

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020 – 2021

## Community Education Widening Participation





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## INTRODUCTION:

2020/21 was a year that continued with the challenges and difficulties associated with a pandemic. We learned from our initial experiences, and we built upon them as best we could. Provision of outreach was reduced across the year to a fewer number of courses than ever experienced. As a result, we had to make hard choices with who we were able to support. Sadly, we were unable to work with everyone which meant ending our partnerships with several Camden based organisations, earlier than we would have preferred, in preparation for our move to Stratford in 2022.

We worked hard to support some of our extremely vulnerable communities such as the Latin American elders, who do not meet under the umbrella of a specific partner organisation. Learning happened in several different ways - on line, in person, blended learning, outdoors, and via weekly postal lessons. In collaboration with our partners, we tried to ensure we could reach as many of our learners as possible and were able to offer iPads on loan for those who did not have access to a device to join their classes on Zoom.

The Community Outreach team worked directly with 20 groups and organisations in Camden, Islington, Tower Hamlets, and Newham. Of these a quarter of our partners were based in East London. In 20/21 a total of 88 courses and tasters were offered to engage a total of 319 students making 1047 enrolments. Partnerships with these organisations are used to great effect to meet students' needs and raise achievement. Community arts projects have been used innovatively to bring together community groups. However, we have seen a growing demand for other classes which enhance health and wellbeing, such as 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 have continued a successful year with Mind in Camden supporting their Healthy Minds Programme through Arts, Health and Wellbeing courses.

Many of our Partners continued to prioritise food and housing throughout the year; staff within our Partner organisations remained furloughed including, on a part time basis, 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 dance, 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 online learning. We also continued to give 1:1 personalised technology support to 30 people to help them use their devices and access Zoom. In addition to this several classes had "in class tech support" for the first few weeks of a course. Tutors also needed tech support. For those unable to take part in online activity, we engaged our communities by sending out visual exercise sheets and diaries to record learning.

Community Outreach targeted provision was much reduced, but we kept on target. In many ways, although the service was much reduced it became more personalised. This has helped to cement the quality of teaching and learning. 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 Covid 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 personalised approach.

Despite setbacks and lockdowns, it has been, once again, a good year. We have had several highlights including showcasing our students' achievements with a Festive Dance Along Fundraiser, a Festive Sing Along, performances at the Castlehaven WinterFest, exhibitions of student work at Stratford Library in Newham and exhibition of Community Arts at the Clarnico Club in Hackney. We ended the academic year with a summer celebration offering people their first experience to meet others since the start of the pandemic.

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.

## **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 2020/21 we worked with 20 groups and organisations across Camden, Islington, Tower Hamlets, and Newham. This year we were able to meet with groups and organisations to evaluate teaching and learning within the context of our partnerships.

During the previous year we had worked hard to develop new relations and partnerships with groups and organisations in Newham, Tower Hamlets and Hackney with the result that we more than met our target that 25% of our partners would be in East London. During 2020/21 the picture was very different. We lost contact with some grass roots organisations who were unable to sustain their activity; some organisations were forced to close their services; some partners had restructures and made redundancies whilst others have prioritized their activity in other ways. As a result, we have effectively started again to rebuild our work in East London.

We continue to have varied partnerships with community centres, drop-in and day care centres, health projects, housing associations and supported housing projects, advice and resource centres, libraries and more recently, cafes. With significant impact from the pandemic this year, our programme continues to include diversity and has embraced the need for change in the moment. We have continued to work closely with organisations that support 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 half the partners we work with particularly in the London Borough of Camden, working with older communities.

	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2018/19</b>
<b>Partners</b>	20	42	55
<b>Courses (and tasters)</b>	88	144	199

In addition to working with new and existing partners, the outreach team continues to spend 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 activity, particularly with respect to engaging new groups in East London.

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. These partners have been very welcoming of our communication keeping them updated on the developments in East London as we start to reduce our provision on Camden. 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.



*Coil work with City Gateway*

The work with older communities now makes up 74% of our learners; and 44% of our learners are over 70 years. This is likely to 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.



*Line Dancing at summer celebration event*

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, and Mildmays. We also work with communities who consider themselves as "old" beyond 50 years

but, more significantly, have underlying health conditions.

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, the Line Dancers at Castlehaven support the Ageactivity programme by performing to help raise funds. The Country Dancers at Third Age Project perform at many of the annual celebrations adding to a rich programme of entertainment.

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

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 lockdowns. We have now had several periods when all face-to-face activity has stopped. Just as in the previous year, during these periods 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 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 on-line and, in some cases, students have the choice to meet in a blended learning style.



*Introduction to iPads at Emmott Close Centre*

We have listened to our students through our Community Partners. Whilst, towards the end of the academic year, people were starting to meet in person again, many of our community classes remained on Zoom as students felt this was safer for them.

### **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 2 years delivering short courses and tasters 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.

Initially we offered several tasters and short courses that sparked some desire to take up a learning opportunity, but we found participants did not necessarily sustain or continue this interest. During 2021 we changed our model. We continued to introduce short tasters each term, to capture initial interest, which was then closely followed by a short course in the same subject. These were delivered in the community but with a new addition, to introduce more specialist courses at Mary Ward Centre later in 2021. This model offers community learners a gentle route into a more formal learning environment within the college, to learn new and inspiring subjects that would not be possible in a community setting.

#### **Feedback from Healthy Minds Partner**

*“Our partnership with the Mary Ward Centre continues to exemplify what we at the Healthy Minds Community programme aim to achieve. By providing tailored community courses, our members are encouraged to engage with adult education in a safe and supported way. Members know when they sign up to one of our community courses they will be amongst students and teachers who have a good understanding of mental health. Once members have built up their confidence, they can use the bursary provided by Mind in Camden to enrol on full courses at the Mary Ward Centre.*

*This year, the Mary Ward Centre trialled doing a more specialist course in glass fusion, which is the first time we have programmed something like this. All nine members attended each and every session, something which has never happened in the entire five-year history of the Healthy Minds programme. Members thoroughly enjoyed creating beautiful glass artworks and felt both encouraged and supported by the lovely staff at the Mary Ward Centre. One member said that she normally gives up when she feels unable to keep up with others. However, because of the generosity of the tutor who supported her to catch up with the rest of the class, the member saw out the entire course, reporting a real sense of achievement when she came to collect her work from the office. We have learnt a lot from our partnership with the Mary Ward Centre, and it will stand as an example to our other partners”.*

This year we have also run tasters and courses for the Healthy Minds programme, in photography, Spanish, personal development with visual art, singing, sketching, Aromatherapy and self-help massage.

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 class 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.

### **Healthy Minds Observational drawing at Royal College of Physicians Garden**

Community Outreach has been working with Mind in Camden on their Healthy Minds programme. On another sunny morning in October 2020, we ran a socially distanced “in-person” session at the Royal College of Physicians Garden to give people with mental health difficulties an opportunity to make some observational drawings in the surroundings of beautiful plants. One person explained it was the first time she had ventured out in such a group setting since before lockdown more than 6 months previously. This one-off taster session inspired them to chat to others, draw independently with 1:1 guidance from the teacher and feel confident that they could return to the gardens of their own accord. The head gardener arranged for each of the students to have an information pack of all the plants, together with some wonderful illustrations of medicinal plants to give inspiration for further drawing.



*Observational drawing in the Garden of the Royal College of Physicians*

Using a Bursary set up through the Healthy Minds Programme several students applied for funding to enrol on mainstream courses at the Mary Ward Centre including Painting and drawing online, L2 pre foundation, Drawing, Painting in colour, Abstract Painting, sewing `machine for Beginners, Singing for Beginners, Spanish, Italian, Flex and strength, Gentle Pilates, and Gentle Yoga.

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. These connections give vulnerable communities a shared sense of the community which in turn leads to a positive effect on their mental health and emotional well-being.

#### **Case story: Student from Health Minds**

“C” initially joined Mary Ward Centre to take part in a singing taster at the beginning of the year. Quiet and lacking confidence to talk in group settings she found it a struggle to attend the follow up course. Later in the year she went on to attend an in person Photography walk taster. Suffering from social and emotional issues caused by mental health illnesses, attending the photography taster was one of the first activities that had brought “C” out of the house after months. Feeling anxious about being around others she overcame a huge hurdle in getting to class and shared that it was well worth it. She described the class as being like mindfulness – discovering what’s around her in new ways. She enjoyed the format of a guided walk with explanation, being able to ask questions, review images, and getting tips on how to develop her photos further. The activity was a starting point for taking her creative skills further. She left the taster with new ways of looking at the world and wanting to buy a new phone so that she could take more photos. “C” went on to take part in a longer Photography walk course later in the year in which she grew in confidence, being able to talk to others about her work and demonstrating commitment by taking photographs in the week outside of class. She mentioned that she can’t stop seeing shapes and patterns, things she wouldn’t have noticed before. “C” has since gone on to enrol on other courses to develop her creative ideas in a glass art course (run by community outreach). She has also developed friendships with students, meeting up with people she has met on the course outside of class.

#### **Partnership Case Study: Mildmays (Genesis Notting Hill Housing)**

Mildmays is an extra care housing scheme for people who want to live independently with support on hand, as well as personal care to vulnerable older people. We have had a long-standing partnership with Mildmays working with their vulnerable residents over the years and supporting them to engage in newfound learning experiences, particularly in arts and crafts.

During lockdown as the question arose on how we would work with extremely clinically vulnerable people it became clear we were not going to be able to post out arts and crafts packs and run our classes with them in the usual way. Learning crafts was often a challenge but to learn on Zoom would be impossible for this group to follow. Also impossible would be the usual need for volunteers to support individuals.

Instead, we provided support to the activities worker at Mildmays offering training on how to use Zoom, connect to internet, and use multiple different devices. This training, held in their car park, gave our partner the confidence and equipment to explore new ways of

connecting with other services digitally. The training was invaluable and together with the loan of a suite of iPads, preparation for learning again was well under way.

#### **Feedback from Mildmays Partner**

*"The course gave residents the chance to do something they haven't done for ages. It has helped them regain confidence to come out of their room after Covid. Residents P and S developed a new friendship during the class as did residents I and A. The class brought together a mixed group of residents and helped them to bond and was an opportunity for them to socialise. The course gave them a tremendous sense of achievement and pleasure. It was fun and exciting revealing the prints once they had been stencilled and residents willingly came which is unusual. It attracted more residents to sit around the edge which also encouraged others to come out of their rooms. The course had a noticeable impact on the wellbeing and brought life back into the centre. The setup of classes taking place indoors and outdoors worked well and gave everyone more socially distanced space."*

During the start of the year the home was unable to meet in person or as a group, so we set up a series of "sing-alongs" where the residents could take part from their bedrooms enabling them to see each other whilst singing together. The staff member we trained was able to visit each resident to provide any individual tech support. It was a hugely uplifting and empowering experience for the residents and everyone else involved.

### **THE PROGRAMME:**

Over 2020/21 we provided a varied and flexible programme of 88 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, textile courses at City Gateway, where women have low level English and many family commitments, are short and manageable so that the students can learn visually, and achieve their learning outcomes without having further barriers to learning. A weekly community exercise class is ordinarily held at the Mary Ward Centre, set up, 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 and this year we supported learners in using their phones and tablets to run the classes online.

#### **Students from Country Dance online – Third Age Project**

*"The social side of the class is really good. It isn't just a dancing class, it's also a meeting of friends. It means a lot to everybody. It is unique because it means we get ourselves together and it's been something to look forward to during lockdown. We are like a very small family group. In fact, it has given us more confidence to log onto other new activities and we've started to interact with more people on Zoom because we chat as a whole group rather than in groups of 2 or 3 when we are face to face."*

Courses, this year, were a mixture of face-to-face classes, tasters often held outdoors, short courses and many longer courses held on Zoom. We varied all the learning

according to the needs of each group and the courses very soon became a lifeline to help people stay connected in a social way. For some people living on their own, the only social contact they had with people was in coming to a weekly online course. The importance of building a social time into the courses was very clear.



*Aromatherapy taster at summer celebration*

For many of our learners logging onto Zoom has started to become a preference over face-to-face, even when it was safe to return in person. For some partners there is a concern that their members are fearful of taking transport or moving around in the community and thus adding to their isolation.

Some older students prefer learning on Zoom because they can fit more activities around the day. Others say it has enhanced their learning and made for a better all-round experience. Some of our partners have been happy to continue

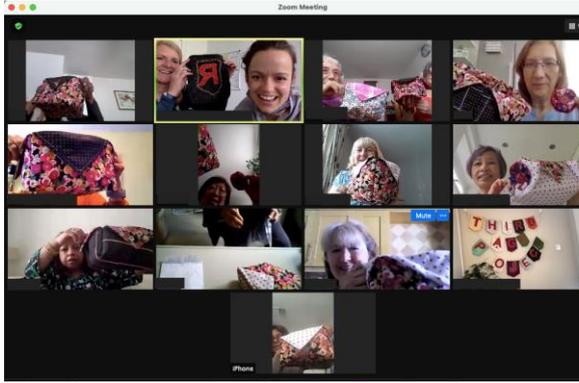
their courses online because we can safely accommodate greater numbers than we would for socially distanced in person classes, particularly for singing and dancing. However, in the main the preference is that people prefer learning in person, and nothing beats personal interaction.

#### Students from Dance classes at Dragon Hall

*“On Zoom teaching is clearer, as you can see the tutor the whole time. In real life the room is small and we are a large group so it's harder to see her all the time. I miss the social interaction. There is a lady who gets the same bus home, and we usually have a catch up, but you can fall out of bed and be in class in 15 minutes and when you finish you are already at home! I miss the hustle and bustle of it all, but I'm finding it much easier to pick up the dances as it's clearer and I can see every step.”*

The programme continues to include enrichment activities as an important element of student learning.

We have continued to find ways to celebrate student learning through the year. There have been art exhibitions both online and at venues. Students have celebrated their learning by engaging in large scale events such as the Festive Dance Along to raise money for the Mary Ward Centre. Choirs have created songs online that have then been shared and celebrated on social media. Arts and crafts students have made collections which have been exhibited in nearby community spaces, such as Stratford Library, to be enjoyed by other students, local communities, and visitors from further afield.



*Students from Third Age Project show off their textiles work and evaluate the course.*

Digital technology has fed a large part of learning in the community outreach programme over the year. All the singing, choir, exercise, and dance classes were taught via Zoom along with several arts and crafts classes. Students have become adept in their technology skills and where they have needed help, we have provided iPads and individual digital support both on their doorstep or over the phone.

Digital technology has had a significant impact on the results of our record collection. Where student evaluations were collected online at the end of each

course, we were able to gather more information as well as substantial evidence to show how much online learning was benefitting individuals' soft outcomes such as an increase in self-confidence, an increase in mental health or an increase in socialising. Further evidence suggests this is a direct reflection of being able to join classes, albeit it online, through periods of national lockdown or self-isolation, when they might otherwise be isolated.

Using iPads has enriched learning with groups of students and has helped people to make new friends in a very social way. It has helped people to 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 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.

During lockdown, in celebration of the choir we run at Castlehaven, the singing teacher worked with the students over several 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 singing together. Ordinarily, during Zoom this is not possible, because people must 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: A community programme at the Clarnico Club, E20

Later in the academic year we were introduced to Eastwick and Sweetwater (E&SW), a new neighbourhood on Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, right next-door to Hackney Wick. Following a series of meetings, we mutually agreed that we would work together to provide a programme of community arts activities for the benefit of the local residents. Mary Ward Centre wanted to capture the interest of communities from the estates around Hackney Wick and E&SW wanted to engage their new communities from the immediate surrounding area.

We worked together with the Clarnico Café, based in the heart of the Eastwick and Sweetwater site, initially to install a community arts exhibition of cultural works made by London community groups some years back. It included a Rickshaw, Mahmal and artefacts from “Looking East” which were exhibited in the Great Court of the British Museum in 2019. Whilst we developed our partnership the aim of the exhibition was to show the quality of community work produced in collaboration with the Mary Ward Centre.

The 3-month exhibition was a success and cemented further planning with the Community Engagement team at E&SW and the staff at Clarnico Café. We ran taster craft courses which served to promote learning and the work of the Mary Ward Centre. It also attracted new customers to the café whilst highlighting the community activity on the new development.



*Community Art installation at Clarnico Club*

The Community Engagement team at E&SW has been very supportive of the work of the Mary Ward Centre and have helped us network and connect to other groups and organisations whilst we have signposted and introduced to them new communities to take part in their own programmes. Plans are in place to run a series of taster learning opportunities in the next academic year. We are also in the process of setting up independent meetings with SEND Coffee, the managing organisation behind the Clarnico Club, to discuss other development collaborations.

## Programme Case Study: A community programme with Newham Residents

Community Outreach has been working with a group of residents from all over Newham, originally in partnership with Stratford Library and Birkbeck, but Covid safe restrictions meant we could no longer use the buildings. Despite lockdowns, isolation and difficulties for some of the group to work online we continued to engage with the group throughout 2020/21. We organised a varied programme of outdoor in-person sessions and online arts and craft courses.



After meeting up at Bow Creek Ecology Park, learning returned to online, and they tried their hand at collage and paper sculpture. Throughout these online classes, materials were posted out or hand delivered, giving us an opportunity to ensure our community was well and managing as well as to provide any doorstep support with any online tech issues they might have.

By the Spring, the group were experimenting with recycled and found objects to create a collection of insect sculptures. The course took a blended learning approach to include those unable to join online. iPads were loaned to those without a working device, class materials were dropped off by bike to people's homes, PowerPoint instructions and notes were posted each week to students unable to join via Zoom, and students who struggled online were visited to provide them with additional individual "doorstep" support. The result of their work was an impressive collection of work which was exhibited later in the year at Stratford Library.

### Newham residents' group at Bow Creek Ecology Park

Community Outreach has been working with a group of residents from all over Newham, originally in partnership with Stratford Library and Birkbeck, but Covid safe restrictions meant we could no longer use the buildings. Now we work with the group independently. On a sunny morning in late September, we were able to arrange an "in-person" visit to Bow Creek Ecology Park (a small open space along Bow Creek tidal estuary of the River Lea in Canning Town, East London) where the group observed how nature finds its way into urban landscapes. They picked up drawing skills and we picked up a new student! The face-to-face session gave the students, several of whom are quite isolated, a refreshing opportunity to see each other again after 6 months. The rest of the course is taking place online and, to help support our new Newham group, we have made socially distanced door to door deliveries of art materials. We are also running a blended learning aspect so that those who don't have access to a device or feel unable to join via Zoom, have worksheets and presentations sent to them and they, in return, send back images and of how their work is going. In addition, we have been able to offer 1:1 tech support over the phone to help individuals who are struggling with the technology. One student commented today how "the Mary Ward Centre has gone above and beyond any other place I have encountered". Two of the students have enrolled on a short painting course later this term.

When this group initially came together, few know one another. It was clear to us that their growing friendships and contact with one another was vital during the lockdown period. The group were not attached or associated with a particular community partner, so a combination of isolation, mental health and CEV status after lockdown, demonstrated how much it meant to keep the group connected. At the end of the academic year, when the weather was warmer and it was safer to meet outdoors in a small group, we arranged a picnic in East Ham Park. This was an opportunity to socialize and reconnect since the visit to Bow Creek Ecology Park in the Autumn, but for others it was the first time they had caught up since March 2019, more than a year earlier.



*Sketching at Bow Creek Ecology Park*

### Curriculum breakdown in community outreach

Dance	32%
Singing/Choirs	26%
Arts and Crafts	17%
Exercise	8%
Aromatherapy	5%
Massage	3.5%
Conversation	3.5%
Drama	2%
Digital inclusion/iPads	1%
Spanish	1%
Photography	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. Students are discovering that they can attend more classes throughout the day by joining on Zoom which is particularly appealing to the older communities.

Arts and crafts continue 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.
- New partnerships.

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 centres, residential accommodation or other partner organisations.

**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.



*Festive Fundraising Dance Along*

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.

- December 2020: Community Outreach Festive Fundraising Dance Along
- December 2020: Castlehaven WinterFest performances from the Mary Ward Castlehaven Community Choir and Line Dancers

- December 2020: Community Outreach Christmas Carol event
- March 2021: Country Dancers perform at Third Age St Patricks Day celebration event.
- July 2021: Summer Celebration of Learning event at Mary Ward Centre
- Summer 2021: start of 2 month exhibition of Insect Sculptures at Stratford Library, made by Newham residents
- Summer 2021: exhibition of 3 month installation of community arts at the Clarnico Club in Eastwick and Sweetwater, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

## PARTNER EVALUATIONS AND REPORTS

The community education outreach team maintains regular contact with partners; it also reports through an annual evaluation where all courses and our delivery can be reviewed and discussed with partners. This is a more formal opportunity for them to help us celebrate successes and look at where we could do things differently. It is also an opportunity to track learner progression and make recommendations for any changes. These meetings, combined with the invaluable input of the tutors' reports, help us build a picture of learning in the community and regularly evaluate their progress or development.

In 2020/21 we met Partners both online and in person. By evaluating the courses with our partners we can make 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. In addition, meeting regularly with our partners helps us to identify changing patterns and priorities in community education and outreach.

The overarching message is that we will work with our partners in the most flexible and creative way possible to meet the needs of the learners.

### Partnership Case Study: Meeting the needs of communities – City Gateway

Working with Mary Ward Centre during the last year enabled City Gateway to run classes that enabled them to expand their programme and services during the pandemic and lead to a *“more robust and wholesome provision”*. For City Gateway the Mary Ward Centre provided a very different structure and learning process to the provision they were used to in *“allowing people to be more practical and creative in their learning.”*

They describe the partnership as a good story for City Gateway helping them to utilise the fantastic learning spaces they have but also in providing a service above and beyond during lockdown. It was this that really cemented that we were more than an education provider and that we went the extra mile to meet the needs of the community creatively, flexibly and sensitively by:

- working with City Gateway to support women who had not access online learning before.
- helping them to form a WhatsApp group to share imagery, encourage each other, share stories, and keep up motivation.
- creating resource packs to ensure that everyone had everything they needed - this particularly worked well for those self-isolating with family and not able to go home.
- engaging 2 mums to take part in class whilst carrying out childcare commitments during lockdown. One was a new mum with a baby who looked forward to the weekly classes with her newborn as it gave her a small time for herself whilst keeping her in touch with others during the isolation of the winter lockdown. Another Mum with 6 children was able to attend classes whilst juggling childcare challenges, learning at her own pace in intense bursts during the lesson, and then continue her work at home. Her enthusiasm for the course resulted in her making an additional cushion at home with her daughter. It was her first time returning to learning since school and she was immensely proud of what she had made.

One student, who really struggled with her health during lockdown, mentioned every week how much the classes were the highlight of her week. She would look forward to them so much and would join the class with commitment, coming early every week, seeking companionship and eagerly waiting for the class start. The classes kept her mind off her illnesses and would lift her mood. Sadly her health deteriorated, which forced her to discontinue, but whilst she was engaging in the classes they '*helped her to feel better*'.

### **Case Study – student**

*Before coming to City Gateway (CG) I had just left an abusive relationship and moved to London to be near my aunt. Becoming a single mum of two was overwhelming when having no experience managing household bills, where and how to buy shopping and to be honest I didn't even know what money looked like. I was so stressed I didn't feel like myself and I had no English, so it was a really scary time. Social Services helped me to find temporary accommodation and showed me where the local supermarkets are, and they also recommended CG to help me learn English to build my confidence.*

*At CG I always felt supported and if I needed any help, I knew I could turn to the staff there. I have built a relationship with them, and I am comfortable to share what I am going through with them. Even if they couldn't help me, they would know who to refer me to, so I could get the help I needed.*

*Together with City Gateway I have become more independent because they are always available to help guide me. I did some creative courses with Mary Ward Centre too and they helped me to feel more confident. I feel happier to speak more.*

*I carry City Gateway with me everywhere. I have already brought a couple of my friends with me to study.*

These examples illustrate the consideration and flexibility Mary Ward Centre gives in making the best possible learning experience to help vulnerable learners feel comfortable in what is often felt to be a daunting and “alien” environment. This in turn has strengthened our partnership whilst giving members of City Gateway the best possible learning experience.

Over 2020/21 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 wholeheartedly 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.



*Making Suffolk Puffs online with City Gateway*

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 enable an exercise class to run, for older Bengali women, it was imperative to look at alternative ways of delivery. None of the ladies could use Zoom and lockdown meant we could not meet in person. Instead, we posted out weekly exercises for them to follow, together with a diary to log their attendance and times. Each week the tutor would phone them to support them through their exercises and assess their learning from their feedback. At the end we met with each student individually to evaluate their self-learning programme.

In meeting with our partners, we can establish what has worked well or where we need to make improvements. It is an opportunity to celebrate our teaching and learning whilst reflect on how or where we might make improvements.

### **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. Exercise packs were posted out to elderly Bengali women who were also phoned on a weekly basis to check how they were and help them with their personalised programme and any questions they had.

*“Members really liked the pictures on the exercise sheets. Because they can’t all read English it was a good way of following the tasks, whilst the younger members preferred to follow the written instructions. This type of learning suited their needs in a difficult time. For many of the students, having the exercises to follow, has helped to reduce their aches and pains.*

*The approach Mary Ward Centre took in delivering the exercise sessions during lockdown was thoughtful and considered and was the best approach.”*

Quote from Partner at Chadswell Healthy Living Centre

### ***Enrichment of Community Programmes:***

Abbey Community Centre described the partnership as enriching their service, explain they would struggle to find such good tutors. Members have a connection and an identity with Mary Ward Centre and being in touch is crucial to them. Running courses has boosted the morale of their staff because it has enriched their programme through the pandemic. *“It has been a strong partnership where Mary Ward Centre and Abbey Centre have truly worked together”.*

### ***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 Clarnico Club and Eastwick & Sweetwater with the cultural arts opportunities which have taken place at the British Museum; introducing Newham groups to courses with Hackney organisations; 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 community organisations 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 in a Library, or interesting café, or a performance within the Mary Ward Centre or even an event online, 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.



*Insect Sculptures created online and exhibited at Stratford Library*

### **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.

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.

*“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 great 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 might 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.

***Improving Health and Wellbeing***

*“Castlehaven were involved in a collective virtual singing performance. Each student was asked to submit an individual recording (and video if they wanted), which the teacher put together to make the recording. These classes have benefitted Castlehaven in having an online face. It has shown people there is a good partnership with Mary Ward Centre and the classes have been a way of keeping members engaged during challenging times.*

Quote from Partner at Castlehaven Community Association

Courses supporting improvement of health and wellbeing are becoming more and more popular with our communities and partners, such as dance, exercise, 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 receive their ISTD bronze, silver and gold medals this year, for which they were awarded prior to the pandemic. Others have been proud to exhibit their art work in public and community venues.

**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.

***Restrictions with some courses on Zoom:***

- Restrictions on class size - classes on Zoom have restrictions in numbers in the same way in-person classes do. This is so that we can keep everyone safe and so that the teachers can give everyone their attention. Whilst it is possible to have

larger numbers in some classes, such as dance, the teacher still needs to be able to assess everyone's learning.

- Restrictions offering places to new people – the Zoom classes have shown that they can fill up very quickly, especially if there is a lockdown, or if it is an ongoing course. This has had a negative impact on some groups who are trying to encourage isolated new members to join classes. They are finding the sessions fill up before they their new members enrol. We encourage the partners to fully manage their own sign-up sheets so that they can offer the places to the people they feel in most need.
- Restrictions in getting people to leave their homes – Some people prefer to attend their courses on Zoom now because they feel safer. The success of Zoom has had a negative knock-on effect in terms of increasing isolation. Where partners spent time early in the pandemic encouraging people to participate on Zoom, they are now spending time supporting people to feel safe about leaving their homes.

### ***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:***

The issue of completing enrolment forms is an ongoing one. We do not ask people to enrol online or in the same way mainstream students would. Outreach students need extra help, more time, trust, and understanding of the connection between us and the community. 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. Some partners have asked us to consider tailoring the enrolment process according to different needs; others have asked that we use their own enrolment process; whilst this would not be possible 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. We have tried to address this by introducing a shorter version for taster courses.

## **THE LEARNERS**

In 2020/21 there were 319 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.



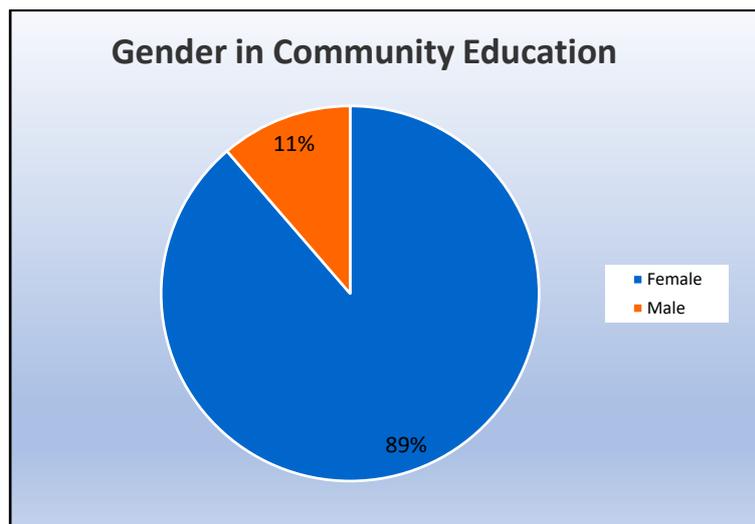
*Printmaking in the garden at Mildmays Sheltered home*

**Gender:**

The following chart illustrates that, of the students enrolling on widening participation classes, 89% 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	89%	283
Male	11%	36
	100%	319



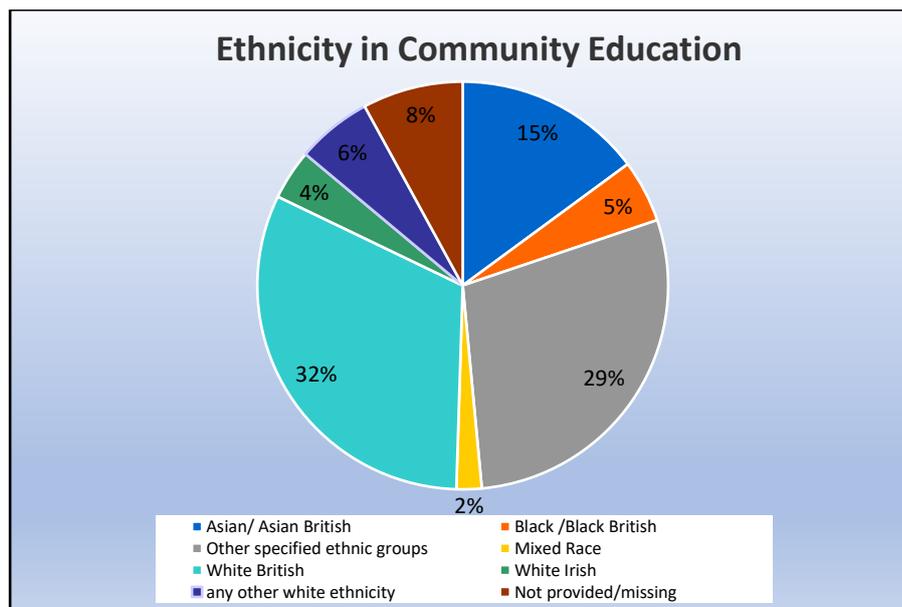
Many of the partners we work with by their very nature, primarily work with or attract women such as City Gateway providing support and employment opportunities for women and Chadswell Healthy Living Centre.

## Ethnicity:

There have been no remarkable changes by comparison to the previous 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	15%	49
Black /Black British	5%	16
Other specified ethnic groups	29%	91
Mixed Race	2%	6
White British	32%	102
White Irish	4%	12
any other white ethnicity	6%	19
Not provided/missing	8%	24
		319



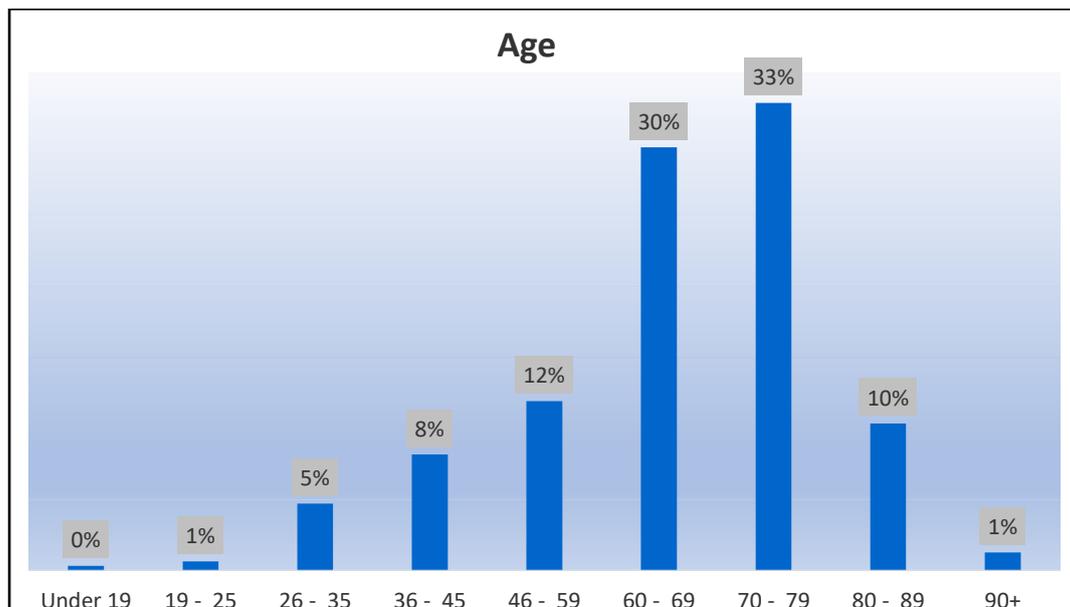
## Age:

The age range of our learners remains heavily towards over 60s. In fact, 74% of our learners are over 60 (33% in community outreach are aged over 70). This can be attributed to the groups we work with focusing their priorities on working with older people such as Millman Street Resource Centre, Mildmays Sheltered Housing, Third Age Project, Castlehaven Ageactivity and Abbey Community Centre.

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. Whilst we remain in Camden 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.

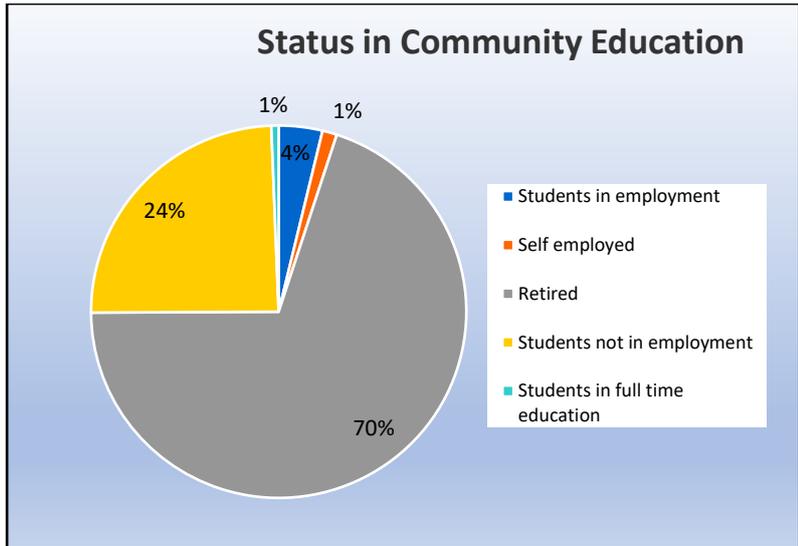
Under 19	0%	1
19 - 25	1%	2
26 - 35	5%	15
36 - 45	8%	26
46 - 59	12%	38
60 - 69	30%	95
70 - 79	33%	105
80 - 89	10%	33
90+	1%	4



**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.

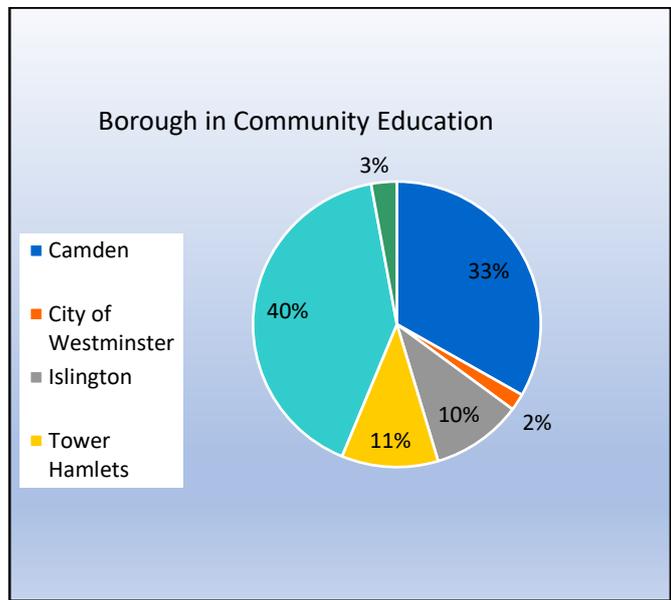
Still in employment	4%
Self Employed	1%
Retired	70%
Students not in employment	24%
students in full-time education	1%
	100



**Borough:**

Unsurprisingly 33% 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. However this year 15% of students are from East London, reflection the expansion of work we are doing in the area in preparation of our move later in 2022.

Camden	33%	104
City of Westminster	2%	6
Islington	10%	32
Tower Hamlets	11%	34
All other London Boroughs	40%	128
	3%	9



## 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 of 100% 99% 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/childbirth, mental ill health or getting re-housed. We are careful to programme classes at convenient times that meet the needs of the learner and consider 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

2020/21			2019/20			2018/19		
start	finish	% retention	start	finish	%	start	finish	%
1047	1044	100%	1535	1521	99%	2348	2330	99%

Target 2019/20	Variance MW Target	Variation from Benchmark 89%
90%	10%	13%

## 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 as much information as we would usually like because our partners were not available during lockdown due to Centre closures, furlough, or priorities in other areas. Non the less, from surveys, information from partners and empirical evidence, we were able to track a sample of students' progression over the last year,

The following information for achievement and progression was gathered from 49 participants across 9 groups and organisations.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Number of learners tracked through partners</b></li> </ul>	49
No. of learners tracked through partners progressing to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>another non-accredited programme</b> (e.g. salsa, disco, Tai Chi, Yoga &amp; YouTube yoga, art and crafts, singing, seated exercise, dance, music, textiles, on-line safety, Cil Hung, Circuit training, Keep fit &amp; Tone, Chi Kung, English on DuoLingo, painting, massage, creative writing for people with dyslexia, country dance, medical themed Zooms).</li> </ul>	26

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>a part-time qualification-bearing programme</b> (e.g. ESOL, GCSE Chemistry online, Spanish)</li> </ul>	8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>training (Work Placements)</b></li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>employment</b></li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Volunteering</b> (e.g. Shopping for neighbour, group leader to Kew, lunch club support, helping deliver food parcels, delivering online cookery sessions, befriending, gardening at Calthorpe; co-ordinator self-help Latin Group; Covid telephone befriending, shopping for vulnerable neighbour, Charity work at Barts, food bank volunteer on local Estate, volunteer helping a computer class at Sidings CC, volunteer at Third Age Project. Working towards offering Coaching and transformation therapy using hypnotherapy).</li> </ul>	15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Support groups</b> (e.g. Advisory group with Abbey CC, Support bubble, Mindfulness and Relaxation, Psychotherapy, Carers group with ODL).</li> </ul>	9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>other activity / projects</b> (e.g. community activities Lunch club, walking, allotment meetings, gardening, outdoor gym, baking, games, museums online, online talks, walking cookies, knitting, camping, galleries, hiking, baking, bingo, sewing, reading).</li> </ul>	30

## LEARNER EVALUATIONS:

During 2020/21 we received 669 (64% return rate) completed evaluations for non-accredited courses. The table below illustrates the responses.

The results of the student evaluations in 2020/21 demonstrate that students continue to enjoy the Widening Participation programme – 99% of students said that their courses were good or excellent and 99% felt they had learnt a lot; 97% said information, advice and guidance was good or excellent; 97% 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).

2020/21	
"Overall I really enjoyed the class"	99%
"Overall I learnt a lot from the class"	99%
"Overall the teacher helped me in class"	97%
"Overall what the teacher said made sense to me"	98%
"Overall the pace of the class suited me"	96%
"I was happy with advice & guidance during the course"	97%
"Overall I would like the course to continue"	99%
"I was happy with the information about other opportunities when the course finished"	95%

Records of comments are kept with the evaluations and spreadsheets from which we can respond to students' queries and celebrate with them their achievements. For example, reflecting on an exercise class at Chadswell Healthy Living Centre students said: "I was

*totally bed ridden with severe depression but, since doing the exercise class I am able to get up and get out. Since coming to the class I have got better;” “I used to give up on things and I didn't really enjoy the class. I was always fed up and had depression. The exercise class has been a huge difference and now I feel more active and want to join in.”*

#### **Feedback from a regular dance student**

EP is a longstanding student with Third Age Project, Castlehaven, and Abbey Centre who missed most of a terms dance due to an injury.

The teacher sent her videos of dances for her to do at home in her own time when she felt able. In a message to the teacher she said -

*“It is so nice to hear from you. The dance videos you are sending out is really useful to me especially with my fractured hip problem. I watched the video right away and I couldn't help but try to copy it. I am an active person and I used to go to different places to do several activities which is why I find isolation difficult. In a way, you sending me the videos helps me feel I am not missing so much. I am positive that I will still be able to join the dance classes as always because I love them so much.*

*I would love to receive some more dance videos. Thank you so much.”*

We ran some sessions for the Mary Ward Centre Over 60s Club and of singing they responded, *“Thank you very much for all your help in making our connection in the Zoom lesson yesterday. My wife P loved seeing her friends at Mary Ward once more, and really enjoyed the singing lesson. All in all, a very happy day for us both!” “I so enjoyed the singing class. Thank you so much for your help and encouragement as I miss going to the Mary Ward, the classes, the friendly people and the building”; “It's been such a joy to begin singing and meet all these people at my age. I want to continue my classes with MWC. Cici really gave me the confidence to find my voice, thank you”; “I was put off singing by my music teacher in school and I never sang to my children. This class has given me confidence since singing”.*

Latin American elders of an English conversation class shared *“for my part I am grateful to Mary Ward for keeping us in mind and learning to defend ourselves. I am very happy we have a wonderful teacher she has a lot of patience for us. Thank you for holding the classes in this pandemic because maintaining the relationship with my classmates with a bit of extra effort has given us all new faith”; “Thank you to the teacher and Mary Ward for giving me the opportunity to attend English classes online. The group is very close and friendly, the class time is very pleasant. I consider it a great success to use the zoom in such difficult moments for older people”.*

The main difference, compared to last year, is the fall in the number of students, from 91% to 64%, who felt they had met new people or made friends. This is reflective of the increased number of classes running online. People found it harder to meet and make new friends. Interestingly is the increase in number of people expressing an interest in further study at the Mary Ward Centre. The number of people saying their “confidence has increased” remains much the same as last year but is still a significant drop on the previous year. 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.

<b>% OF RESPONSES TO SOFT OUTCOMES (from a sample of student evaluations)</b>	<b>2020/21 (%)</b>	<b>2019/20 (%)</b>
"The class helped to increase my self-confidence"	77	79
"The class helped to develop my communication skills"	68	64
"The class has helped me to meet new people and make friends"	64	91
"The class helped me develop an interest in further study at the MWC"	71	48
"The class has helped me think about doing an accredited course"	5	13
"The skills I have learned helped me <i>apply</i> for paid / voluntary work"	2	9
"The skills I have learned have helped me consider paid or self-employed work"	4	3
"Improved an existing health/medical condition"	48	70
"Improved mental health and wellbeing"	66	73
"Made fewer visits to the doctor"	6	24

Taking part in courses during the pandemic has continued to improve people’s overall mental and physical health and wellbeing but we are still seeing a fall in numbers. It is unclear whether this is the impact of the second year of a pandemic. It is possible that last year people felt so much better taking classes online, even though they would prefer to meet in person, where perhaps this year it has become tiresome, and people feel less good about learning online and the impact it has had on their wellbeing.



*Digital inclusion with Emmott Estate, in partnership with Ocean Regeneration Trust*

**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 2020/21 we have continued to work with groups who find it difficult to engage in individual feedback. This worked especially well for small online groups with low level English, such as exercise for Latin Elders. With the teacher interpreting, the Outreach team would direct discussion and answer questions.

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, particularly with online classes when using the chat function on Zoom.

#### *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 we met for a picnic in the park and used this as an opportunity to find out what other types of courses they might be interested in.

## **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 move on to mainstream learning. However, it is always positive news to hear people have made that step. Several students have enrolled onto courses at various colleges, for instance students from Mind in Camden enrolled on several courses including Abstract Painting, Sewing Machine for Beginners, Spanish, Italian, Level 2 Pre-Foundation Art and Zumba Gold.

**Improved the way people feel about themselves** – Evidence from learner feedback shows that 77% of students reported that their self-confidence has increased, and learning has helped to improve their communication skills; 66% of students have also reported that learning has helped improve their health and well-being. Anecdotal partner feedback over the year indicated 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** – For a second year we were unable to deliver many classes face to face during lockdown, however we managed to

train more 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 learning** – In 2020/21 the feedback from student evaluations illustrated 71% said that doing an outreach course helped them develop an interest in further study. This is an increase from 48% in the previous year, suggesting the lockdown has inspired people to take up more learning opportunities.

**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.

**Helped people stay mentally and physically healthy** –

*“I was so pleased to make my own products. We all have our own health issues, and we can use these things to help ourselves and take it to another level. I’m living on my own, shielding and it breaks up my day. It’s very inspiring and helped me a lot with my mental health. I’ve met people I’ve never met before and it’s good to have human contact even if it’s over the screen. It’s been great. I want to thank the teacher for her time energy and kindness”.*

## 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.
- 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 Newham. We have started to develop further partnerships in Tower Hamlets along with new relations in Newham.
- We have continued work in partnership with Mind in Camden on a Healthy Minds Programme for people with mental health difficulties.
- The format of student evaluation forms was changed based on the previous year’s recommendations. With health, training/employment and soft outcomes grouped together we obtained more valuable data.
- We have sourced spaces in Newham and Hackney to run act courses for communities not linked to a specific partner organisation.

## **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 is used effectively to plan provision and make improvements, e.g. student evaluations, partner evaluations, 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 Healthy Minds 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 (74%) and retired (70%). The community outreach programme is working towards balancing the provision as it expands work with diverse communities in East London.

## **Recommendations and plans for 2021/22:**

- 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 whilst learning to live with Covid.

- Communication with Camden partners on the reduction of provision in the borough as we increase our delivery in East London.
- 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 will be continuing to develop partnerships in Tower Hamlets and Newham after the loss of many connections during the pandemic.

### **Thank you in 2020/21:**

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

Abbey Community Centre  
 Bromley by Bow Centre  
 Camden Chinese Community Centre  
 Castlehaven Community Centre  
 Chadswell Healthy Living Centre  
 City Gateway  
 Clarnico Club  
 Dragon Hall  
 Eastwick and Sweetwater  
 Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association  
 Latin American Elders/MWC  
 Mildmays Housing (Notting Hill Genesis Housing)  
 Millman Street Resource Centre  
 Opening Doors London  
 Peel Institute  
 St Hilda's East Shadwell  
 St Mungos, Covent Garden  
 Stratford Library  
 Third Age Project  
 Women at the Well