

# ANNUAL REPORT 2019 – 2020

## Community Education Widening Participation



Front Cover:

*Community Partnerships: Looking East: Middle East*  
4<sup>th</sup> October – 21<sup>st</sup> October 2019, Great Court, British Museum

# **ANNUAL REPORT 2019 - 2020**

The Mary Ward Centre, 42 Queen Square, London WC1N 3AQ  
[www.marywardcentre.ac.uk](http://www.marywardcentre.ac.uk)

## **CONTENTS**

1. INTRODUCTION
2. PARTNERS
3. THE PROGRAMME
4. PARTNER EVALUATIONS & REPORTS
5. THE LEARNERS
6. LEARNER RECRUITMENT & RETENTION
7. LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT & PROGRESSION
8. LEARNER EVALUATIONS
9. IMPACT OF LEARNING IN THE COMMUNITY
10. CONCLUSIONS

## **APPENDICES**

1. LOOKING EAST: MIDDLE EAST
2. DEVELOPING WORK IN EAST LONDON



## INTRODUCTION:

2019/20 was a year of many unexpected changes, a year where we, along with the rest of the population, faced a barrage of challenges and difficulties with Covid-19. However, it was also a year of change and a year of reflection and finding new ways to reach our communities and deliver an outreach programme.

The Community Outreach team worked directly with 42 groups and organisations in Camden, Islington, Tower Hamlets, Southwark, Hackney and Newham. Of these a third of our partners were based in East London. In 19/20 a total of 144 courses were offered to engage a total of 787 students taking 1535 enrolments. Partnerships with these organisations are used to great effect to meet students' needs and raise achievement. Community arts projects are used innovatively to bring together community groups. However, we have seen a growing demand for other classes which enhance health and wellbeing, for example, singing (choirs), dancing (various genres) and exercise. The outreach team engages a wide variety of students ranging from those experiencing mental health difficulties, homelessness and addiction problems to those who have experienced social and cultural barriers to learning. We continued a successful project with Mind in Camden supporting their Healthy Minds Programme through Arts, Health and Wellbeing courses. See the Community Education Widening Participation Annual Report 2019/20.

The pandemic completely altered the summer term – our Partners had to prioritise food and housing; staff were furloughed including our community outreach manager; the small amount of direct delivery we could offer was online; however, for all the challenges faced, community outreach continued to keep in touch with Partners and students and run a good quality service. We ran visual arts and singing courses on Zoom and hand delivered art materials to students across Newham in a Covid-safe way so that they could continue their on line learning. We also gave 1:1 personalised technology support to approximately 20 students in order to help them use their devices and access Zoom. For those unable to take part in online activity, we engaged our communities by sending out warm up videos, vocal breathing exercises and quizzes, as well as IT activities and keep fit booklets. Tutors who were not furloughed also kept in touch with their students to make sure they were well and to share news.

In many ways, although the service was much reduced it became more personalised. This in itself has given us food for thought. Year on year we report on the potential impact to service quality and the growth of outreach where we enrol more students, increase our partnership portfolio and deliver additional courses. The impact of the pandemic has forced us to take a step back and slow down. It has helped us to reconsider the importance of the quality of our provision in terms of a personalise approach.

Despite setbacks it has been, once again, a good year.

The highlights at the start of the year have been inspired by a range of visual and performing arts with students being offered amazing opportunities to work towards large public events such as a large scale community art installation at the British Museum called ***Looking east: Middle East*** which explored themes from the exhibition ***Inspired by the East: how the Islamic world influenced Western art***. Our Opening Doors London choir made their biggest public performance yet at Queen Elizabeth Hall, Southbank Centre ***Legends and Legacies, Yule Tide Special*** at an evening of music,

drag and poetry from London's older LGBTQ+ community run by Opening Doors London and the Southbank Centre.

Other showcasing included the work of our community choirs and dance groups at a number of seasonal events during the first term. The choirs performed at St Mary's Church Islington with the Stuart Lowe Trust, St Anne's Church Soho, and Bromley by Bow Centre amongst other places. The dance groups have performed at New Diorama Theatre, Castlehaven Community Association and the Indian YMCA.

This year we have continued working on the Healthy Minds programme. This is a Mind in Camden Project aimed at supporting adults who may be struggling with their mental health, feeling isolated or disconnected with their community, or would like some additional support in finding out what their local area has to offer them. We have partnered with Voluntary Action Camden in delivering short courses across the Borough. When this came to an end Mind in Camden invited us to deliver the programme independently with them.

During lockdown our community outreach found other ways to showcase our students' achievements.

### Newham Unlocked Community Broadcasts

Our newly created Newham group, whilst meeting at Birkbeck University, produced a series of Papier Mache bowls inspired by living in Newham. On completion of their work we produced a video where students reflected on the positive aspect of coming together each week and talking about their individual bowls and the inspiration behind them.

Community members were invited through an open call to submit their own creative content and showcase their talent upon this communal digital stage.

The video was submitted to Newham Unlocked Community Broadcasts was chosen for the last weekly broadcast. It was also promoted on the Mary Ward Centre's own website and social media. It shone a light on the creative talents of the borough sharing what they have been doing creatively during lockdown and how it has helped them.

<https://www.newhamunlockedbroadcasts.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/MaryWardCentre/videos/230288358355635/>



## PARTNERS:

The outreach work of Mary Ward Centre would not be the success that it is without our partners who, provide space, recruit students, provide input on course design, look after the tutors and help us to evaluate our delivery. It is mutually beneficial exchange of business.

Over 2019/20 we worked with 42 groups and organisations across London. Ordinarily we would meet with every single group and organization at the end of the academic year and gather their comments and feedback. However, this being a very different year meant that many of our Partners were incredibly busy with smaller teams as staff had been furloughed and juggling to manage crisis situations of getting emergency food to people and ensuring people were safe and coping making thousands of weekly phone calls to do this.

In preparation for our plans to move to Stratford we worked in partnership with a number of groups and organizations in East London, including Marner Children's Centre (Tower Hamlets), Stratford Library, St Hilda's East Shadwell, Bromley by Bow Centre, Crisis, Limehouse Project, Emmott Close Community Centre, Bridges Homeless Support, Pritchard's Road Day Centre, Lowcab TRA and Wapping Bigland's Children's Centre. In addition we have set up links and liaised with other groups, such as St Mungoes Hackney, Stepney City Farm, Ocean Regeneration and Care in Mind paving the way for developing other new partnerships.

After more than 4 years working with Ageing Better Camden on a Digital Inclusion programme, our contract came to an end in October 2019. Whilst we will miss working with our Ageing Better partner, the experience we have built up connecting older people in Camden, can now be applied to all age groups and across our London partnerships. This experience came into its own during lockdown when we were able to support communities in Newham as well as Camden.

We continue to have varied partnerships with community centres, drop-in and day care centres, hostels, health projects, housing associations and supported housing projects, advice and resource centres, museums and galleries. Our programme continues to include new and growing work particularly in East London. We have continued to work closely with organisations that support trafficked women, homeless communities and people with early dementia and complex health needs. Our work with people over 60 remains predominant which is, in part, attributed to the last piece of work with Ageing Better Camden project. In addition more than half the partners we work with particularly in the London Borough of Camden, work with older communities.

	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
<b>Partners</b>	42	55	45
<b>Courses (and tasters)</b>	144	199	216

In addition to working with new and existing partners, the outreach team spends time following up links and possible partnerships with other groups and organisations with whom we could potentially work to widen participation in adult education. This is an on-going priority whilst we source new learners to engage in the digital inclusion project for

Ageing Better Camden. We are mindful how much we are working with older communities in Camden and have been exploring new partnerships with organisations who work with other groups in an attempt to balance learning opportunities. Currently over half our partner organisations work with older communities and apart from Mildmays they are all based in Camden.

Once again our partnerships have been highly successful and mutually beneficial, through effective working relationships, good communication and the maintenance of regular consultation. With some partnerships we have had longstanding relations of over 10 years and, as a result, the understanding of each other's organisation is truly cemented. With other partnerships which are relatively new, such as City Gateway, and Bromley by Bow Centre, we are excited about the prospect of future planning together and responding to the needs of the community.

The work with older communities now makes up 70% of our learners; and 38% of our learners are over 70 years. This is mainly a result of the knock on effect of working with older people whilst we worked with Ageing Better Camden delivering Digital Inclusion. However it may also be because there is currently more funding available to support activities and projects working with older people. For example in Camden there are volunteering and Time Banking programmes for older people, age activity programmes, befriending schemes amongst other activities, courses and workshops, social activities and other community provision such as intergenerational activities.

We cannot ignore that people are also living longer, thinking more about their health and wanting to get fitter, or are considering their mental health and see some of our classes as brain gyms. Our partnerships with these groups are constantly improving and developing as we increase our knowledge and understanding of vulnerable communities. It is true to say that we are working with organisations that have a growing number of very elderly and frail clients such as at Peel Institute, Millman Street, Mildmays and St Pancras Community Association. We also work with communities who consider themselves as "old" beyond 50 years but, more significantly, have underlying health conditions.



*Third Age Line Dance group on stage at New Diorama Theatre*

At Chadswell Healthy Living Centre we continue to deliver weekly exercise classes to Bengali women over 50 years. They are taught by a Bengali speaking teacher who very much understands their social and cultural needs. Every student has a medical condition where they can see how taking part in exercise will help towards improving their health. The women have taken their exercise sessions seriously demonstrating this by showing

up to class on time, helping to set up the class by taking out the exercise mats, attending regularly or joining other women only gym sessions at Chadswell. During lockdown the exercise teacher created a series of exercise sheets to send out to the women. Feedback later in the year demonstrated how much they relied on these sheets to keep mentally well during a period of isolation and fear.

Our partners love the fact that working with Mary Ward Centre offers many other opportunities to their members. For example, having introduced Opening Doors London community choir to Culpeper Gardens, the choir were then invited to perform at St Mary's Church Community Hall with the Stuart Lowe Trust.



*Opening Doors London performing with Stuart Lowe Trust at St Mary's Church, Islington.*

We continue to work with many organisations and groups to support the specific needs of their members and clients. For example, for a group of Latin American elders at Latin American House we have run an iPad course which was taught in Spanish. Similarly we run chair exercise taught in Spanish to a community class for an older Latin American community at Mary Ward Centre, as well as the exercise classes taught in Bengali for Bengali learners at Chadswell.

*"I am 93 years old so find that I do not always manage to remember what I am told. I would like to carry on with these excellent teachers".*

Student at Castehaven

There is clear recognition of the value that learning adds to the opportunities our partners could offer and of the benefit that participants gain. It is also important that, in what are financially lean times for many of our partners, these courses have been funded and there is no direct monetary cost to students.

We continue to maintain that the key to successful outreach is in providing the best possible learning experiences. This means looking at diverse kinds of learning and different learning styles and then making arrangements to meet the needs of previously excluded groups in their own environment. We continue to provide a bespoke service tailored to the needs of each group and this has been particularly highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. It was a period when all face to face activity stopped, and replaced with a period where students were phoned up to check they were safe, activity work sheets and art projects were sent out in the post, classes ran on Zoom,

bespoke one to one support was given on technology issues, and distanced deliveries of materials were dropped at students' doors.

The COVID-19 pandemic has influenced the way we approach the teaching and learning experience. For our communities online learning doesn't hold a candle to face to face, but what it has done is to open up new opportunities and in some circumstances it has reduced the potential risk of isolation in keeping people connected and enabling classes of people to continue to meet and learn. This new way of working has forced our ability to cope with unknown technologies within a very short period. Whilst this has been a challenge in many ways it has also been a learning opportunity to improve our skills regarding online teaching. We know now that students prefer to meet in person but they are also able to meet online and in some cases students have the choice to meet in a blended learning style.

### **Partnership Case Study: Healthy Minds Programme, Mind in Camden**

We began working with Mind in Camden on the Healthy Minds programme, in partnership with Voluntary Action Camden, in April 2017 on a 3 year project until January 2020. The success of this resulted in the Healthy Minds team inviting us to work with them for a further year delivering short courses and tasters in order to help people, with a history of mental health difficulties, to reconnect with their interests and goals by engaging in activities and courses and building positive connections with the local community.

This year we have run courses in Aromatherapy, which proved very popular and courses in visual arts including an Introduction to Patchwork and an online project learning about collage techniques.

Running courses in the community has a great positive impact demonstrating an increase in confidence and further interest to learn. The inspiration it provides has helped people to make the leap to join a mainstream classes at the college. Part of the Healthy Minds programme with the Mary Ward Centre includes an arrangement to set aside a bursary for participants to attend courses at the Mary Ward Centre. The positive connection between the first steps in joining a class in the community and applying for a bursary, makes for a smooth and painless journey into reconnecting and developing their interests and goals.

Some students from the courses went on to enrol on mainstream classes including Painting and Drawing for Beginners, Introduction to Complimentary Therapies, Introduction to Massage, Massage and Aromatherapy, Indian head massage and Pilates.

For one student it was clear to the teacher how a lack of confidence was masking someone with very creative and hidden talents. At the start of the course she would turn off the camera. Each week there was uncertainty about whether she would attend let alone return the following week. She cowered away from sharing any thoughts on her work. Unfurling little by little, she turned the camera on and started to raise it a little higher each week until she was happy for people to see her. She returned each week and with her growing confidence she started to share her thoughts and ideas until, in the final week, she sent some photographs of her work to show the rest of the class. Since this course she has taken the plunge to apply for a bursary and enrol on a mainstream Painting and Drawing for Beginners class at the Mary Ward Centre.

What helped made this course different from other courses was the trust and encouragement she got from the other students, whilst having anonymity and feeling no

pressure to have to turn on the camera. Building into the lesson, time for people to talk, submit work and share ideas so there is less pressure on making things in the moment but rather more time to make things later, helped the student to feel the lesson was not focussed on her and gave her the confidence to take part.

The programme with Healthy Minds is more than us providing learning opportunities. The partnership with Mind in Camden remains a key element to support people in taking them out of their comfort zones and encouraging them to try out new opportunities – in a different setting, meeting different people, in another geographical area, exploring a new subject, or taking a risk away from what is familiar



*Lowcab TRA, (Stepney)  
on a textile course*

## THE PROGRAMME:

Over 2019/20 we provided a varied and flexible programme of 144 courses and tasters in response to the needs and diversity of the many different communities we work with. Courses are co-designed to suit specific learner groups. For example craft courses at Women at the Well, where women have multiple and complex needs, are short and punchy with weekly outcomes to make and take away a different craft piece. A weekly community exercise class is held at the Mary Ward Centre, set up in particular, to attract Latin American elders who do not have a space to meet as an organisation. The class is also taught in Spanish to enable students with low level English to take part.

The majority of the courses took place in term 1 and 2 with a much reduced provision in term 3 whilst we were in lockdown. However, during lockdown we paved the way, by introducing some of our older low level English speaking groups as well as other groups, unconfident with technology, in preparation for having their classes on Zoom.

We have completed four years with Ageing Better Camden, funded by the Big Lottery, to deliver a digital inclusion project for older people who may be at risk of isolation. The project, which has taken a “test and learn” approach, has been highly successful in terms of us reaching our targets and milestones, whilst producing significant change stories and providing opportunities for volunteering. In addition we have made some positive new partnerships, and worked with more diverse communities. It has given us the experience to develop this work with other communities in other areas of London.

Using iPads has enriched learning with groups of students and has helped people to make new friends in a very social way such as making iMovies or creating photobooks; or keep in touch with friends and families, for example in setting up email or learning

about Facetime. It has enabled tutors to provide a visual step-by-step instruction for some activities which has been particularly useful for those with language barriers and different learning styles. Students have used iPads in so many different ways - to take photographs and inform learning within the classroom, for research, to develop art ideas, for singing, to make small films, to look at local history and much more.

### **Enrichment using iPads: Photography Men's Photobook**

Abbey Community Centre wanted to help their Men to develop their tech skills and to better understand their devices by helping them learn how to take photos and put them together to make a photography book. For 5 weeks, students went on photography walks around Camden with a tutor from the Mary Ward Centre, discovering new parts of their neighbourhood in Camden and taking them to Coal Drops Yard, Regents Canal and even around a local housing estate, exploring street and documentary photography. This was a large class, which kept growing each week as enthusiasm picked up, despite the weather getting increasingly inclement. The nature of the walk provided opportunities for students to get to know each other and share tips and history about the areas they visited. After the photography walks, students then learnt how to edit and format a collaborative book for the centre. Students were delighted with the book and each received their own copy. It encouraged some students to go on to take many more pictures for the Centre. One student went on to produce his own autobiographical photobook for his family.

This course helped a group of men create a photography book for their local community centre. In doing so it enabled the men to meet new people and make new friends whilst finding out about new places to visit in their local area. The course also provided people the tools to take their learning further and more independently in their own time.



*Abbey Coomunity  
Centre Men's Group – a  
lesson on photography*

We have completed three years with the Healthy Minds programme working in partnership with Mind in Camden and Voluntary Action Camden and have started a fourth year. The aim has been to deliver a series of tasters and short courses supporting adults who may be struggling with their mental health, feeling isolated or disconnected with their community, or would like some additional support in finding out what their local area has to offer them.

A successful bid to Awards for All last year enabled us to start and complete another large scale multi-partner cultural arts project with the British Museum, working with a number of community groups and organisations exploring the topic of Orientalism. The project which began in the summer term of 2019 was completed in September 2019 before being exhibited in the Great Court during October 2019.

During lockdown, in celebration of the choir we run at Castlehaven, the singing teacher worked with the students over a number of weeks on a round singing “One Day I'll Be Free”, asking people to record themselves singing and sending back a video of it. The teacher edited all the clips and created a whole video of the choir. It gave everyone an opportunity to hear themselves as if they were actually singing together. Ordinarily, during Zoom this is not possible, because people have to sing on mute. It was a really uplifting experience for everyone particularly when the video was posted on YouTube.

During the spring the line dance and ballroom dance students worked hard towards their bronze, silver and gold awards. At the beginning of lockdown our dance teacher received all the medals and certificates of the IDTA awards students. In her own time she created a video of some of their dance routines to celebrate their dance successes. From these routines the tutor put together some short videos to share on Vimeo so that the students could follow and be reminded of some of the routines they had been learning.

The success of the programme is very much down to the versatility of the tutors, the extra mile that so many of them went, the strength of our partnerships and the innovative work of the outreach team, to reach some of the most isolated communities despite the challenges of the year.

### **Programme Case Study: Stratford Group**

With the support of Stratford Library we started to create connections with a group of Newham residents. Stratford Library kindly provided us with space where we could meet the students on a weekly basis. We introduced them to tile work creating a series of designs inspired by the repeat patterns of Middle Eastern and North African ceramics and textiles. Their work formed part of “Looking East” a large cultural community collaboration taking centrepiece in the Great Court of the British Museum.



*Newham residents at  
Stratford Library - Tiles  
inspired by Middle Eastern  
and North African patterns*

Inspired, feeling more confident and eager for more, the group was motivated by the papier mache bowls made by women at St Hilda's East for “Looking East”. They wanted to work on a personal project rather than a collaborative piece. The Stratford Bowl Project was born with the aim to make beautiful bowls using a technique of layering paper and decorating the inside and outside using imagery inspired by the area of Stratford with maps, drawings, old photographs, or magazine images. Collaboration with

Birkbeck, University of London, enabled us to have a room and storage on site. They were incredibly accommodating and also helped to promote the course. We were not entirely sure whether the University of East London building where Birkbeck is located, would be too overwhelming and austere for the community learners, but one of the students volunteered to be a point of contact at the entrance to provide a welcoming and familiar smile.

When lockdown halted all face to face learning, the Stratford Bowl Project continued remotely with the tutor demonstrating and teaching in an incredibly skilled way to allow a group of such different levels to continue. Outreach staff provided personalised support on using technology and for those who did not want to join on Zoom, we provided them with handouts and worksheets. New friendships have evolved and some students have been in regular touch with more isolated students. This group will be the Stratford flagship group of our work as it develops in the London Borough of Newham.



*Third Age Project –  
teamwork in the craft  
group*

### **Other successful Programmes**

Dance and singing continue to be increasingly popular elements of the community outreach programme. They help to promote a sense of improved health and wellbeing, from making new friends to improving self-confidence or physical health; the dance courses offer progression opportunities to take awards through International Dance Teacher's Association (IDTA), whilst singing and the community choirs offer many opportunities to take part in public performances.

We have run 49 dance classes from a variety of genres and their success come from a strong “following” of the tutors. Participants come from across London to attend line dance, ballroom, chair dance or country dance or a combination of these.

The 22 singing classes were also very popular and have resulted in communities coming together as choirs to perform together in celebratory settings. These classes are proving to be very successful in how they bring people together no matter what their background or connections. For example, our LGBT Opening Doors London choir was established two years ago year and is a group growing in confidence, with performances at Mary Ward Centre, St Mary's Church Islington and the Southbank Centre; a choir group at Abbey Community Centre have wide ranging needs, including dementia, mental health difficulties, autism spectrum disorder and, in common, is that they all have a love of singing. Equally, participants from Castlehaven Age Activity and Millman Street Resource Centre, also with varying different needs, practise a common repertoire and would usually come together once a year to perform at the annual Queen Square Fair.

Whilst Queen Square Fair was unable to take place this year the Castlehaven Choir ended term with their own online performance.

These courses are momentous for some as they make a lengthy journey each week to take a class which will improve their health and wellbeing. For others it is a lifeline against social isolation as their confidence grows and they make new friends. During lockdown the importance of seeing each other online became as important as the taking part.

Health and wellbeing is at the forefront of priorities for many of our partners. As a result we have seen a shift in courses moving towards more fitness with a third of our courses now being dance and exercise related. These courses are well attended and demand supersedes our availability of tutors. We offer a range of exercise classes including yoga, chair based exercise, and exercise incorporating dance moves.

Arts & Crafts	24%
Dance	29%
IT/ Digital Inclusion / iPads	10%
Exercise, yoga,	5%
Singing, Choirs	15%
Aromatherapy, massage, herbal remedies	10%
Photography (digital)	4%
Conversation	2%
Drama	1%

Overall we continue to offer a diverse curriculum of activities and courses to suit a broad spectrum of community groups and organisations.

The activities of singing and dance have come into their own during the Covid restrictions. They recruit good numbers and retain good attendance. That said there are still many students who have felt unable to continue due to technology issues and we are working with our partners to try to support people to participate on Zoom.

Arts and crafts continues to be popular and the topics within this curriculum area appeal to the majority of the groups and organisations we work with.

The programme continues to be designed in response to:

- Demand in the community;
- Student evaluations from previous courses;
- Identification of learner-need by a partner;
- A proposal from the community education outreach team;
- Identification through local needs based audits;
- Requests through museums and galleries

The community classes help people to make choices, learn new skills in different subjects that they may not have considered before, or develop specialist interests. These classes also help develop people's confidence or language skills. These soft outcomes are often quite subtle but become the very tools to support or develop students' learning. Learners have reported that: "*it is good to meet people and share skills;*" "*I have been learning by having fun;*" "*I feel happy and relaxed;*" "*I have a better memory.*" These are a mere handful of outcomes that emerge over and over again from

people whether in day care centres, community projects, hostels, or parents groups in schools.

### **Exhibitions, events and performances in the community:**

Dance, singing and visual art continues to provide support to so many of the groups with whom we work because it provides learning activities suitable for all. It is a “friendly” way back into education and provides something that anyone can try out, giving the feeling of achievement and success, regardless of language, health, ability, confidence or other things which might be a barrier to learning.

Being a part of something very public has been a wonderful way for people to increase their self-esteem whilst celebrating or sharing their achievements with other communities in the form of events, exhibitions or performances.

Sadly, due to Covid and lockdown we were unable to take part in the familiar and regular events where our students can ordinarily showcase their work such as, the IDTA annual medal award ceremony, Camden ACL health and well-being event, National Carers Week events, Queen Square Fair. However, we were pleased and proud that our students had several opportunities in the first term to showcase their work or perform to audiences.

- September 2019: Camden Chinese Community Centre Line Dance performance at Indian YMCA Fundraising event.
- October 2019: Exhibition in the Great Court of the British Museum called ***Looking east: Middle East*** which explored themes from the exhibition ***Inspired by the East: how the Islamic world influenced Western art.***
- November 2019: Stuart Lowe Trust community choir evening – performances from Opening Doors London and Castlehaven choirs coming together as Mary Ward Chorus to perform.
- December 2019: Bromley by Bow Winter Celebration: Adult Social Care choir performance and solo with singing group
- December 2019: Wellesley Road Care Home, seasonal performance from the Mary Ward Chorus.
- December 2019: Opening Doors London choir performed at St Anne’s Church, Soho at their annual Christmas Carol service celebration.
- December 2019: Castlehaven Winter Festival performance from the Mary Ward Chorus and the Line Dancers
- December 2019: Third Age Project Christmas show at the New Diorama where the Line Dancers close the show
- December 2019: Abbey Community Café Christmas events day - Abbey Line Dancers performance
- July – August 2020: ***Newham Unlocked Community Broadcasts*** – exhibition and broadcast of our Newham group’s work

The community education outreach team maintains regular contact with partners. Ordinarily this reporting is carried out through an annual evaluation where all courses and our delivery can be reviewed and discussed with partners. This would usually provide a more formal opportunity for them to help us celebrate successes and look at where we could do things differently. It would also usually be an opportunity to track learner progression and make recommendations for any changes. This year, being very different, we have gathered information and made recommendations using tutor reports, anecdotal evidence with partners from telephone and email conversations and student feedback.



*Christopher Hatton Primary School – community partnerships team join us for a talk and object handling session.*

Over 2019/20 most partners have continued to support the notion of the short course and clearly see the benefits of a shorter more achievable course for the learner. Some partners, who find it particularly hard to engage their learners, have whole heartedly welcomed us providing one-off taster sessions as a new opportunity for their groups. On the flip side of the coin are the partners who have found it more beneficial for their learners to have term long courses. This is particularly the case with the exercise, dance and community choirs or singing courses. It is a positive outcome that partners see benefit in running longer courses. However a drawback to this means that retention is affected when just one person in a small class of eight students drops out of a course. Partners have articulated how positive it has been to have a choice and to be able to work with us to devise courses flexibly. We have worked hard to tailor our courses to the learner and partners have recognised this and commented on the benefits this has had. For example, to make adult classes run successfully at the primary schools it has been essential to set objectives to an appropriate level for the student, find a suitable time in the day to run a course so that it does not clash with school pick-up times, and work with partners to incorporate interpreters where needed. As a result, attendance has become stronger and some students have had the desire to further their learning experiences. Evidence of this is clearly demonstrated when we track learner progression.

*"I really enjoyed this class....it gave me reasons to live longer "* Quote from a student at West Euston Time Bank

Evaluating the courses with our partners helps us make an informed assessment of what is going well or what needs improving. It also helps us to identify learner needs in the neighbourhood and subsequently plan our curriculum accordingly. This year we had to look at things differently. In the middle of the summer term when we would usually carry out the evaluations, our partners were dealing with very challenging situations getting

food and medicines to people. For that reason it was not possible to evaluate in our usual way. What was important was keeping in regular touch with groups and organisations to keep each other informed and make plans for the term ahead. We will continue to work with our partners in the most flexible and creative way possible, looking at alternative ways of delivery, during a very changeable climate, in order to meet the needs of the learners.

### **What was good about the programme:**

#### ***Responsive to the needs of the learners during a Pandemic:***

Whilst the programme was heavily impacted and all face to face learning evaporated during lockdown, the online activity we delivered was personalised and tailored to each group. For example art materials were delivered to people's doorsteps along with socially distanced conversations to help reduce the risk of isolation. IT packs were posted out to beginners' level IT students who were also phoned on a weekly basis to check how they were and help them with any IT questions they had.

#### ***A springboard to engage our partners with other organisations:***

There have been many settings where partners feel there is an opportunity to engage with other groups and organisations and work together, for example, engaging Stratford Library with the cultural arts opportunities which take place with the British Museum; offering an opportunity to engage in recordings for Newham Unlocked Community Broadcasts; or taking groups to perform in other organisations where they can network and build new relations.

#### ***Promoting integration between communities and bringing people together:***

Partners feel the courses have allowed an opportunity to encourage integration of cultures between different communities, so building bridges and opening up people's experiences of meeting others whom they might not have considered. This is particularly the case with online courses where numbers of students is not determined by the size of the space. For example, it is possible to engage many more people in a dance class on Zoom which means more people get to know each other. We see the importance of building in a social element at the end of sessions so that people can meet and chat in a similar way that they would in a traditional face to face class.

#### ***Opportunities to perform or exhibit work in the public eye:***

Working with prestigious museums and producing high quality exhibitions is very inspiring for the students. Supporting community art and promoting it in public open spaces has really helped to raise the self esteem of the learners. Whether it is work exhibited at the British Museum, a performance at New Diorama, a Broadcast or an art exhibited on the Mary Ward Centre website, it has given people a sense of worth and pride in their learning. It is also an opportunity to share their experiences with friends and family and to the wider audiences.

#### ***Quality of Teaching:***

Partners consider the quality of teaching to be very high giving positive outcomes to the learners. For example, posting out materials to groups who are unable to engage in online learning so that they can engage in the same way as those who are taking part on Zoom; or going the extra mile and creating additional resources so that students can continue their learning during the holiday periods. Prior to Covid one tutor continued meeting with her students (low level English speaking older community members) outside of term time so that they kept in touch and kept active whilst reducing any risk of

isolation. It also meant they could keep mentally stimulated without forgetting everything they had learnt during the term.



*St Hilda's East –  
Papier mache bowls*

Appropriate teaching and learning strategies sensitively meet differentiated needs, such as at Mildmays where we provide courses for people with early dementia and learning difficulties. The tutor incorporates visual learning and repetition to help the students with their short term memory loss. This is also highlighted in the schools where learners tend to be culturally mixed with varying levels of English language. Visual learning, supported by practical demonstrations, enables a more diverse range of abilities to achieve whilst generating positive integration between parents.

Teachers are practical and thoughtful in the classroom, for example at Castlehaven extra written support is given to one student who struggles to remember instructions. This means that students can get on with elements of the work at their own pace without feeling anxious.

*"They are classes of high quality tutors teaching interesting classes for free each term – it means people come to the Centre who wouldn't have the opportunity to get out of the house, exercise and learn. People join classes and improvement in their health encourages them to volunteer.*

*The high quality tutors the college provides, in turn means Abbey Centre can be seen to deliver a high quality service to its members and local community. People can try out new things without travelling and at little or no cost. It is invaluable and we wouldn't be able to run without these courses."*

Quote from our Partner at Abbey Community Centre, Kilburn

Partners have commented on how the tutors make the effort to get to know the students so that they can adapt the teaching strategies to individual needs and make each lesson feel like a positive and personal experience. The tutors create a friendly atmosphere that invites the students to feel happy and relaxed, and so embrace learning. Alongside the skills learnt, students have benefited from improving their emotional wellbeing, feeling more confident and improving their self-esteem.

***Flexibility of programme tailored to the needs of the groups:***

Many of our partners comment on the positive benefits of delivering a flexible programme. We create the classes to suit the learners. For some groups where concentration is very low classes may only run for little more than an hour, for example at Women at the Well. Here we deliver learning as a series of 1 ½ hour tasters across 3 to 4 weeks and so, for the women, whose lives are vulnerable and chaotic, where commitment is a major challenge, we plan a programme that the women can achieve and complete something at the end of each lesson. The aim is that we create enough flexibility that allows learners to achieve no matter what their needs.

***Working with Vulnerable Learners and Communities:***

Partners have indicated how pleased they are that the community outreach department and the Mary Ward Centre show considerable experience, patience and sensitivity in working with vulnerable communities.

***Case Story : Bromley by Bow Centre***

Bromley by Bow Centre works with adults with learning difficulties who may also have mental health needs and physical disabilities. The organisation has been really happy with the way teaching and learning has taken place with consideration given to each student's individual needs in a thoughtful and inclusive way. They love the fact that there are participants who are quite able singers learning together with participants who struggle with their communication and participation.

The Centre feel they have gained a lot in our flexible approach, encouraging care workers and key workers to join the lessons so that they can support their clients with singing when we are not teaching. Over Christmas we worked with Bromley by Bow Centre to support the clients in their first ever public performance as a choir at the organisations Christmas celebration. In addition the teacher worked with one of the students to support them in a solo, which remained a complete and unexpected surprise until the event.

During lockdown we continued with the singing group on Zoom. Several students found it impossible to carry on singing using Zoom, because they did not have the one to one home support in place to help them and one which they are dependent. However a handful of students continues and the Centre were grateful we were committed to working with a smaller number of students than usual.

During the next year we look forward to expanding our work with Bromley by Bow Centre exploring work with another group on the Space to Connect Project for people 50+.

***Improving Health and Wellbeing***

Courses supporting improvement of health and wellbeing are becoming more and more popular with our communities and partners, such as dance, exercise, yoga, massage and aromatherapy. Partners have reported their members as having reduced blood pressure or greater mobility or improved mental health, from attending a regular activity.

### ***Exciting Experiences and Challenging Learning Opportunities:***

This is a regular feature of feedback from partners where art projects are delivered. Many students had never contemplated an inspiring learning environment, let alone designing, making and completing a project. Participation in a project has given people the skills and experience to move on to other challenging outcomes. For example some students in the dance classes have had an opportunity to take their ISTD bronze, silver and gold medals this year. Others have been proud to exhibit their art work in prestigious venues.

*“This course (dance) has helped a lot – made new friends, feeling fit and healthier, gained self-confidence”*

*“I love this activity and am enjoying it very much. I have benefitted with the dance class as my cholesterol has gone down and there is much less pain in my leg”*

Quote from students on a dance class at Abbey Community Centre, Kilburn

### **What could be improved?**

Over the last year our partners have reported little that they would like to see done differently. Many of their issues or concerns remain the same each year such as the difficulties for people in completing the enrolment form.

#### ***Drop in ethos:***

This is a different issue to time keeping and commitment. Where some partners have found it difficult to engage a viable number of students, there has been some evidence of people being encouraged to come to a class to which they cannot commit. This makes a very difficult kind of class to teach; it does not provide a good learning experience for other members of the class and may risk giving a poor experience of learning to the people being coaxed to join. Often this type of scenario occurs in organisations where there isn't a core group of learners or where a group finds it difficult to do outreach because of staffing restrictions. It is also typical scenario to hostels and groups where participants find it difficult to engage for long periods of time and feel the need to come and go.

#### ***Enrolment process:***

Many of the outreach learners find completing the enrolment form challenging and intrusive. People in vulnerable situations such as those who are homeless or with mental health issues are fearful the information will be used against them. Those with complex health needs such as dementia combined with learning difficulties, simply can't complete the form and often don't know the answers to the information required. People with literacy difficulties or low level English speakers of other languages have trouble reading and writing. For these reasons and many others, the enrolment process requires a huge degree of sensitivity and can take a very long time. We often lose students along the way because they just find the process too hard. Our Partners fully support us in trying to gather the information and understand why we need the information but equally find the enrolling a daunting process.

### **Consistency in capturing evaluation data:**

The evaluation returns from students indicate some results that don't necessarily reflect how they say they are actually feeling. For example, most students we speak to, indicate that taking part in a course helps to improve their health and wellbeing. However this is not necessarily reflected on their evaluation forms.

## **THE LEARNERS**

In 2019/20 there were 787 individual learners on widening participation courses.

Learners in the widening participation programme are people with barriers to learning and include people who are homeless, at risk of offending or ex-offenders, refugees, asylum seekers, at risk of isolation, people with mental ill health, local community/non-traditional learners, and people living in hostels or residential care or people recovering from alcohol/drug dependency.

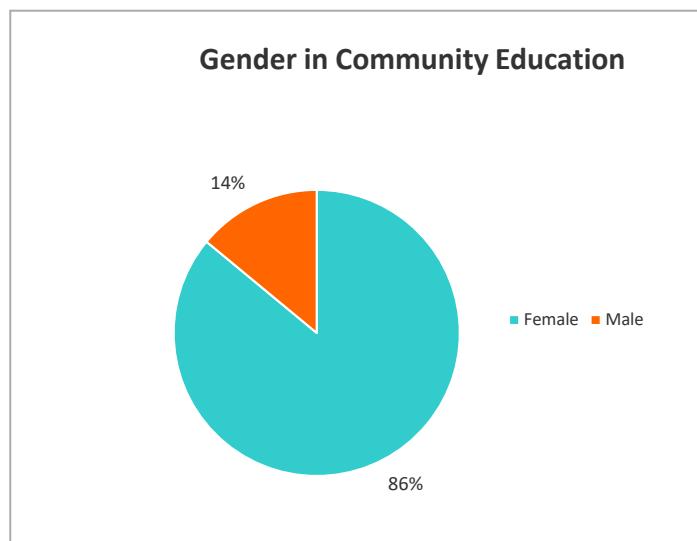
### **Gender:**

The following chart illustrates that, of the students enrolling on widening participation classes, 86% are female. Widening participation attracts the highest proportion of female learners of all sections in the Mary Ward Centre.

The gender of learners has remained virtually unchanged compared to previous years.

Female	86%	679
Male	14%	108
	100%	787

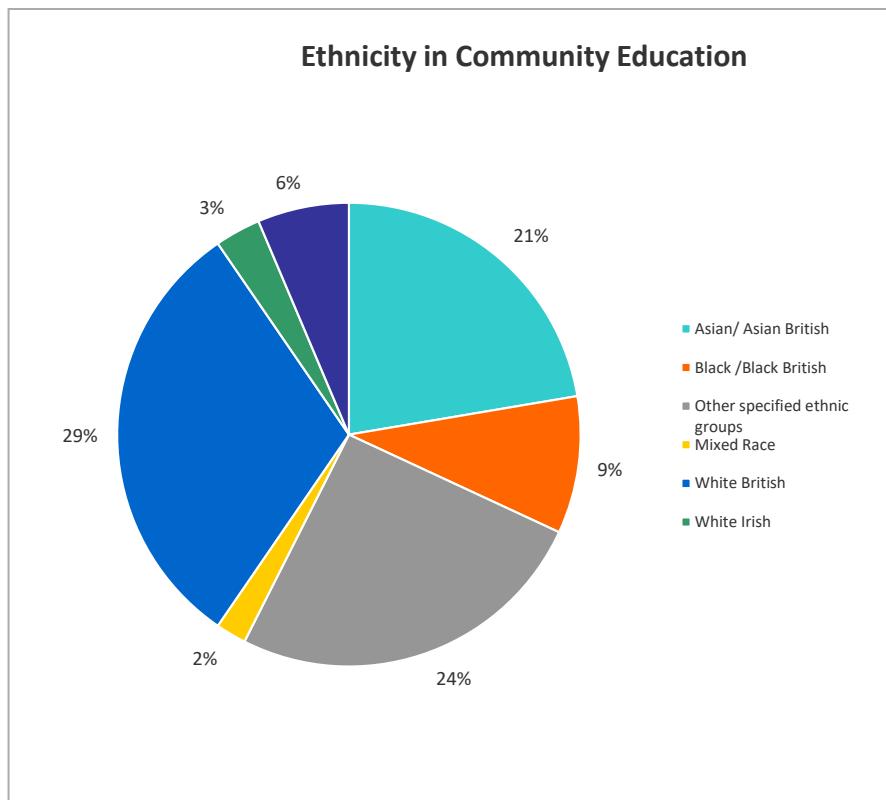
Many of the partners we work with by their very nature, primarily work with or attract women such as City Gateway providing support and employment opportunities for women, Crisis Skylight Women's Zone, Women at the Well, Chadswell Bengali Women's Health Project and Bethany House Women's hostel.



## Ethnicity:

There have been no remarkable changes by comparison to the previous year other than a small increase in the number of Chinese learners enrolling on courses this year.

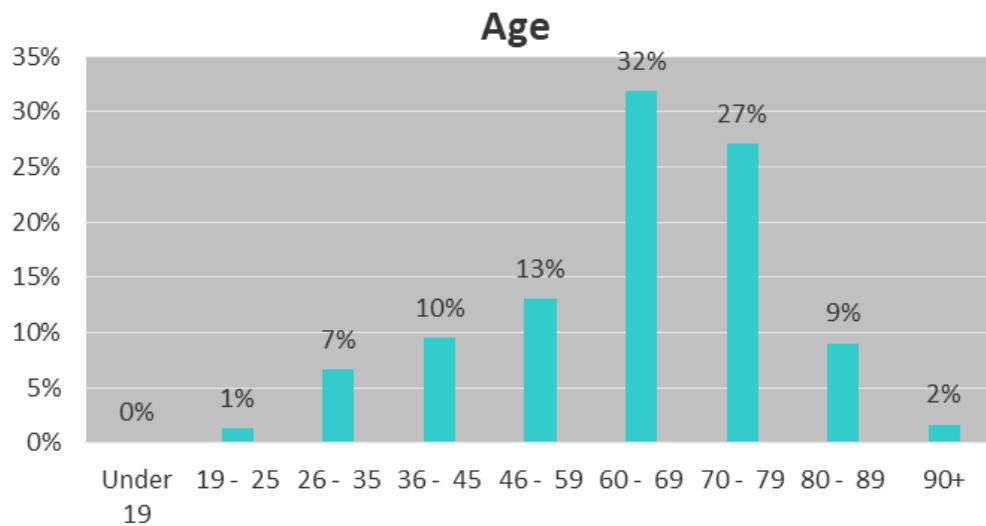
Camden's benchmark for BME students is 20.25% and the widening participation programme exceeds this expectation, with over half the student cohort being BAME learners.



Asian/ Asian British	21%	167
Black /Black British	9%	73
Other specified ethnic groups	24%	188
Mixed Race	2%	17
White British	29%	277
White Irish	3%	21
any other white ethnicity	6%	51
<b>Total</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>794</b>

## Age:

The age range of our learners remains heavily towards over 60s. In fact, 70% of our learners are over 60 (38% in community outreach are aged over 70). This shifting trend can be attributed to the new partners we have sought who work with older communities, for the digital inclusion project with Ageing Better Camden together with the number of partners we work with who prioritise age activity programmes such as Millman Street Resource Centre, Conrad Court Sheltered Housing, Mildmays Sheltered Housing, Third Age Project, Castlehaven Ageactivity and Abbey Community Centre.



Although our Ageing Better Camden project came to an end early in the year we still had targets to reach which remained at 120 unique older learners per year so, as forecasted last year, figures have remained constant this year as we have continued to seek more new partners to work with this client group.

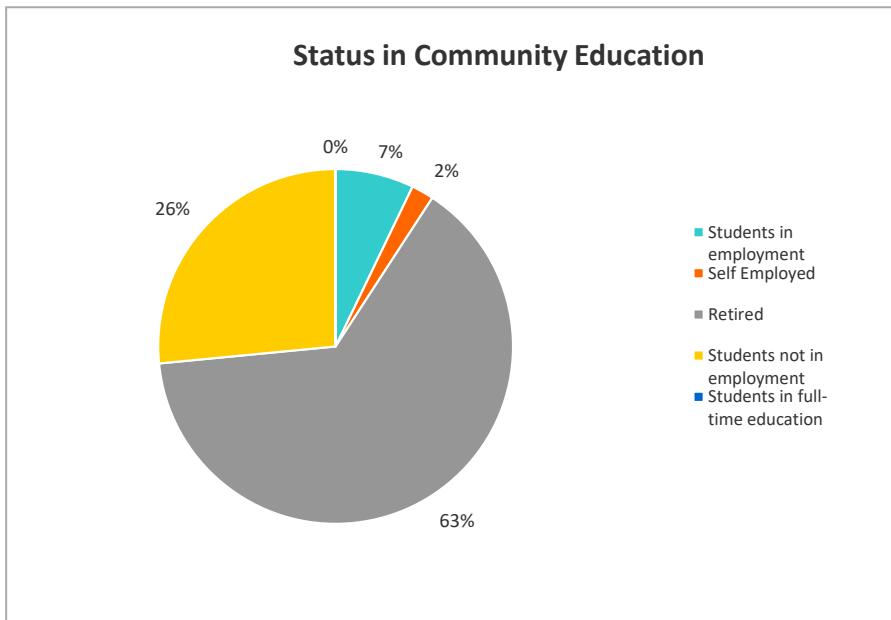
Camden's 65+ population is estimated at 24,000, and is on the increase. The 85+ population is estimated at 3,100. By 2022, Camden estimates there will be a 35% increase in people aged over 85. Our priority is to continue to serve our local community and we will do what we can to improve health and wellbeing by providing activities that support the rising numbers of older people with long term conditions and mental health disorders. The Bengali Women's group at Chadswell Healthy Living Centre is a prime example of older learners with multiple health needs (diabetes, heart conditions, arthritis, and poor mental health) who have a desire to overcome their immediate aches and pains and get fitter and whose GPs are regularly "prescribing" more exercise.

Under 19	0%	0
19 - 25	1%	10
26 - 35	7%	52
36 - 45	10%	75
46 - 59	13%	102
60 - 69	32%	293
70 - 79	27%	248
80 - 89	9%	90
90+	2%	15

**Status:**

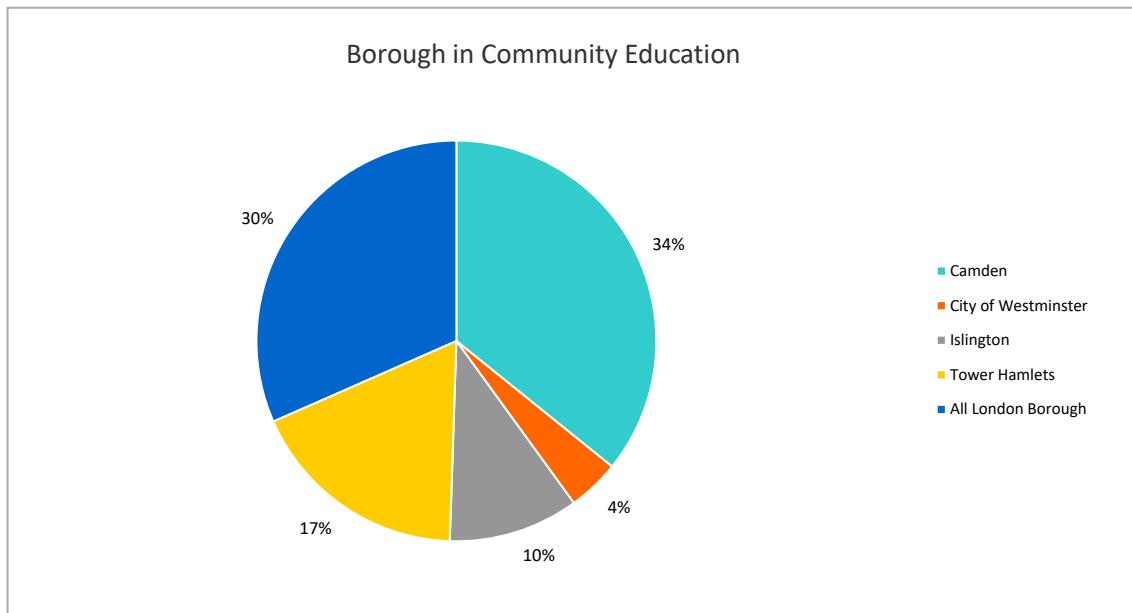
There has been little change in status by comparison to last year. Given that over two thirds of the students in community outreach are aged 60 or more it is unsurprising that almost two thirds of learners are also retired.

Students in employment	7%	57
Self Employed	2%	19
Retired	63%	499
Students not in employment	26%	207
students in full-time education	0%	2
		784

**Borough:**

Unsurprisingly 34% (43%) of outreach students live in Camden, which is in keeping with our commitment to provide learning opportunities and support communities in the immediate vicinity of the Mary Ward Centre. Although one third of our students live in Camden this is almost 10% less than last year. However this year 17% of students are from Tower Hamlets compared to 2% last year. This figure is a reflection of the new partners we have made in East London.

Camden	34%	267
City of Westminster	4%	32
Islington	10%	80
Tower Hamlets	17%	130



## LEARNER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION:

Overall the community education outreach programme has continued to see an increasing trend in the numbers of students starting courses. Retention rates have remained at 99% which can be attributed to the way courses are planned and delivered – shorter classes for those with short attention, and for those who struggle to finish because of factors such as pregnancy/child birth, mental ill health or getting re-housed. We are careful to programme classes at convenient times that meet the needs of the learner and give consideration to school drop offs and collections, signing-on times, peak travel times or dark evenings. Outreach classes tend to be small in the groups where students have more chaotic lifestyles, have mental or ill health, live in unsecure accommodation or are restricted by space and so the loss of just one learner in a class can have a detrimental impact on retention figures.

### Departmental non-accredited course figures for three consecutive years

2019/20			2018/19			2017/18		
start	finish	% retention	start	finish	%	start	finish	%
1535	1521	99%	2348	2330	99%	2549	2542	98%

Target 2019/20	Variance MW Target	Variation from Benchmark 89%
90%	9%	12%

## LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT AND PROGRESSION:

### Tracking Student Progression:

In previous years we have been able to track student progression with the help and support of our partner organisations during an annual evaluation. The consequence of Covid, staff furlough and lockdown meant we were unable to gather the information in the usual way this year because our partners were not available during lockdown due to Centre closures, furlough or priorities in other areas.

The following information for achievement and progression has been based on the previous year's evidence as the information is usually very similar from one year to the next.

Highlighting the year was that a number of our Line dance students were entered for their IDTA awards and the results have been inspiring. 19 people who had already taken their Bronze and Silver in the previous academic year went on to take their Gold and complete the set for that level of solo line dance exams.

Line Dance people also took their Bronze in Couples Line Dance and these were a mix of new students and ones from the existing group who had already finished the Gold as solos.

Some members of our community choirs have built up a vast amount of experience and self-confidence and have gone on to join larger choirs such as the Finsbury Park Singers, Victoria Park Singers and even the Lips Choir. Opening Doors London built up a portfolio of public performances including the Southbank Centre, St Mary's Church Islington, and St Anne's Church Soho.

• Number of learners tracked through partners	372
No. of learners tracked through partners progressing to:	312
• another non-accredited programme	
• a part-time qualification-bearing programme	35
• training (Work Placements)	11
• employment	27
• Volunteering	106
• Support groups	12
• other activity / projects	223
- community activities	
- Actively seeking work	
- Committees and groups	

Those students we were unable to track had either moved away or were no longer in contact with the partner organisations.

We have been able to gather information from a more detailed breakdown of how we track student progression. From a sample of tracking progression with our partner organisations it can be identified more specifically where and what some students have gone on to do:

- Non-accredited courses – exercise, sewing, yoga, gardening, aromatherapy, painting, aerobics, tai chi, jewellery, singing, knitting, crochet, craft, Line Dance, Ballroom, Singing, Qi Gong, Latin dance, basic iPads, ballet, sculpture, up-cycling

furniture, Zumba, French, Spanish, mindfulness, boccia, Guitar, pottery, cardio exercise, web design, Talk English, IT, employability, music, cooking.

- Part time qualification bearing courses – ESOL, IDTA dance, Fashion design, environmental course, mental health first aider, French, Rail Track engineering, Diploma art college, horticulture, IT, Japanese, Spanish, Book keeping, Life Coaching with Hypnotherapy, ECDL, Database L2.
- Support Groups - Coaching support with an employment team; dyspraxia management.
- Training & Work Placements - First Aid, food handling and hygiene, Cooking certificate, catering, walk leader award, Massage and reflexology, Money Mentoring, Law placements, Councillor training courses
- Employment – p/t child educator, p/t psychotherapist, p/t gardener, f/t mini cabbing, p/t college work, p/t teacher, p/t horticultural therapist, catering, p/t work, nursing, p/t builder, p/t in Special Needs schools, p/t property management, p/t law; f/t retail team leader, Relaxation & Yoga teaching1, p/t pharmacy, p/t community work, p/t administration; p/t exam invigilator, p/t mental health with AMHP; community work, p/t cleaning
- Volunteering – p/t helper Charity shop, community gardening Barnsbury Community Centre; Trustee; Management Committee, reading with children in local school, charity shop, steering group, befriending for Camden Connect, community garden, Church, English Heritage guide, Shelter, Management Committee member, Ecology, editing, walk leader trips, , Chinese conversation class, British Council, membership secretary for NGO, magistrate, probation board, hostels, Southall Day Centre; refreshments at tea dance, debt counsellor, on ground animal husbandry, lunch club volunteer at Our Lady of Hal, singing in care homes with choir, first aider at a festival, fund raising, canvassing, community development, Age Concern, Age UK Charity shop, visiting elderly neighbour, Camden Councillor, Food Bank, Reader/Listener in a school; Shelter, serving tea/coffee in a Chinese school, Cancer Research, Temple London, Receptionist at Buddhist temple, crafts at St Margarets House.
- Other activities - trips and outings, walking groups, film nights, scrabble club, gardening, bridge, cookery, dancing, drama group, nature conservation group - "Wren", poetry, cycling, bridge, Men's activities at North London Cares, drumming, song writing, allotment, opera, ballet, fishing, Mahjong, RummiKub, gym, Esperanto club, Boccia, restoration and recycling from boards, socialising at community centres, dog walking, cookery, cinema, table tennis, hiking, cycling, bird watching, DIY, political campaigning, reading,  
Moved to settled accommodation, obtained immigration status, obtained council flat.

## LEARNER EVALUATIONS:

During 2019/20 we had an excellent response rate with a total of 1,168 completed evaluations for non-accredited courses. These give a fairly accurate idea of how successful classes have been. The table below illustrates the responses.

The results of the student evaluations in 2019/20 demonstrate that students continue to enjoy the Widening Participation programme – 100% of students said that their courses were good or excellent and 99% felt they had learnt a lot; 98% said information, advice and guidance was good or excellent; 99% were happy with the support they received in class (this is so important when, for many of the students, this was their first learning experience in many years).

<b>2019/20</b>	
“Overall I really enjoyed the class”	100%
“Overall I learnt a lot from the class”	99%
“Overall the teacher helped me in class”	99%
“Overall what the teacher said made sense to me”	99%
“Overall the pace of the class suited me”	98%
“I was happy with advice & guidance during the course”	98%
“Overall I would like the course to continue”	98%
“I was happy with the information about other opportunities when the course finished”	93%

Records of comments are kept with the evaluations and spreadsheets from which we are able to respond to students' queries and celebrate with them their achievements. For example, reflecting on an iPad class at Castlehaven Ageactivity students said: “*I was totally ignorant about iPads in the beginning. Now I am more confident I would be interested in finding out how to use Smartphones*” “*Thanks to the helpful teacher this course has helped improve my health*”.



*Line Dance classes with Dragon Hall*

At Latin American House of a photography course, one of the students said “*The course has helped us to learn and improve our English and learning photography has given me a new hobby*”.

Conrad Court Sheltered Housing in Surrey Quays worked with Mary Ward Centre to run some chair dance with their residents. Students said “*I had developed a pain in my knee and went to the doctor and was told to do some exercises – this class has helped tremendously*”. “*In my room I'm always singing so it's nice to practice my dance at the same time*”. “*It was very pleasing to see this happen here, otherwise there is very little*

*else to do". "I used to do athletics but have had two knee operations so a low impact seated class is very helpful".*

Participants at City Gateway shared how happy they were in their Textile Project making purses "*The course focuses your mind and gives you a challenge". It's good for your memory and keeps your brain busy". "patchwork was completely new to me and I wasn't sure if I would be able to do it, but with the teacher's help I can and it's really grown my confidence". "Being here in this class is nice because it de-stresses me and keeps my brain thinking.*"

Of a Line Dance course at Dragon Hall, the N1C Plimsol Building, the partner organiser commented that "*The group have really been able to bond and their confidence has increased. As a result of this 7 students in the class have done IDTA exams and 4 students have done vocational training through volunteering*".

Students from Bloomsbury Baptist Church, taking part in an aromatherapy course, commented how relaxing and stress relieving it was. "*We wish there were more classes similar to this – it was excellent". The handouts were superb*", *There were increased social aspects and knowledge gained from fellow course participants and I got a much deeper understanding of aromatherapy". It was refreshing to receive excellent course notes and make such healthy natural products*". "*I have done similar paid courses in the past but this course exceeded all these*". "*Everyone was supportive, friendly and enjoying the process of learning and making the products. Please feed back to the funding body with a big thank you*".

79% of the students said that attending courses helped them increase their self-confidence. This is one of the key outcomes in community outreach and the element that often completely changes a person's life: "*I have gained confidence in using an iPad*" "*I would be interested to do another similar course as this has improved my confidence and balance to exercise*" *This course has improved my self-confidence and ability to make new friends*"; "*I feel more healthy and as a result I feel more confident.*"



*Christopher Hatton  
School – Islamic tiles*

91% of the students said that participating in the courses helped them to meet new people and make new friends: “*I made many friends from different countries and religions and learnt a lot from them regarding their cultures*”. “*I have made new friends*”; “*The sessions focussed on carers and people with illnesses and friendships were made*”; *the classes made people less isolated and people have made friends*”.

It is interesting to see that the number of people who felt doing the courses helped them thing about or apply for paid work or volunteering opportunities, has fallen. Similarly the number of people thinking about further study in a mainstream setting has dropped. It seems apparent that these changes have coincided with the pandemic. It cannot be assumed coincidental that the number of people saying their confidence has increased, has also fallen. The pandemic lockdown gave people fewer opportunities to learn in person and in community outreach aspects such as mental health, physical difficulties, low level numeracy and literacy and of course little or no experience of technology, have added to the difficulties in online learning.

% OF RESPONSES TO SOFT OUTCOMES (from a sample of student evaluations)	2019/20 (%)	2018/19 (%)
“The class helped to increase my self-confidence”	79	86
“The class helped to develop my communication skills”	64	66
“The class has helped me to meet new people and make friends”	91	84
“The class helped me develop an interest in further study at the MWC”	48	57
“The class has helped me think about doing an accredited course”	13	10
“The skills I have learned helped me apply for paid / voluntary work	9	22
“The skills I have learned have helped me consider paid or self-employed work”	3	9
“The class has helped improve my overall health and wellbeing”	70	65
“Improved an existing health/medical condition”	73	46
“Made fewer visits to the doctor”	24	25

However, what taking part in courses during the pandemic has done, is improve people's overall mental and physical health and wellbeing. Taking part in classes has helped people feel better about themselves. 73% of participants report that taking part in exercise classes, singing and dance classes has helped improve an existing health or medical condition and 70% said it helped improve their health and wellbeing.

Using the evaluation sheets we are also able to collect other more detailed information about people's health, such as any improvements in Blood Pressure, breathing, balance, flexibility/mobility, improvements to joints or to pain management. Over half the students who have taken part in health related courses have said that the classes have helped them feel more flexible and mobile. Over a third reported that their balance had improved. Significant is that nearly a third said their blood pressure had improved.

## **Methods used to gather student feedback:**

### *Course feedback forms*

This is the main method we use in gathering information. As well as gaining feedback about students' views on the quality of the courses we provide, we have also used feedback forms to gather information on the suitability of the courses, the 'soft' or additional benefits the students have gained alongside the identified learning outcomes, and changes in attitudes or intention in relation to further learning or other progression routes that students might wish to take.

### *Student group feedback*

During 2019/20 we have continued to work with groups who find it difficult to engage in individual feedback, particularly at places such as St Pancras Community Association where dementia impacts on their ability to remember what they have done. Equally at some of the classes where there are very large numbers of students such as at Castlehaven Community Centre, gathering group feedback has proved a more successful and appropriate way of getting information.

### *Tutor course evaluations*

Each course was evaluated by the tutor who delivered it. As well as recording their own views on how courses could have been improved and what had made them successful, tutors recorded the RARPA assessments for students and any additional benefits which students had reported to them or which they had observed during their teaching.

### *Informal feedback and celebration events*

Throughout the year there was a variety of opportunities for informal feedback, such as at visits to the cultural arts community previews as well as through regular visits and meetings with partner organisations enabling us to collect information that otherwise might have been overlooked. In fact, these visits and the accessibility of the staff managing and delivering the project were identified as key strengths by many of our partners and strengthen the importance and need for good communication in community outreach.

### *Student focus group meetings*

From time to time we run focus group meetings to gather extra stories and to get feedback on specific impact from the courses or to gather additional information that we cannot extrapolate from the evaluation from, for example with our Newham group at Stratford Library where we wanted to find out their other interests and how far they would travel to a course.

## **IMPACT OF LEARNING IN THE COMMUNITY:**

Providing learning opportunities in the community has:

**Helped people into mainstream learning** – It is not a requirement that learners eventually move on to mainstream learning. However it is always positive news to hear people have made that step. A number of students have enrolled onto courses at various colleges, for instance students from Mind in Camden's Healthy Minds Programme have enrolled on courses in Painting and Drawing, Complimentary Therapies, Aromatherapy, Indian head massage and Pilates at the Mary Ward Centre.

**Improved the way people feel about themselves** – Evidence from learner feedback shows that 79% of students reported that their self confidence has increased and learning has helped to improve their communication skills; 70% of students have also reported that learning has helped improve their health and well-being or existing medical condition. Anecdotal partner feedback over the year indicate that learning has helped many individuals with issues of mental ill health feel better about themselves when they are learning with others in a social setting.

**Connected and introduced people to online learning** – this year has been like no other. We were unable to deliver classes face to face during lockdown, however we managed to train some of our learners to use Zoom, we talked people through how to use an iPad, we supported people with how to use their Smart phones and we encouraged people to engage in online learning.

**Helped people back into work or volunteering opportunities** – In 2019/20 it was evident how many of our older learners over 60 keep mentally and physically active through volunteering. Through the final months of our digital inclusion programme with Ageing Better Camden we have also been able to recruit volunteers and digital champions to help support iPad activities.

Through work with our Partners and tracking progression it is evident that taking part in learning opportunities has given some people the confidence and communication skills to help them get jobs, particularly in retail, catering, cleaning and administration.

**Brought communities together** – The multi partner cultural arts projects have been very successful in bringing communities together; **Looking East: Middle East** was an art project involving several different community organisations working towards an exhibition in the Great Court of the British Museum.

Students comprised of individuals from homeless communities, parents, over 60's, Chinese, and Bangladeshi communities, and other people with dementia and learning difficulties. The most amazing outcome of this work has been to see participants coming together, sharing experiences and talking about their involvement. People, who would not usually cross paths for whatever reason, had a common purpose – to celebrate their achievements in very public spaces beyond their expectations.



*Camden Chinese  
Community Centre –  
landscapes displayed in  
the Great Court, British  
Museum*

**Encouraging independence through confidence** – A student from Abbey Community Centre always used to visit the Centre yet speak to no one. They have learning difficulties and mental health issues but over time they were persuaded to join a dance class. With growing confidence and trust they then joined the community choir. Through coming to the Mary Ward classes, people have taken him under their wing and look out for him and as a result he is now involved in almost all activities and having social contact with people.

**Helped to reduce isolation** – The classes have helped support many learners in the community by offering an opportunity to meet new people, thereby making new friends. 91% of students felt that in taking part in a course it helped them to make new friends.

The main aim of the digital inclusion project with Ageing Better Camden is to help reduce risk of isolation amongst people over 60 in Camden. “Investing in our communities to ensure sustainable neighbourhoods” is one of the strategic objectives of the Camden Plan. Within this objective it states that for a community to thrive it is essential that its residents are safe and just as importantly feel safe. This includes our older and more vulnerable residents whom we want to be able to live within the community making it a community for everyone. Offering accessible courses to our more vulnerable learners has helped to reduce feelings of isolation and allow opportunities to make new friends or be part of a community group. This has been especially the case with our older learners, our learners facing homelessness, those with mental ill health, and lone parents.

#### iPad course – student case story

*A student went along to an iPad short course because her husband had recently passed away and she found herself left with his iPad which she had no idea how to use and no confidence to get started. Her grandchildren had begun using the iPad, but she had wanted to learn how to use it for herself. During the sessions, she was able to go through the device and sort out her husband's online presence; deleting email accounts, ending Facebook notifications and deleting old photos. Once she had worked through this difficult process, she began learning for herself how to use the device and working out how it could do things that would interest her. It was a wonderful day in the middle of the course when she came to the class proudly displaying a leopard skin cover for her iPad. It was wonderful because it had now become something that she felt confident to use for herself for things she enjoyed.*



*Latin American House  
– photography course*

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Widening Participation is an important aspect of the Mary Ward Centre's offer to the community. What strengthens our work is the knowledge we have of the neighbourhood and the unique and personal relationships that we maintain with all those involved on the programme – the partner organisations, students and tutors as well as other groups and agencies indirectly involved.

### **Progress and Changes:**

- Following an Ofsted inspection community outreach provision remains Outstanding.
- With a target of 25% of our provision taking place in East London by the end of 2019/20 we are proud to say that we achieved 33%.
  
- We have transitioned to online learning during lockdown and maintained contact with our community partners.
- We continue to have successful partnerships working in Camden and the surrounding boroughs of Islington, Westminster, Tower Hamlets and Hackney. We have started to develop further partnerships in Tower Hamlets along with new relations in Newham. We have continued an excellent and supportive relationship with the British Museum and have been fortunate to run another project with them this year.
- We have continued work in partnership with Mind in Camden on a Healthy Minds Programme for people with mental health difficulties.
- We have been able to continue with the benefits of an Awards for All application to deliver a multi partnership community programme with the British Museum which will span into next year
- The format of student evaluation forms were changed on the basis of last year's recommendations. With health, training/employment and soft outcomes grouped together we obtained more valuable data.

### **Strengths:**

- We are good at reaching new groups and developing new partnerships and this year we have worked tirelessly exploring and developing relations with new groups in East London.
- Partner relations and face-to-face work remain strong and mutually supportive. Mary Ward Centre has a good reputation with offsite partners and learners as well as within the community in general
- Provision of a curriculum that meets the needs of the local community – we have been successful in engaging our target groups and vulnerable learners

- Previous partner reviews\* and student feedback are used effectively to plan provision and make improvements, e.g. student evaluations, partner evaluations (\*2018/19), tutor evaluations, student progression, change stories and annual report.
- The outreach programme has remained flexible. Innovative course design helped to support outcomes for learners, whilst short tasters were effective in introducing new learning. We have responded to delivering online learning with our partners where possible.
- We have responded positively to alternative streams of funding such as Ageing Better Camden (final tranche), Healthy Minds and Awards for All, whilst meeting our targets and providing a service for which we at the Mary Ward Centre can feel proud.
- The community outreach team is dynamic and very energetic and responds well to change. Not afraid to take some risks and grasping at new opportunities the team strive to make outreach a vibrant, interesting and responsive section of the Mary Ward Centre.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Covid and lockdown has introduced us to online learning. We still have a way to go in on how best to do this effectively with some of our community groups.
- The student profile has continued to show a steer towards work with people over 60 (70%) and retired (63%), and living in Camden (34%). The community outreach programme is working towards balancing the provision to include more communities in East London.

### **Recommendations and plans for 2020/21:**

- Continuing to build on our community outreach programme with new groups and organisations in East London.
- Expand and explore online learning, blended learning and alternative types of learning during whilst the pandemic prevails.
- Consider our priorities in community outreach in terms of who we work with in terms of how much is delivered in Camden and in terms of changing our bias towards a particular learner group.
- With the lease on the building of Mary Ward Centre coming to an end in 2022 we will be moving to East London. The community outreach team has started to develop partnerships in Tower Hamlets and Newham with plans to develop this further.

## **Thank you in 2019/20:**

Our thanks go to the following groups and organisations for all their support and partnership over the year.

Abbey Community Centre  
Ageing Better Camden (final quarter)  
Basil Jellicoe Hall / Origin Housing  
Bethany House  
Birkbeck University of London  
Bloomsbury Baptist Church  
Bridges Homeless Support  
British Museum  
Bromley by Bow Centre  
Camden Chinese Community Centre  
Castlehaven Community Centre  
Central and Cecil: Rackshaw House  
Chadswell Bengali women's group  
Charlie Ratchford Centre  
Christopher Hatton School  
City Gateway  
Conrad Court, Surrey Keys (Notting Hill Genesis Housing)  
Crisis Skylight (Women's Zone)  
Dragon Hall  
Dragon Hall at Plimsoll Building  
Emmott Close Community Centre  
Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association / The American Church  
Holborn Asian Women's Association  
Healthy Minds at Charlie Ratchford Centre  
Islington Bangladesh Association  
Latin American Elders/MWC  
Latin American House  
LGBT Connect / Opening Doors London  
Limehouse Project  
Lowcab TRA  
Marchmont Street Community Centre  
Mildmays Housing (Notting Hill Genesis Housing)  
Millman Street Resource Centre  
Peel Institute  
Pritchards Road Day Centre  
Regents Park Time Bank  
St Hilda's East  
St Hilda's East Shadwell  
St Mungos  
St Pancras Community Centre  
Stratford Library  
Swiss Cottage Community Centre  
Third Age Project  
Wapping / Biglands Children's Centre  
Women at the Well



The British  
Museum

# Community partnerships **Looking east: Middle East**

4<sup>th</sup> October – 21<sup>st</sup> October 2019,  
Great Court



This installation explores themes from the exhibition *Inspired by the East: how the Islamic world influenced Western art* at the British Museum which opens on 10 October 2019.

Participants have taken a theatrical approach to the representation of the Middle East in the 19th century, exploring patterns, objects, architecture, artists' studios, market and urban scenes and landscapes. Groups focused on crafts of the Middle East and North Africa, to explore the richness of decorative and applied arts. They researched different techniques, patterns, designs and textures, taking their inspiration from tiled floors, archways, landscapes, textured walls, ceramics, and artefacts such as metal jugs, furniture and rugs.

The Mary Ward Centre led the project, engaging groups in Camden, Islington, Tower Hamlets and Newham. Teaching artists Helena Roden, Zoe Hewett Dutton, Amy Leung and Marie McMorrow worked with the following community groups: Blackfriars Settlement; Mary Ward Centre/British Museum Art Group; Camden Chinese Community Centre; Castlehaven Community Centre; Christopher Hatton Primary School; Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association; Islington Bangladeshi Association, Mildmay Housing (Notting Hill Housing); Regents Park Time Bank; Single Homeless Project; St Hilda's East; and Stratford Library.

The Mary Ward Centre is a college for Adult Education located at 42 Queen Square, WC1N 3AQ and 10 Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7JU. The college delivers a wide variety of courses and an exciting off-site programme, in partnership with local organisations, to provide courses which widen participation.

# Connections in East London

During 2019/20 we built up our connections in East London, making new partnerships, meeting new communities and running new activities. We have worked with a very solid group of residents from across Newham who are not linked to any particular organization, and did not initially know each other, but have met at Stratford Library, then at Birkbeck, University of London and then on Zoom, to attend classes through our community outreach programme.

### **Birkbeck, University of London, E15**

We have been very fortunate to link up with Access and Engagement at Birkbeck, who very kindly arranged for us to have classroom space and storage for materials in order to run classes to a group of Newham residents. In addition they also helped promote our courses through their marketing network and signpost us to other groups who would benefit from our activity.

### **Bridges Homeless Support, E13**

"Bridges offers services designed to help homeless and vulnerably housed people in Newham (and the surrounding area) to bridge the gap between 'social exclusion' and 'mainstream society'". We have made connections with Bridges Homeless Support and delivered a taster session in iPad photography. Creating an activity that was fun, engaging and interactive allowed a diverse group of people to join in and let go of their inhibitions for a short while. Everyone was able to take away with them at least one photograph of themselves. *"I just wanted to say how much everyone enjoyed the photography workshop at Bridges on Monday. Thank-you very much, you hit just the right tone and drew everyone in. I had lots of positive comments after you'd left".*

### **Bromley by Bow Centre E3**

During 2019/20 we worked in partnership with the Adult Social Care Team at Bromley by Bow Centre to set up a singing group made up of adults with learning difficulties and mental health support needs. This later formed the choir that performed at their annual Christmas event with one of the students delivering a solo. The singing group continued to meet during lockdown as we worked with Bromley by Bow Centre to engage people in online activity.

### **City Gateway E1**

We were introduced to City Gateway through the Ocean Estate Regeneration Project. City Gateway is a Charity in Tower Hamlets that offers support, employment and apprenticeship opportunities for young people, women and families. We worked with the organisation providing textiles classes and supporting women with developing their sewing skills. Of a course learning about applique and making a person, ladies said "The

course focuses your mind and gives you a challenge”; “it’s good for your brain and I have really grown in my confidence”; “it’s a de-stress that keeps me busy”.

### **Crisis Skylight E1**

Working with the Women Zone we have run a series of visual and performing arts such as drama and singing in ‘finding your voice’, collage, pop art, mono printing and stop frame animation tasters and courses to engage homeless women in new learning opportunities.

### **Emmott Close Community Centre E1**

The centre works with older residents around Mile End and the Ocean Regeneration area. Our community outreach programme engaged members in a series of connecting short courses where they learnt a variety of marbling techniques which was then applied in the creation of handmade cards. Then followed a session on creative writing and poetry with a further session where members could write their cards to a friend, family member, a neighbour or to themselves. We posted these cards and had a further session sharing the responses of the recipients of the cards. This project really brought people together with good old fashioned writing.

### **Limehouse Project E14**

Limehouse Project offers advice on a range of social welfare issues through weekly drop-in, appointments and telephone advice sessions as well as training sessions, volunteering opportunities and luncheon clubs. We worked with the organisation in providing a series of taster courses offering people a gentle introduction into learning new and unknown topics such as printmaking and aromatherapy. The sessions proved very popular and were attended by predominantly Bengali ladies made up with other communities from Tower Hamlets. Much was achieved in a very short space of time and staff at Limehouse Project were impressed with the quality of teaching and what could be achieved in a short taster session. We also joined Limehouse for their International Women’s Day event running the ever popular course on making unique stitched cards. This gave us an opportunity to share information about adult education at the Mary Ward Centre and about the services of the Mary Ward Legal Centre.

### **Lowcab TRA E1**

With support from My Time Active who work to identify issues impacting on health and wellbeing that matter to local people, we set up a textile course for Bengali women in Tower Hamlets under the Lowcab TRA. We plan to revisit more courses after the pandemic.

### **Marner Children’s Centre E3**

Meeting parents at their weekly Stay and Play sessions gave us an informal opportunity to share with them the kinds of activities we can provide groups in the community. Delivered by the outreach staff we ran a very simple finger knitting craft taster that people could share with their children at home. The session provided us with information of other places people go to for activities, such as Bromley by Bow Centre.

### **Pritchard's Road Day Centre E2**

Day Centre is multi-cultural day centre based in Bethnal Green for adults experiencing mental health issues. We ran a series of taster sessions including singing and photography to give people a sense of what a course entails. Since the pandemic it has temporarily closed.

### **St Hilda's East, Club Row E2**

During 2019/20 St Hilda's East established a connection with us and we discussed the opportunity of their women's group working in the ***Looking East: Middle East*** cultural arts project.

Our partner said "*The project brought together a diverse group of local women who absolutely amazed that they were able to create bowls from scratch. The finished pieces were gorgeous and they felt incredibly accomplished once they had finished them. The amalgamation of all the projects' work coming together was a real spectacle that showcased the immense amount of talent that is contained within our local communities – it was a real visual celebration of culture and partnership*".

### **St Hilda's East Shadwell E1**

Linkage Plus over 60's Programme has a focus on social isolation, where we ran courses in IT. An introduction to iPads helped to demystify technology and break down people's fears of technology. A mixed group, culturally and gender diverse learned something they had never done before. Some knew a little about technology and were able to share some of their knowledge in fun facts. Another course later helped people develop their learning in a more individualized way. Later in the year we were invited to join St Hilda's East at their annual Health and Wellbeing Fair with Linkage Plus running craft activities. This was also an opportunity to share information about the Mary Ward Centre.

### **Stratford Library E15**

Stratford Library have been incredibly helpful in providing us with space to run a course for the ***Looking East:Middle East*** Project. Their knowledge of the local community also provided us with the introductions we needed in order to set up a class and engage Newham residents in a prestigious project with the Mary Ward Centre at the British Museum. This initial introduction onto Newham developed into a solid group of students who continued to meet over 2019/20 building on their craft skills and creating new friendships between themselves.

### **Wapping Biglands Nursery**

A nursery and school in Wapping where we were able to work with parents, some from vulnerable circumstances and all culturally diverse. We provided a course in Indian Head Massage for people to be able to give something good to one another and also learn some skills they can practice with the children to support positive wellbeing. This partnership had plans to deliver a longer programme of activities but unfortunately this has been put on hold whilst there is a pandemic.

