEY ATKINS



214

**young people
attended
intervention
sessions**

Case Study

Kenzy Diab

Inspiring Others

During our street work on the Isle of Dogs, we met Kenzy and his friends, a group of young people often getting into trouble.

Kenzy was disengaged and at risk, avoiding local youth centres like Spotlight despite hearing about it from others. Our Detached Youth staff worked hard to build trust and introduce him to Spotlight.

At first, Kenzy was shy, reserved, and reluctant to get involved. Past experiences with youth workers made him cautious and hard to motivate. It took patience, consistency, and care from our team to earn his trust and help him feel more confident about trying new things. Slowly, Kenzy began opening up and saw how Spotlight could help him.

He now feels comfortable asking for help, speaks up more confidently, and has encouraged his friends to check out Spotlight and the Phoenix Heights Centre. Some of his peers have even earned certifications in “Food Safety & Hygiene” thanks to his influence.

Kenzy is now making better use of his time, stepping out of his comfort zone, and inspiring others to do the same.

“**Spotlight offers a safe and accessible environment for learning, growth and enjoyment.**”

KENZY DIAB, 13 YEARS OLD





Centre-specific Highlights

Across the Spotlight Centres, young people have been actively engaging in a vibrant mix of educational, cultural, and recreational programmes.

At our main building in Langdon Park, the Girls' Club has grown, now welcoming 65 regular attendees. A standout moment was when Mental Health UK filmed a participant's personal journey for the Your Resilience programme, while lunchtime drop-ins successfully encouraged more Langdon Park students to join evening activities. The centre has also set up an inclusive after-school club at which now supports 22 students every week.

Thirty-five (35) pupils from Langdon Park School gained valuable skills through a week-long work experience

placement, and 17 young people were supported through social prescribing referrals. The centre also hosted a memorable Spotlight Iftar, drawing 33 attendees for a shared meal and a live performance by Ayan Aden.

St Paul's Way has been buzzing with activity as well, with 12 young women completing their Level 3 Emergency First Aid qualification. Outdoor programmes and cultural workshops have thrived, and three young participants have been trained and onboarded as support volunteers, improving their engagement and leadership skills.

Over at the Linc Centre, young people participated in 154 sessions that included Laser Tag, Escape Rooms, and Go-Karting, offering a balance of fun and teamwork. Additionally, 33 students from Bow and Stepney completed meaningful work placements, while football sessions and food hygiene training proved to be particularly popular.

Eastside has become a creative hub, with 33 young musicians engaging in 65 studio sessions. Quiz nights and work experience opportunities have drawn consistent interest,

and the launch of the Spotlight Rep volunteering programme has opened new pathways for training in music and youth work.

We hosted multiple **Spotlight Iftars** and celebrated **South Asian Heritage Month** with young people, families, and staff across the centres.



Partner Engagement

Spotlight's prominence as a centre of excellence in youth work continues to rise, with staff getting regularly invited to speak at conferences, consultations and other high-level gatherings of important partners, stakeholders and policymakers.



Examples of these include being: a speaker alongside the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan where they highlighted the importance of long-term investment in youth work; a panellist and speaker at the National Housing Federation's Customer Experience and Resident Engagement Conference to showcase Spotlight's youth offer; and a guest speaker at the Tower Hamlets Voluntary and Community Sector Awards where they spoke about the instrumental role grassroots organisations/services play in Tower Hamlets. They also provided real life case studies and touched on their lived experiences.

Throughout 24-25, our staff have shared the Spotlight model both locally and nationally drawing interest from stakeholders as strategic as senior government officials from the Cabinet Office.

One of our staff, Nahim Ahmed, has also been awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the University of London in November 2024, for his exemplar work with young people through Spotlight. HRH Princess Anne presented the award in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen.



Community Development and Wellbeing



It's been another busy year for our staff, volunteers, residents and partners at our community hubs.

Feldy celebrated its 2nd year of opening, the Linc Centre intensified work with SEND families, SPW welcomed GLA's Business Growth team, Poplar Union hosted free community dinners, Teviot Centre doubled opening days of organic food co-op, and the Welcome Hub opened at George Green. These are just a few of the key highlights of the past year.

Supporting the Vulnerable

When it comes to supporting our residents and local people in Poplar and Bow, our community hubs get five stars.

Throughout 2024-2025, our centres have provided a safe and welcoming space for over 2,000 families, especially those worst-affected by the continuing cost-of-living crisis.

We partnered with First Love Foundation (FLF), Clean Slate, Bromley by Bow Centre (BbBC) and National Energy Action (NEA), to provide advice, information and support on issues such as debt/money management, fuel poverty, housing, welfare benefits, and healthcare. Financial well-being workshops, for example, covered topics like budgeting and avoiding scams.

2,000+
families made use
of our centres

Our Money Matters event attracted 100 residents who received support from 14 participating organisations.

Our staff worked with TH Community Cupboard to distribute essential care packages to over 60 families. Kitchen Social enabled us to provide 206 children with hot meals. We hosted the Felix Project Food Distribution and Warm Pack Projects that supported 600 residents through the winter. Corporate partners such as Poplar HARCA contractor K & T Heating made in-kind and financial contributions towards our Fuel and Food Poverty programmes.



100
residents received
support at our
Money Matters
event



For two years in a row, we had run our Food and Fuel project which enabled strong community engagement and progress across a variety of workshops and initiatives designed to support residents through the colder months. We have delivered the project jointly with our external partners such as Bromley by Bow Centre (BbBC) and Sunny Jar Eco.

The project supported 370 people. It has helped in various ways such as signposting residents to additional services or financial support schemes, giving away items to keep them physically warm and sharing efficiency advice for their energy usage at home or practical tips around batch-cooking.

Through the project, 235 warm packs were distributed to residents, providing much-needed warmth and support during winter. Batch cooking workshops attracted 210 individuals. These sessions promote low-waste, budget-friendly cooking techniques and encourage community-based learning. Energy saving workshops

attended by 56 people focused on sustainable living, energy awareness, and cost-saving strategies, equipping attendees with practical skills to manage rising living costs.

Breaking Bread group at Spotlight also participated in the project where 25 young people prepared and enjoyed a vegetarian meal together, fostering a sense of community and sharing through food.

Jointly with Independent You and Growing Hope, we supported SEND families through inclusive sports and free online training. Early intervention initiatives with Linc Preschool and Tower Hamlets Speech and Language Team include 'Early Talk Boost' training. We have launched weekly SEND yoga sessions and inclusive art workshops, and have adapted our community gardens, for accessibility. Our Change Makers project funded by Public Health is consulting on GP accessibility, while SEND youth sessions and parent-led groups continue to expand.



Sometimes I don't eat so my kids can and so that I can afford to heat my home. If heating my home means that I get into debt, then so be it. I won't have a cold house. Thankful to Poplar HARCA for supporting us through the Food and Fuel project.

LOCAL MUM



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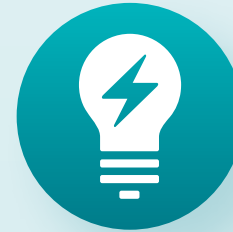
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I am a single mum with three kids so paying bills is always a struggle. I wasn't aware of what support is out there until I joined the Food and Fuel workshops. I have learned so much and appreciate all the support provided esp the warm packs.

LOCAL MUM





Case Study

The power of community hubs like Feldy



Brian Pells, a retiree who lives in the Isle of Dogs, found himself grappling with profound loneliness after the passing of his parents. The absence of a community centre on the island left him feeling isolated.

To combat this, he started taking long bus rides and stumbled upon Feldy Community Space during one of his journeys. Since then, he has actively participated in various activities, such as the Feldy Fellas, male exercise classes, Bingo and bike riding. In addition, he has utilised the Clean Slate service to effectively manage his finances.

Through his involvement, Brian has been warmly welcomed into other men's groups and has had the opportunity to join trips to different locations. When he's not immersed in these activities, he savours the welcoming atmosphere of Feldy while enjoying lunch and unwinding.



“

I feel very contented and always happy in the company of so many wonderful people here at Feldy. I'm much happier now.

BRIAN PELLIS

”



Feldy has also been a lifeline to another local person looking to overcome his loneliness. His name is David Holmes.

David visited the Feldy Centre in early June 2024 to explore what the Centre has to offer. He visited the Centre and explored the space and enquired about the upcoming activities. David has struggled with his mental health and immediately got interested in the scheduled activities. Since then, he has regularly taken part in physical activities held at the Centre such as: Men's Learn to Ride, a cycling training session, Feldy Fellas, a male support group and Men's Body conditioning classes. Dave is now an active member of our community centre and encourages other local men from the community to come and join these activities to improve their mental and physical health.

“

We all enjoyed playing table tennis last Monday, it made me feel really happy!

DAVID HOLMES

”



9,940
engaged in health
& wellbeing
sessions in
person

Health & Wellbeing Events

We offered opportunities for families to participate in group activities, workshops, and events, to connect with others, build relationships, reduce feelings of isolation and improve their wellbeing.

Our sports and fitness programmes for all ages and abilities were over-subscribed.

Our very successful women's boat club called Oar & Explore, held its first photography exhibition at Poplar Union that showcased their beginnings and rapid progress. Their regular paddle sports programme led to a Paddlefest in September 24 which attracted 140 participants. While awaiting the construction of the Teviot pontoon, the group has received funding for a boat storage from The Canoe Foundation. Another

grant from Active Thames will enable them to run club sessions to maintain their skills. The Club has welcomed a new cohort of 18 women in October 24. Most work full-time and wish to enjoy a six-week introductory paddle sports programme on the Limehouse Cut. Oar & Explore's profile has continued to rise and had garnered positive international press coverage, giving participants an exciting moment in the spotlight.



Case Study

Supporting Gina's mental health and family wellbeing



Gina, a single mother of two, first engaged with us at Linc through her son Romaine attending our pre-school.

At the time Gina was going through a lot and her mental health was suffering. She was reluctant to participate in any activities due to social anxiety and a lack of confidence.

Building trust over time, we encouraged Gina to attend our Wellness Workshops with Della. She responded positively to these sessions and developed a connection with Della - which motivated her to seek further mental health support. We assisted Gina in reaching out to her GP and connecting with a psychiatrist for professional sessions.

Since then, Gina has actively participated in various activities, including essential oil workshops, candle making, and meditation. She and her children now attend all of our family activities and community events. Gina also faced challenges getting a SEND diagnosis for her daughter. Through our SEND Parents Support Group, she received guidance on navigating the system, securing financial support and getting her daughter the accommodations she needed at school.





Over time we have seen Gina's growing in confidence and engage more socially within our community. As her daughter enters adolescence and her father battles Alzheimer's we will continue to try to support Gina's mental health and wellbeing. Our goal is to ensure she prioritises self-care, remains connected to mental health resources and continues exploring opportunities across our support network to maintain her happiness and health.



Linc is literally the first place I go if I'm having a bad day and need a friendly face or support with any problem I might have, they are like extended family at this point and will always try to help.

I have trouble trusting people and opening up but I can at Linc and I know if Becs or Mo suggest I try something or sign up for something - that I will genuinely like it and benefit from it. They really take the time to get to know their community and connect us with things/people based on our own personal situations and I appreciate that.

GINA





10,178

**engaged in health
& wellbeing events
held by PH-funded
partners**

Social bike rides continue to thrive and cycle loans are on the increase. Teviot Cycles got over 16 new women who learned to ride. The Linc Community Cycles launched new cycling programmes, including baby-on-board rides and a women's BMX course. Five families from Aberfeldy participated in the London Freeride held in the summer. Our partner, British Cycling trained two new female ride leaders. Funding from LBTH enabled us to deliver our summer cycling programme. In partnership with the Kent Cricket Association, we have also started to run an indoor women's cricket.

In line with the preparations for the Paris Olympics last year, we participated in the Path 2 Paris Challenge. We ran sports sessions in our community centres and outdoor at Mile End Park in partnership with the Urban Adventure Base. Three local schools have engaged in sessions for children. The Big Sports Day was held on the 29th of May where we offered families with young children, opportunities to take part across 10 sports. A Team GB Paralympian table tennis player graced the event to the delight of the excited children.



Support With Training & Employment

In partnership with our Employment & Training Hub, we offered access to computers, free wi-fi and basic digital skills training to enable residents to keep up with the demands of the online world.

Employment and other training sessions held at the Centres included LinkedIn workshops, job fairs, and a recruitment drive with Burger King. In October we hosted a Business Network event, led by Rhoda, a SPWC partner that brought local business owners together for networking and idea-sharing.

With Rhoda, an Employment Specialist from Tower Hamlets Centre for Mental Health (NHS, East London Foundation Trust), we held a job fair that attracted around 86 participants seeking job opportunities and CV support.

Community Events

- We celebrated Black History Month across all centres with speakers and storytelling.
- Our Day of Dementia event, in partnership with the Alzheimer's Society, attracted 200 attendees.
- SPWC hosted an International Women's Day event, providing a platform for women in business.
- The Freelancer's Circle launched monthly networking events for creatives.
- Community events included Eid parties at our various community hubs, Christmas Karaoke, Elders' Christmas Lunch, Chinese New Year celebrations and a Christmas Makers' Market with 500 attendees.



733
engagements
online

8,564
attended events
in person

43,772
views attracted
by our community
FB page



Case Study

Empowering Carol to build a business and stay connected

Carol first joined our Knitter Knatter group at Linc, where she shared her desire to sell her handmade items (like candles and keyrings) on eBay but she lacked the IT skills to do so.

We supported her in signing up for digital inclusion classes at The Hive, helping her to quickly gain the skills needed to start her online business.

As orders started coming in, Carol decided to expand. We helped her enrol in a Business and Enterprise course with the council, which she successfully completed.

This led to the launch of her business 'East London Wax Melt and Resin.' Carol now runs a weekly stall at Roman Road Market and participates in art and craft fairs across the Borough, including all Linc's bazaars.





In addition to her entrepreneurial journey, Carol stays engaged with our community by attending various social groups and events, including the Elders' Christmas Party each year. At our Winter Bazaar this year, Carol shared that as she gets older and faces health challenges, she is finding it difficult to manage the physical demands of market trading. She expressed interest in shifting to selling more online but recognised the need for a professional website and stronger social media presence to achieve this.

Going forward, we plan to assist Carol in building her online presence, ensuring she can continue her business journey while managing her health and maintaining connections with the community.



I have been going to coffee mornings and parties at all Poplar HARCA's community centres for years. There is always something fun to do or new things to try.

As family moves away and friends move or pass away, it is more important that community centres are there so we can still socialise and find the help we need.

CAROL





Volunteering

Our volunteering programme provided opportunities for residents, which have helped build their confidence, develop their skills, and contribute meaningfully to the local community.

597
volunteers
engaged

Young adults from Spotlight have used volunteering as a gateway into the world of work, gaining experience in a safe and supportive environment. Their involvement has also helped challenge negative perceptions, showing older residents that young people can be positive forces in their communities.

We have also explored ways to engage colleagues through the Poplar HARCA Staff Volunteering Offer. A great example includes two staff members leading a four-week knitting workshop at St Paul's Way Centre, reviving a once-popular activity attended by 6–10 women weekly. Staff have also assisted Housing Services with garden clearances for vulnerable residents, strengthening bonds between staff and the community.

Through networking, we introduced our Centres to **Grow London**, supported by the Mayor of London. Grow London helps start-ups and offers free small business support—an exciting

opportunity for our community.

In April 2024, we partnered with Hilton Hotel to host a Volunteer Social with high tea at their London Bridge branch, recognising our volunteers' contributions. Hilton also supports us through their Corporate Volunteering Scheme. We have always welcomed volunteers from our corporate partners who not only shared their precious time and skills but also provided in-kind and cash contributions to the volunteering events.

For **Volunteers Week** in June 2024, five volunteers took part in a professional photoshoot with their families, with their stories shared to celebrate their inspiring efforts.

Between September and October, we received 30 applications for roles such as Café Support, Nursery Volunteer, and Event Volunteers. Our partnership with the DWP at Feldy also brought ten potential nursery volunteers.





Greening Programme

Our green hubs had been hard at work promoting healthy eating habits and increasing access to good, affordable local food.

We have completed the repairs and restoration of 15 community gardens bringing the total vegetable beds to 73. As a result, 86 gardeners have been re-engaged and are enthusiastic about getting back to growing.

The Carbon Champions continue to play an active role by delivering community sessions that raise awareness of the benefits of gardening and green spaces for health and wellbeing. Our partner, Groundwork, has contributed by rebuilding raised beds at SPWC, donating plants, a composter, and a water butt, and collaborating with Global Eyes to host a community planting session.

Our Greening team has started a participatory research project with our sustainability partner Sunny Jar Eco. It aims to gather supporting data from

gardeners in our community growing spaces, to enable us to firm up our Good Food Access Strategy. We have also started collaborating with the scheme Co-operation Town to explore how we can encourage local people to run their own food co-ops using their model. Our work on this is still evolving so more to come in 25-26.

One of our gardens has hosted a fruit tree pruning workshop with a local gardener as well as a corporate volunteering event with a PH contractor, Dunhams. The programme team remains actively involved in broader community and sector networks, including Food Ladders Tower Hamlets, the Social Farms & Gardens and the LBTH Food Partnership led by the Women's Environmental Network.

Case Study

Catherine finds her happy place

When Catherine first reached out to us, she was feeling deeply isolated. Like many others, she longed for connection—a place to belong, to share, and to feel valued.

Knitting had always been a quiet passion of hers, but it had remained a solitary hobby. What she truly wanted was to connect with others who shared her interests and to contribute something meaningful to her community.

With our support, Catherine's journey began to change. We listened to her aspirations and worked closely with her to transform her love for knitting into something more—a space where creativity and companionship could flourish. We provided the resources, encouragement, and guidance she needed, helping her take the first steps toward forming her own knitting club.

The idea quickly became a reality. Catherine launched her club, welcoming a small group of women to weekly sessions filled with warmth,

laughter, and the rhythmic sound of knitting needles. Week by week, the group grew—not just in numbers, but in spirit. The club became more than just a place to knit; it was a safe, welcoming environment where members found friendship, shared stories, and supported each other.

For Catherine, the experience was transformative. Her confidence blossomed, her social circle expanded, and she no longer felt alone. She had not only built a community for herself but had created one for others who, like her, were looking for connection.



“The Centre has made this wonderful thing happen. Just goes to show that with the right support, caring communities can thrive. Thank you!”

CATHERINE

Resident Empowerment and Support Team (REST)

Residents Lead the Way

The Resident Empowerment and Support Team (REST) plays a vital role in ensuring that every resident affected by Poplar HARCA's planned redevelopment is fully informed and supported throughout the process.

REST ensures residents understand both the short- and long-term impacts of redevelopment and, crucially, guarantees they have a meaningful voice in shaping the Masterplans for their estates.



REST has been successful in maintaining resident enthusiasm and engagement in the transformation of their neighbourhoods. We create opportunities for neighbourly interaction by organising community events such as Quiz Nights and social gatherings that foster local connection and unity.

On the Teviot estate, REST collaborates with community partners including Leaders in Community, Teviot Action Group, Fit and Feisty, Teviot Sisters, and Manorfield Primary School to deliver the annual Teviot Festival. This vibrant, well-loved event draws over 500 attendees each year and is funded by the Teviot Estate LPP (Hill Ltd and Poplar HARCA) through the Community Chest Fund.

In Aberfeldy, our redevelopment partners EcoWorld and Willmott Dixon support local projects and events through Feldy, the new state-of-the-art community centre. Last year, REST co-organised a successful summer programme and the much-anticipated Elders' Christmas Lunch, which welcomed 100 older residents for a festive celebration.

REST continues to ensure that community voices are heard, and that regeneration brings people together through inclusive engagement and collaborative placemaking.

500+
Teviot residents
attended the
Summer Teviot
Festival



441

resident surveys
focused on the
Teviot regeneration
planning
submission



78

recommendations of
YEB/RSG Joint Panel
incorporated into the
final submission to
LBTH



Teviot Regeneration

Between July and September 2024, REST conducted a community outreach and completed 441 resident surveys focused on the Teviot regeneration planning submission.

It aimed to ensure residents were well informed and their questions and concerns identified and addressed. We wanted to understand the elements of regeneration that they support or look forward to and find out any community risks associated with the process. We successfully contacted 100% of eligible regeneration tenants, ensuring inclusive engagement across the estate.

Through this exercise, we were able to directly engage and inform 441 residents about the current regeneration plans. In the process, we received over 40 repair requests and more than 50 enquiries regarding decanting and future housing options, all of which were promptly addressed. To support ongoing dialogue, we shared the Insights that we have gathered with the Teviot Resident

Steering Group (RSG) in October 2024. The outreach also informed the creation of a comprehensive FAQ document, addressing common themes and concerns raised during the survey and were distributed in March 2025. In addition, the findings helped identify potential risks and areas requiring additional support as regeneration progresses.

As part of the co-design process for the Teviot Estate regeneration, the Resident Steering Group (RSG) and the Youth Empowerment Board (YEB) held a panel discussion that resulted in a total of 78 recommendations being incorporated into the final submission to LBTH (London Borough of Tower Hamlets) in May 2024. The proposals reflect the priorities and aspirations of the Teviot residents and the young people that YEB represents.

Aberfeldy Regeneration

Over at the Aberfeldy estate, REST conducted 445 surveys from September to December 2024, to engage and update residents on the ongoing regeneration process.

The engagement focused on providing clear information about the regeneration, addressing any resident questions or concerns, gathering feedback on the use and perception of Aberfeldy Square, and identifying any community risks related to the changes. A total of 455 residents were informed and engaged.

This resulted in the completion of over 60 household MOTs, more than 40 repairs reported and resolved, and upwards of 30 decant and

housing-related enquiries addressed. Feedback from the outreach has been compiled into a report, which has been shared with the LLP and included in the succeeding edition of the Aberfeldy Newsletter. A letter was also sent to tenants addressing key concerns raised during the outreach. The survey results provided a clearer understanding of the community's views on Aberfeldy Square and helped highlight both the perceived benefits and potential risks of the regeneration.



445
surveys conducted
at the Aberfeldy
estate



60
household MOTs
completed due
to Aberfeldy
survey

40
repairs reported
and resolved
due to survey

Thanks!



We wish to thank all our funders and donors for their continued invaluable support.



- Action Funder
- Active Communities Network
- Arc'teryx Equipment
- Barts Health NHS Trust
- Big Lottery Fund (Reaching Communities)
- British Canoeing
- Bikeworks
- Clarion Housing
- Common Ground Co
- East End Community Foundation
- East London Foundation NHS Trust
- European Social Fund
- The Greater London Authority

- Mammoth Screen Limited
- GP Care Group CIC
- Groundwork
- London Borough of Tower Hamlets
- London Marathon Fund
- London Sport
- London VRU
- Mayor's Fund for London
- Propel-Active
- AEG Present
- Morgan Stanley
- Mount Anvil
- National Lottery
- Need 2 Succeed

- East London Foundation NHS Trust
- Paddle UK
- Port of London Authority
- Queen Mary University of London
- Rangoonwala Foundation
- Refugio Project
- The Royal London Hospital
- South Gloucestershire College
- Sureserve Foundation
- Sustrans
- Sport England
- TED LLP – Community Chest Fund
- University of East London

