



Hilldrop Area Community Association



Annual Report 2020-21



Hilldrop Area Community Association



About us

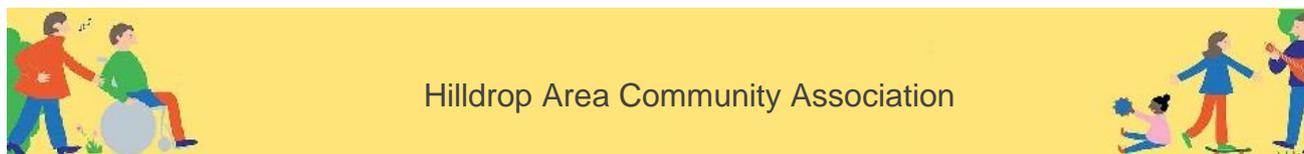
Hilldrop Area Community Association (HACA) is a registered charity (number 1164597) that aims to promote opportunities, services and activities that increase the social and economic wellbeing of our diverse community, supporting social cohesion and benefitting all.

Located in the St George's Ward of Islington and based at Hilldrop Community Centre, we are an established multi-purpose community venue, offering a wide programme of activities and services that respond to local interests and needs. We are committed to involving the community in the shaping of our programme, and work in partnership with a vibrant network of local groups, providers, and statutory services to meet needs.

Our Association was first formed in 1986 in the wake of rising community turmoil. Local tenants of the surrounding Hilldrop Housing Estate brought together different groups and individuals who took over the management of an estate building that became Hilldrop Community Centre. The first Head of Centre was Bob Drinkwater, whose dedication and commitment saw him hold the post until March 2016 - an amazing 30 years. The strong community base on which we were founded has continued to this day, with staff and trustees all local to the area.

We are committed to:

1. Providing strategic leadership within the local community.
2. Coordinating a coherent and engaging neighbourhood-based offer of services and activities for local residents.
3. Ensuring that local community facilities and assets are utilised to their full potential.
4. Attracting external funding to facilitate the delivery of activities and services specific the local community's needs.



A message from our Head of Centre

In March 2020 everything changed. During that month, our busy centre gradually saw all its services and activities withdraw and grow quiet. We began to consider the impact a ‘lock-down’ would have on our residents, families, and the wider community who could no longer come to us, or to each other, for support. As staff and volunteers went home, we had serious financial concerns for the coming months, unsure of how we could come through it.

But we were made for this. The links to our community, our networks, and the vibrant social fabric of this neighbourhood, enabled us to identify needs and seize opportunities to provide practical support, continuing to play a part in the lives of those who were isolated, concerned, and vulnerable.

Within 3 weeks we’d opened our **Food Hub** to supply emergency parcels of food and essential items, working with community partners to build a strong informed service that provided not just meals and bread, but social support and wellbeing. Members of **St George’s Mutual Aid** group were a driving force in enabling us to reach more people and the kindness, care and energy of those individuals have been an inspiration over the past year.

As services for children were gradually reintroduced, our Play Project staff met the challenge of delivering reduced capacity holiday and after-school activities under difficult COVID restrictions and were able to provide a vital quality service to those families most in need, maintaining a safe, caring, and fun environment for children, as reported in our recent Ofsted Inspection.

Our strength is in our people: staff, trustees, volunteers, donors, residents, and service users. All have played an essential part in the successes and achievements of the centre over the past year, keeping us hopeful and inspired for the future.

Elaine Maffrett – Head of Centre



A message from our Chair of Trustees

2020-21 was challenging to say the least, but I'm happy to be able to say that Hilldrop Area Community Association has come through the COVID crisis in good shape financially and organisationally, and that we look set to continue to make progress in getting back to some sort of 'normal', whilst being in a good position to meet further challenges in these uncertain times.

This is due overwhelmingly to the outstanding work of our staff and volunteers, in particular our Head of Centre Elaine Maffrett, our Administrator Natasha Harper, our Play Project Manager Iola Isaac and Deputy Manager Jahanara Rahman.

Recently HACA received an 'Outstanding' **Ofsted** report, and this was a tribute to the hard work and skill of our Play Workers. Our own volunteers, working alongside local mutual aid volunteers, played an essential role in delivering food relief and support during the worst of the COVID pandemic. Thanks to them the Food Hub has proved a great success, which we intend to develop further.

I would like to thank all those groups and individuals who've continued to use and support the community centre, especially our long-term resident guests the **Kingsley Organisation**. I would also like to thank Islington Council for their unwavering support, both organisational and financial, over the past 18 months. We simply couldn't do what we do without them.

Finally, I'd like to thank our Trustees for their dedication and expertise, in particular our Treasurer Anjit Chaudhuri, supported by our excellent Bookkeeper Anita Nightingale, for doing so much to keep HACA on a firm financial footing. Thanks must also go to our Secretary Sarah Martin and Board Member Geraldine Brennan for their dedicated work with the Food Hub service, and again to Sarah and our gardening volunteers for their hard work maintaining and cultivating the centre's outside spaces.

With the course of the COVID pandemic still uncertain we're not yet in the clear but I'm confident that, going forward, HACA has the strength and the resources to weather the storm and to emerge stronger than ever.

Stephen Moorby – Chair of Trustees



Our Community Space

In the early days of the pandemic it was strange to see our centre, usually so full of life and busy with activity, suddenly become quiet and empty. Regular centre users such as the Kingsley Organisation, North London Cares, our Bengali women's group, Mountain of Fire Ministries, Alcoholics Anonymous, Sisters Uncut and the Olokoro community group could no longer meet at the centre, while activities like sewing and crafting, ukulele practice, pilates, capoeira and other exercise classes had to cease.

One-off events and parties booked in our large and small halls had to be cancelled. We missed hosting partner organisations, local charities, resident's associations, and other ad-hoc users of the centre. With the additional suspension of our children's activities, there was a moment when it felt like the beating heart of the centre had gone silent.

Storage solutions and improvements

What we did have was plenty of space to utilise, which we began adapting to store and process donated food and essential items to provide to the community from outside the centre.

The centre became a base for **St George's Mutual Aid** group and a collection point for cooked meals provided by organisations like **Food For All HQ** and delivered by volunteers to residents who were either self-isolating or unable to get to the centre.

As we were fortunate enough to have a fully fitted kitchen, our **Food Hub** workers were able to continue making free healthy hot lunches once a week by switching the sit-down lunch club to a takeaway service.



Always looking ahead, while the building was effectively closed to the public an opportunity arose for us to make some small improvements and increase accessibility. This included installing a new automatic front door and larger accessible toilet in the lobby.



Christmas Appeal

As 2020 drew on we started planning our **Christmas Appeal**. We knew there would be many individuals and families struggling to make ends meet over winter, so we set about making up Christmas parcels with food and essential items, gifts and a few luxuries for our service users and toys, games, and books for children. The donations we received during this time were incredible and we'd like to thank everyone who contributed. Our main hall briefly became a hive of (socially distanced) activity again as our volunteer elves wrapped gifts and made up parcels!



Moving forward

We held our **Annual General Meeting** in December, our first one using Zoom, and we were pleased to have a number of local residents and community partners in attendance, while we also produced a one-off online Christmas wreath making workshop with Islington's **Adult & Community Learning** team.



In January 2021 we were allowed to bring one of the centre's most important services back: the **Kingsley Organisation's** disability support group. Risk-assessed with new testing and hygiene measures in place, it was a delight to have them back and hear chat and laughter coming from the small hall again!

Other services and activities would not be able to return until after the official end of restrictions in June 2021, and still each would need to be risk-assessed and adopt new hygiene measures and limits on the number of participants. Since that time, we have welcomed the return of **Stay & Play**, **Little Kickers**, the **Humpty Dumpy Singalong**, **North London Cares**, and our **Ukulele** players.



We've since been able to begin taking some small-scale party bookings again and the centre remained ever popular with families wishing to get together in a way they were unable to the previous year. Both halls and the garden provide ideal space for children to play in all weathers, while ease of access, parking and kitchen facilities make it easy to get set up and manage activities.

As things stand with the pandemic, we know we're by no means 'out of the woods' yet and we're grateful to all our centre users for their patience in observing our rules and restrictions over the past year and a half as we've tried to navigate the changing times.

The Food Hub

The Food Hub became the backbone of our delivery during the pandemic.

Implementing 'Covid Secure' measures we put our resources into providing weekly food and essential item parcels for families and individuals in the St Georges Ward.

This became a gateway to safely meeting our members and the wider community, providing them with advice and signposting for any further needs, whilst also taking some of the stress away through the practical means of providing food.

As the project developed it was important to us that the provision of surplus food did not stigmatise our service users. Our offer is about reducing food waste and raising awareness of the environmental impacts of food production and disposal and promoting healthy eating.

165 households and over 300 people, of which a third were children and young people, benefitted from this service over the year. We know that receiving important practical support and having a level of social contact can have a positive benefit on people in our community going through difficult times.



Good food is vital for wellbeing and so is creative activity, especially when families are locked down together, so we also distributed a number learning resources for families with children. We were able to give out amazing activity packs donated by **Maths on Toast**, **The Culture Mile**, the **Barbican**, **Museum of London**, and the **British Museum**. **Bright Start** and **All Change Arts** also provided brilliant cards, poetry, and activity ideas.



We are sincerely grateful to the **City Bridge Trust** for reaching out to us early in the pandemic with a Covid Response Wave 2 grant, enabling us to safely deliver the service and provide for essential items in hygiene and health for our members. This was followed by a successful grant from the **National Lottery Community Fund** which continued to support the Food Hub and mitigated losses to our core budget, since we were no longer receiving income from hall hires and centre users. In July 2020, a huge lorry pulled up in front of the centre with several towering pallets containing over 2K worth of non-perishables for us to distribute, made possible by **The Gunners Fund**.

We owe many thanks to the **Octopus Community Network** who have supported us with strategic development of the Food Hub. The network and our fellow community centres have been there for us throughout, all contributing to a strong grass roots approach to utilising food waste and tackling food inequality.

Elaine Maffrett & Robin Campbell, Food Hub Co-ordinators



The Play Project

Having previously had a successful year in which our team grew, activities expanded and registrations for both the **After School Club** and **Holiday Playscheme** increased, the lockdown in March 2020 meant an abrupt suspension of services and we were mindful of the impact this was likely to have on individual children and their families.

While restrictions prevented us from running our Easter Holiday Playscheme or summer term After School Club, we were keen to re-introduce a service in time for the summer holidays, knowing that this was likely to be a particularly difficult time for parents of children with special educational needs, and key workers struggling to find childcare.

With guidance from Islington Council, we put together a limited-capacity Summer Holiday Playscheme for those families in most need. A 'bubble' system and new social distancing and hygiene measures were put in place and children were given their own writing and crafting materials, avoiding shared toys & equipment. There was more emphasis on individual creativity and outdoor activity. We included fun ways to teach about germs and introduced activities to help children make sense of the unusual circumstances presented by the pandemic and address their anxieties in a safe and supported environment.

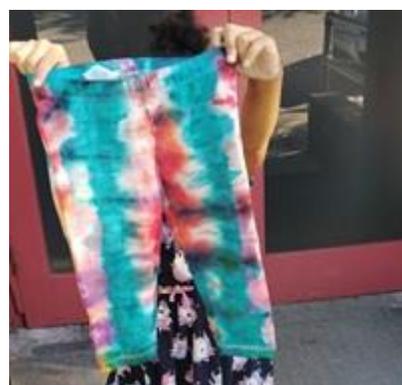


In the autumn we were able to run a limited capacity After School Club, again prioritising families most in need. Some of our children found it difficult being separated into 'bubbles' as they wanted to be near the friends they'd made. We made sure we provided space for the children to talk about any worries they had, and staff were equipped to be pro-active in picking up any signs of anxiety or behavioural changes in the children and addressing them appropriately and sensitively.



During this time the COVID infection rate was very high both nationally and locally. Our staff had a strict testing regime and parents were required to ensure regular tests for their families. On occasion we had to temporarily close the service due to staff needing to self-isolate. In November, after a third case, it was decided to close the service until 2021, hoping that in the interval there would be a reduction in positive cases locally.

We kept in touch with our families however, and issued books, games, toys and activity resources to use at home. We returned for the spring term in 2021, and by March we were able to begin planning our summer activities in accordance with the Government's Road Map. We were able to increase capacity for the late summer term and holidays, and bring in more varied activities, including a trip to the theatre and visits from **Freightliners Farm** and the **Flying Seagulls Circus**, whilst keeping sensible safety & hygiene precautions in place.



I'm incredibly proud of how our staff team were able to adapt with the changing circumstances in what was an unprecedented year. I'd like to thank our children for their understanding and positivity, despite the difficulties, and our parents and families for their patience and support throughout.

Under-Fives Activities

Sadly, our Stay & Play sessions were suspended during 2020-21 due to the high risk factor and lack of capacity to manage activities safely. Little Kickers and the Humpty Dumpty Singalong began making their sessions available online. We were able to signpost people to these and other online resources offered by Islington's Family Information Service, the Parent House, Maths on Toast and many other organisations.

Iola Isaac – Play Project Manager



The Artistic Takeover

One of our own projects that made the successful transition online was our **Artistic Takeover**, an ongoing creative arts project for young people aged between 12 and 17 delivered by **Cut Moose**. Funded by Islington Council in partnership with the **Cripplegate Foundation**, workshops that would have been delivered at the centre were instead conducted online via multiple platforms during the 2020 summer term.



The workshops are collaborative and build on ideas and concepts brought by the participants. Different creative mediums are explored including visual arts, model making, storytelling and performing.

The Hilldrop Peace Garden

Our community garden & raised beds are the combined work of many volunteers who've given their time over the years. Our current volunteers **Thomas** and **Alfred**, along with **Trustee Sarah Martin**, have been regularly tending to our outside spaces on Thursday afternoons, creating a peaceful oasis in a densely urban area.

The project had to be put on hold during the first lockdown, but as a small socially distanced group working outside and using individual tools, they were soon able to return, taking advantage of the quieter periods offered while the centre was closed.



As always, we're grateful to the **Octopus Community Network** and gardening guru **Frannie Smith**, for the ongoing support and guidance. We also appreciate the bulbs, plants and flowers brought to the centre by our many kind donors, and the family grow boxes donated by **Overgrow East** as part of the **Lockdown Growers** project.



Here, Sarah talks us through some of the work undertaken during 2020-21:

'We planted lots of spring bulbs in the front garden, creating a cheerful display of daffodils, crocuses and jonquils, and brought the rose bush back to life producing a flush of unusual salmon roses.'

Meanwhile we planted herbs and tomatoes in the raised beds. The smaller bed was planted by children from the Play Project producing chives, rocket, and parsley, all of which could be picked and used by our Food Hub cooks.

The back garden allows for a greater diversity of plants and trees and is designed to attract a variety of wildlife. We've been tending to the pond area which provides a home for water creatures and a source of drinking water for birds and small mammals. As the garden is frequently used by children from the Play Project there are signs and pointers on display that teach them about nature and ecology.

We put in more natural woodland plants in our 'wooded' area at the back of the garden and piled up the branches from tree pruning to make a woody haven for wildlife and insects. We also spruced up the 'secret' garden which contains a venerated walnut tree, accompanied by two younger cherry trees, creating a peaceful enclosed space.

Along our fences we kept our rosemary, sage and jasmine plants growing, while our apple and pear trees were pruned and fed. Last year yielded a fine crop of apples and we made a big crumble for our disability support group. This year we'll have enough to make them for the Food Hub and Play Project too!

Outside in Community Lane are the six raised beds, some of which were planted by local growers and others by children from the Play Project. Due to their exposed location, they can be hard to maintain, but we did can have a series of flowering plants and one bed was used to grow chard and spinach supplied by Tufnell Park Nursery.

None of the work would be possible without our superb volunteers. We keep a diary record of the garden to log our progress and fill it with notes, photos, cuttings and some beautiful drawings by our volunteer Thomas.'

Sarah Martin, Trustee & Gardening Volunteer



FINANCE

An overview from our Treasurer:

Like many organisations, three months after the start of the pandemic, our financial situation was very worrying. But by the end of the financial year 2020-21, our accounts were showing a £16k improvement in our position over the period, which we managed to achieve while ensuring all staff were retained and paid throughout.

On top of this and with help from key funding initiatives and generous donations from our partners and the community, we were able to quickly set up and run the Food Hub service and keep it in operation for the majority of the year.

We have many people and organisations to thank for their support, not least Islington Council, who were able to continue providing funding via scheduled grants, even when services could not be run, and provide ring fenced funding from discretionary pots.

We were also able to secure emergency funding from the National Lottery and the City Bridge Trust to help us develop the Food Hub. The Government's Job Retention (aka Furlough) scheme was also clearly crucial.

Since much of the year's funding was on a one-off basis it is important that in 2021-22 our revenue streams return to near normal. At the mid-year mark the signs are good, with the After School Club and Holiday Playscheme back in operation and the income generated starting to return to pre-pandemic levels. Being able to provide space for private hire once more has also provided a significant boost.

Anjit Chaudhuri - Treasurer



FINANCE

Basis of Independent Examiner's Report

I carried out an examination in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charities Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. The examination also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from the Managers and Trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken provided as much evidence as would be required in an audit and, consequently an opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a "true and fair view", and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent Examiner's Statement

In connection with my examination, despite the negative impact of the covid-19 pandemic on the general UK economy, no matters have come to my attention that are materially significant

In my opinion the financial statements

(1) give a true and fair view of the state of the charity's affairs as at 31 March 2021 and its profit [loss] for the year then ended have been properly prepared in accordance with SORP FRS 102 as adopted by the Charities Commission and

Section 130 of the Charities Act 2011 and

(2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Andrews Tete-Donkor, MBA, ACIE

Glandy & Co (Accountants), 43 ECKINGTON HOUSE LONDON. N15 6SH

4th August 2021

	Unrestricted General Fund	Cyclical Maintenance Fund	Restricted Fund	Total 2021	Total 2020
	£	£	£	£	£
INCOME					
<i>Incoming resources from generated funds</i>					
Grants and other donations	67917		42859	110776	94720
Other income	11191		63136	74327	96803
<i>Incoming resources from charitable activities</i>					
Income from services provided				0	0
	79108		105995	185103	191524
EXPENDITURE					
<i>Cost of generating funds</i>					
Fundraising and project development					
<i>Charitable activities</i>	66482		102680	169162	177116
	66482		102680	169162	177116
Net Income/ (Expenditure)	12626		3315	15941	14408
Transfer between funds					
Other Recognised Gains/ (Losses)					
Realised gain on investment					
Net Movement in Funds	12626		3315	15941	14408
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS					
Balance Brought Forward 31Mar 2020	41007		0	41007	26599
Balance Carried Forward 1st April 2021	53633		3315	56948	41007



We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Hilldrop Staff, Volunteers and Trustees who have all contributed to developing the centre and organisation, enabling it to flourish.

Staff

Elaine Maffrett – Head of Centre

Robin Campbell – Food Hub
Coordinator

Natasha Harper – Centre Administrator

Anita Nightingale – Bookkeeper

Rani Bibi – Stay & Play Co-ordinator

Arifa Choudhury – Under Fives Worker

Nasrina Ahad – Under Fives Worker

Iola Isaac – Play Project Manager

Jahanara Rahman – Deputy Play
Manager

Mick Carroll – Play Worker

Amy Marciano – Play Worker

Emilio Reyes – Play Worker

Lance Symister – Play Worker

Giorgi Gogishvili – Centre Warden

Sandra Florez – Centre Cleaner

Volunteers

Edith Reyes

Thomas Coyle

Matteo Cross

Alfred Maher

James Cross

Ambrin Shafiq

Trustees

Stephen Moorby (Chair)

Anjit Chaudhuri (Treasurer)

Sarah Martin (Secretary)

Marissa Campbell

Victor Olayebo

Brian Bench

Kunbi Jones

Alem Afework (to Dec 2020)

Geraldine Brennan (from Dec 2020)

Charlene Braithwaite (from Dec 2020)

Cllr Satnam Gill (Co-opted)

Cllr Tricia Clarke (Co-opted)



And finally, we'd like to thank the many individuals and organisations that gave their time and donations to help the community and spread some kindness during such difficult times. It is thanks to the generosity and dedication of our donors, partners, funders, local businesses and other supporters that we've been able to help so many people. Thank you for making St George's Ward a community to be proud of!



Special thanks also to:

Islington's VCS Team, Islington's Local Initiative Fund, Islington Homes and Communities Team, St George's Mutual Aid, Vicky Richards, Bob Dowd, Jane Andrews, Claire Wynnck, Petronella Carter, Rebecca Taylor, Caroline Jackson, John & Gillian Yudkin, Claudia Cotton, Sarah Tuck, Sylvia Roberge, Emma O'Brien, Sid Mulchandani, Eva Magiera, Zoe Korsner, Katherine Roberts, Lauren Kemble, Julia Bard, Kelly Blackshaw, Leonie Abrahamson, Glega Miniadis, Sue Berger, Roger Smith, Marco Cedaro, Sierra Williams, Elizabeth Philips and countless other individuals who supported & contributed to our Food Hub and Christmas Appeal.



Hilldrop Area Community Association

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Registered Charity number 1164597

Ofsted setting number 2503947

