

Barlow Moor BMCA LTD.

COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

IMPACT REPORT 2021



BMCA CHAIR'S REPORT

This has been such a challenging and difficult year for all of us. However, there is still a huge amount of amazing work to recognise and celebrate at Barlow Moor Community Association and in the wider community.

The overriding highlight has been the positive and caring way in which the whole organisation has pulled together at every level during the covid pandemic to continue to provide high quality services for the community and to support vulnerable service users.

Our staff have shown great resilience and imagination in finding new and innovative methods of keeping in touch with service users and offering activities in different ways.

They have put together and delivered hundreds of activity packs so that service users can cook, do art, learn about nature, look after their well-being and do puzzles (amongst many other things!) at home. The 'cake and conversation' in peoples gardens has proved to be extremely popular. Hundreds of 'playschemes in a bag' have been delivered to local children and many families received a 'Christmas dinner in a bag'.

Young people have benefitted from exciting and caring provision both online and in support bubbles when allowed and the nursery has continued to be a safe haven for our youngest users. All these efforts and more have helped



to reduce loneliness and isolation, tackle food poverty and connect people together.

Staff have become adept at working in new situations and reacting to government restrictions and guidelines, often at very short notice. They have gone above and beyond to maintain service provision.

Our wonderful volunteers have also played an important role in preparing, delivering and taking part in these activities and as always, we value their commitment and input.

We have much to look forward to when we come out of current restrictions, not least picking up our eagerly awaited work with The Den Café which will provide targeted activities for older people and opportunities for training in hospitality and catering.

I would like to thank the board members for their dedication and support and meeting every month through the pandemic to ensure that the organisation continues to thrive through this most difficult of financial times. Huge thanks to our donors too as without them none of this work would take place.

I am so proud of everyone involved with Barlow Moor Community Association for meeting the challenges of this year with such determination and care for each other and thankful to our service users and local residents who give us such inspiration.

**Councillor
Jo Midgley
Chair of BMCA**

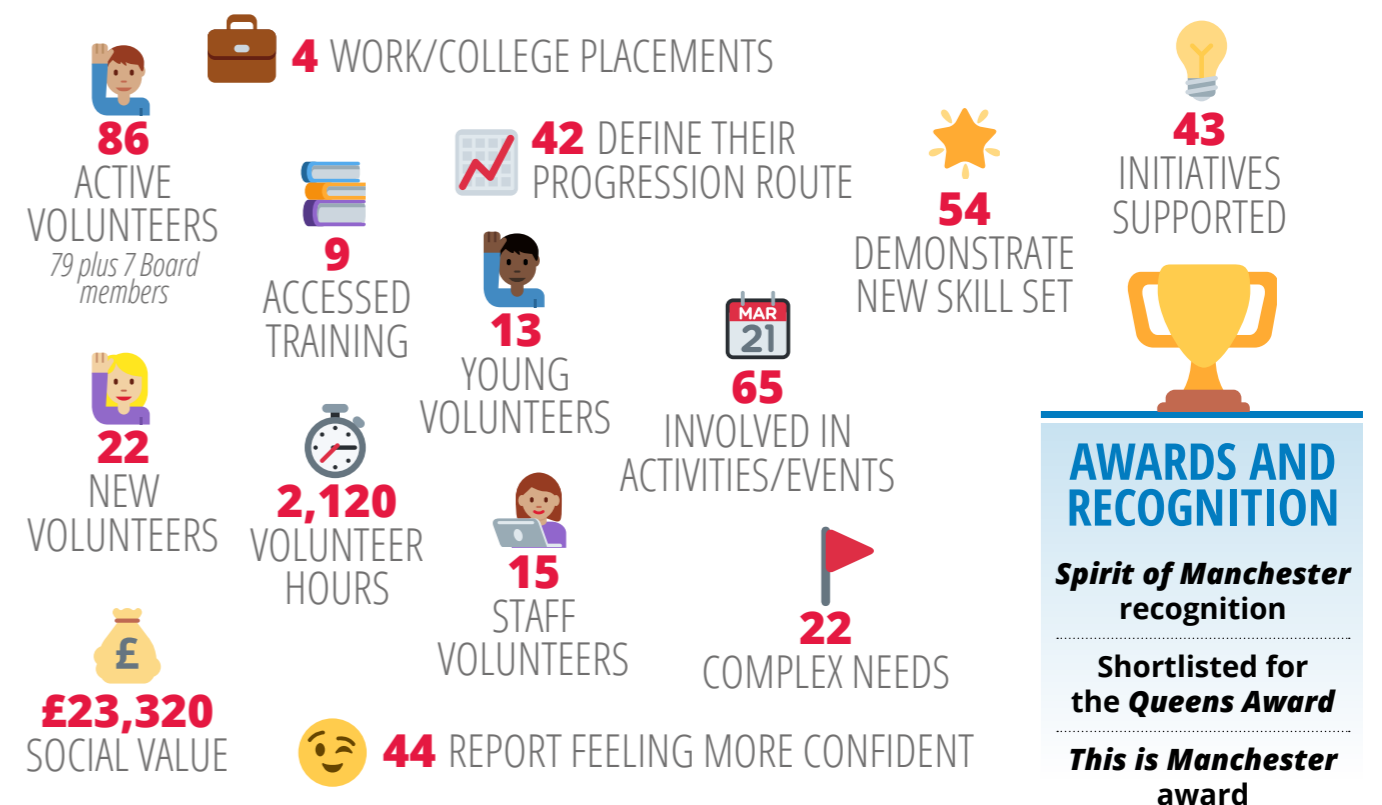
VOLUNTEERS

BMCA continues to offer a diverse range of volunteering opportunities enabling consistent growth and development even throughout a pandemic.

"I found out about BMCA at a recruitment fair that I attended. I am passionate about volunteering and wanted to broaden my input into the community. I started volunteering in the library at BMCA and then my role changed during Covid 19. I then became part of a team that delivered meals out twice per week to vulnerable people shielding or those that may be struggling financially. It was great to feel like I was helping and enabling people to have a meal that may not have. During that time, I also accessed training with BMCA via Zoom. This was a new way in working but it was great fun and good to stay connected. I really enjoy volunteering in the library and helping people in the community."

"I started volunteering a year ago and have thoroughly enjoyed the many experiences I have had. I have made lots of new friends and have been supporting many activities that take place at BMCA, everything from flower arranging to making a sleigh for Father Christmas! My role, as well as helping other parts of BMCA, which I am extremely proud of, is supporting the community café, The Den. I have been part of the planning of it opening and have felt really involved in having a say and my thoughts listened to. It is a great opportunity to help the community eat a variety of food for a small cost. I feel like I make a difference within my role and I am happy to be a part of the team."

"I started volunteering about two and a half years ago. I originally wanted to increase my confidence, meet new people and use the skills I had to support the community Centre. Since starting, I have been involved in supporting events and applied for funding that has been successful. I have undertaken training to enhance my existing skills and have put these to good use in many ways. I am now in a role of leadership within The Focus Group and help plan, manage and coordinate the events/activities programme that we deliver throughout the year. I get so much joy out of seeing the community take part in something that I have been involved in creating and enabling people to come together. With being from the local community myself, people feel more confident in sharing their ideas and suggestions with me when I am out and about and this helps when sharing ideas for future events/activities."



A VOLUNTEER'S OVERVIEW

"I have really enjoyed my time volunteering with BMCA. I have often said it is my second home and genuinely feel that way. This has given me such a confidence boost that has continued to increase and I have developed new skills by continuing to volunteer my time.

Reflecting on my journey has enabled me to see how much I am able to use my skills in my role when volunteering and supporting BMCA each week. This has really become a place where I feel like it's one big family and I often tell others about the centre and how good a place it is to be.

One of the things I am pleased about is how my whole family are involved too. This is a centre that welcomes volunteers of all ages and this helps people come together and build connections.

I am proud to be a part of a team that makes such a difference and support various activities and events that BMCA do. As part of the volunteer team, I am able to share my ideas and suggestions in planning meetings and feel I am listened to.

In 2020, I was still volunteering as the Community Chef and supporting other activities, to my delight and surprise, it was discussed with me that the community centre would be opening a Community Café, The Den, and they wanted to employ me as the chef. I felt absolutely excited at the possibility of this and being paid for something I love to do. I feel that my hard work at the centre was recognised and the staff took notice of my work and input.

I really felt involved in the planning of the opening and have a wonderful team of volunteers that support me. This was such an exciting time. It felt like the perfect job that I could have been offered.

This has really boosted my confidence in myself and I feel I have proven that if you work hard, it will help show people how dedicated and passionate you are, and hopefully could help you gain paid employment.

When lockdown hit in March, we had only had the café open a couple of days after the opening and I was devastated. I was absolutely enjoying being in the café and working as the chef, I felt important and needed. These things aren't in our control so I just had to wait until we could open again.

My family are extremely proud of me and I feel like I am setting a good example for my daughters.

Hopefully my story will give a bit of hope to those who are wanting to gain skills by volunteering and shows how you can make a difference to others as well as in your own journey and self esteem."

A VOLUNTEERS JOURNEY WITH BMCA

JULY 2019

Whilst trying to claim for universal credit J asked staff for support.

J is unemployed and struggling with their mental health.

AUGUST 2019

J became a Volunteer supporting activities/events.

J completed "Wellbeing in the workplace" with Manchester Mind.

OCTOBER 2019

J accesses job club, their confidence in using IT improving/achieves a Level 1 Health and Safety

DECEMBER 2019

J successfully achieved SIA badge.

FEBRUARY 2020

J starts a full time job just before the lock down; J has continued to work throughout.

SUMMER 2020

J continues to visit sharing how work is going and how they are now in a positive financial situation

DECEMBER 2020

J called into the Centre to wish staff a Merry Christmas.

IMPACT

Gained full time employment

Developed skills and knowledge

Increased self-esteem and confidence

Social interaction new friends

Own sense of achievement

A valued member of the volunteer team

Improved mental health & wellbeing

LIFE AS A VOLUNTEER

"I have been involved with the charity shop since its conception 2 years ago. BMCA Boutique has really become a hub for local residents and volunteers to come together, share unwanted goods, help support the community and offer a good range of items at affordable prices.

I had moved from a previous role and wanted something new. I had not volunteered in a charity shop before and looked forward to the opportunity and embraced it.

Volunteering at the shop has really given me a purpose. I really look forward to when we are open so I can chat to the local people and I feel I am there as a listening ear for them too. As a disabled lady with many health conditions it keeps me moving and sane, it has helped my mental health a lot.

I like to try and help other initiatives whenever I can as I feel this helps me learn new skills and enables me to meet more people in the community to build connections with.

I have always enjoyed volunteering and believe that if you can engage your children in taking part then this should be encouraged. My two daughters volunteer when they are free and really enjoy it. I feel that this is important as helps them meet people from different backgrounds, helps them understand the struggles

and problems some people face and gives them a sense of pride.

Volunteering makes me feel like I am giving back to society and that I am truly making a difference. This is a two-way process. I benefit from being involved by increased confidence and self-esteem, opportunities of training and access to other services whilst I give my time to others and really feeling like the community benefits from my time volunteering.

We recently organised a school uniform swap with a local resident this was a huge success, it helped so many families. Since volunteering I have now gained a qualification in retail, which I am very proud of! Volunteering in this role has really helped my mental health as I love sorting and organising so it is perfect role for me.

It feels great when you are volunteering, especially in an area that has quite a lot of low income families, being able to offer goods at very low cost prices. People are proud and I believe the charity shop respects that and this is why it is very successful. People can come, have a chat and buy items they can afford. If someone was in need of clothes that we have and no money, we would always put an emergency bag together of basic items. People need help at times and that is what we are here for.

I enjoy the friendship of the other volunteers working in



the shop also. It's a really good team we have and this is huge factor that volunteering should be made fun, my role is and so is the charity shop.

The volunteer coordinator has really been supportive and caring throughout my time at BMCA." - **Angela**

"Before volunteering I experienced anxiety and didn't really feel welcome or comfortable being in groups or helping out with parts of the community.

BMCA has become my sort of home-away-from home and I enjoy every minute I spend in the building. I still feel worried or scared when I start new things, but being a part of the community has certainly brought me out of my shell. The BMCA staff are very welcoming and great people with big smiles no matter what time it is or who the person is."

- **Eryn, 13yrs**

POSITIVE CHANGE

Whilst providing a holistic approach to tackling confidence and self-esteem is still at the heart of everything we do we have had to re-evaluate and re-adjust some delivery in order to ensure we are able to meet the increasing demands around isolation, poor mental health and connectivity compounded by the pandemic.

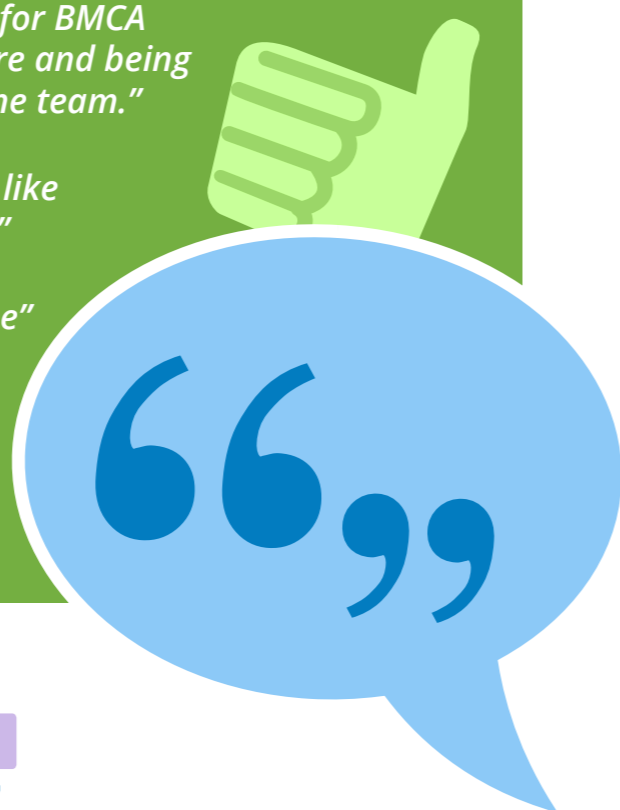
"The community wouldn't be what it is if it wasn't for BMCA being there and everybody benefits from the centre and being involved. I feel very safe being there and part of the team."

"I really benefitted from my volunteering and feel like I was made to feel very welcomed and supported."

"If it wasn't for you, I don't know where I would be"

"I think of BMCA as a beacon of light, leadership and engagement in the community."

"Thank you BMCA you have saved my life."



VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

BMCA have faced challenges this year with guidance constantly changing, and sometimes difficult to understand. With some planned activities not able to go ahead staff have had to be agile, proactive and innovative with their approach and mindful of the impact of these constant changes on the service users we work with in order to ensure we maintain our vibrant community through the most challenging of times.

SPOOKY TRAIL

Working in partnership with Chorlton Water Park we provided a Spooky Trail activity to celebrate Halloween and encourage people to get out and about in their local area whilst staying safe and following covid guidelines.

It was a great success with many volunteers supporting, young and old dressed up in costumes really getting into the spirit of the day.

"Special Thanks to our marvellous team BMCA all out early doors this morning dressing up the Water Park for our Halloween event, you are priceless lovely to see so many in fancy dress. Well Done."

"Thank you for putting on this event. Our family had so much fun! It was really nice to have something Halloween-y to do with most other activities cancelled this year."



SANTA DASH

At the end of the year, BMCA hosts a Santa's First Stop event at the community centre, unfortunately due to Covid 19 restrictions this couldn't go ahead - as the community couldn't come to see Santa we thought we could bring Santa to see the community!

Volunteers worked hard to, design and build a sleigh to meet Santa's high standards. Santa visited the whole estate, accompanied by his personal elves and even a donkey or two, delivering over 250 gifts to children and families in their gardens. The feedback has been fantastic.

"Thank you so much guys, this was an amazing thing to do"

"Thank you, this brought so much happiness to my family"

"Next year, even if you can do an event at the centre, I'd still love to see this, it was amazing"

COVID-19 AND OUR RESPONSE

"One of the best things about Chorlton is the way people have rallied round to help each other. They moved fast to tackle the immediate lockdown challenges and made a real difference for friends and neighbours hardest hit. The team at Barlow Moor Community Association, on Merseybank Avenue, is no different, but they're thinking about the longer term too." - *OPEN UP magazine Sept-Oct 2020*

MEALS ON WHEELS

During the first lockdown a local person set up a new initiative called Soul Food.

They began preparing and delivering cooked meals to those living alone or shielding. The initiative grew quickly and around June BMCA stepped in to support. We gathered the help of our volunteers and community chef and expanded on this incredible work.

ART FOR MINDFULNESS PROJECT

The affects of the pandemic has seen an increase in poor mental health and a severe lack of motivation.

We asked if art therapy would be something they would like to try and the response was overwhelming. The hidden talents within the community really shone through in our virtual art gallery.



POSTCARDS

'Thank you BMCA for the beautiful postcard that arrived today. A special thanks to Eryn for the stunning drawing and hopeful message. Also, a big thank you to all the children that contributed. As Eryn wrote, 'it can be difficult, but we are all in it together.'

'What a lovely way of keeping in touch, reducing isolation and spreading some joy! Postcards designed by young people with a personal message for service users'

Remote Cooking on a Budget	6 people
April Activity Packs – puzzle's and Adult Colouring Books	50 packs
Cake and Conversation Remote	27 packs
BMCA Buddies	50 in the group
May Family Activity Packs	97 packs
Postcards	150 postcards/people
Brunch and Board Games	32 packs
Tablets and Wifi	29 tablets 11 Mifis 19 Mobile Phones 2 Laptops
Meals on Wheels	73 people accessed 638 Meals Delivered
Art for Mindfulness	29 packs/people
Grow your own Kitchen packs	40 packs/people
School Uniform Project	150 families



FAMILY ACTIVITY PACKS

'Thank you so much, our daughter was over the moon about the hoola hoop and skipping rope especially because they were the things she liked to play with at After School Club.'

'Thank you so much it was a lovely surprise and the kids are loving all of it.'

'Thank you so very much. We are very lucky to have such as lovely bunch.'



FOOD PARCELS

In partnership with Rapid Relief Team, Morrison's and Aldi we were able to provide food parcels for local people over the Christmas period.

Each Food Parcel contained enough food to last for four days and even some nice treats! This ensured parents/ carers were able to provide food for themselves and their children over the Christmas period, going some way to combat the effects of the financial strain Christmas brings to families and the job losses and negative effects caused by the pandemic.



SUPPORT BAUBLES

Since 2018, we have worked with City of Trees and MCC looking at the possibility of a Christmas tree that would grow with the community and one that could be dressed each year by local families on the estate.

We now have a beautiful 6ft tree where the community can hang their own hand made decorations. This year staff and volunteers helped dress the tree and we had a lights switch on. Support baubles were also placed on the tree - support baubles were our take on the "support bubble", clear plastic baubles containing useful contact information such as MIND, Samaritan support, Young Carers advice line, BMCA, 42nd Street and more, allowing those that may struggle mentally or emotionally over the holiday period access the support they need.

CHRISTMAS SUPPORT



106

ADULTS AND CHILDREN WITH CHRISTMAS DINNER



41

FAMILIES WITH FOOD PARCELS ON CHRISTMAS EVE



135

CHILDREN RECEIVING CHRISTMAS PRESENTS

BE-FRIENDING

'The centre gave me a reason for living, I don't know what I would do without you.'



LIFE IN LOCKDOWN - MY STORY

At the beginning of the lockdown in March 2020, it wasn't too bad. I thought it would just pass, it was a novelty, so I persevered with it and kept to the rules and had to shield. Things weren't too bad and the weather was good so I concentrated on my garden and this gave me a bit of focus.

When we got through that and the second lockdown came, I wasn't prepared for it and it became scary and with so many deaths, it was a very grim time and I really felt the impact and had had enough of being alone and stuck inside. I thought I would be getting back to volunteering at the charity shop soon and was devastated to not be able to go back.

I wasn't worried about catching Covid 19 but the effect it was having on me being so isolated and my mental health deteriorating. If it wasn't for the phone calls from BMCA it would have been even more difficult. When the third lockdown came, I was at my lowest ebb. My depression had really kicked in, I didn't want to carry on at the mindset I was at. I had lost interest in all the gardening I had done in the summer that I had worked so hard on.

I reflected a lot on how far I had come and how I had gone downward and became more isolated and not wanting to talk to people. BMCA has given me support and had really taken me on a journey to build confidence up and access external opportunities, but without actively being involved in volunteering, it has become so difficult to see a way out. It has become worse on my physical condition as my volunteering helped me get out and exercise and now I cannot do that. Waking up in the morning brings worries for me as to how I will feel as my health is worsening.

I had come such a long way before Covid 19 hit and it is upsetting to be how I am feeling now. I have had personal upset which hasn't helped during this time. I had so much and now I feel I have nothing with all my restrictions with shielding. When BMCA come by or phone,



*I just want to say that the contact **BMCA** has continued to do has meant a lot to me and without that I don't know where I would be. I am feeling a bit more positive now and trying to look forward to when I can get back into the volunteering.*

it really brightens my day and helps me feel connected.

The virus has made me feel like I don't want to do things and have lost interest. However, I am trying to look forward to when I can come back to volunteering at BMCA as this was where I grew into the person I was and I will be surrounded by people who care about me.

I just want to say that the contact BMCA has continued to do has meant a lot to me and without that I don't know where I would be. I am feeling a bit more positive now and trying to look forward to when I can get back into the volunteering.

ZOOM, ZOOM, ZOOM

Zoom, zoom, zoom! People zooming here, zooming there these last few weeks. When I first heard the word, I'd no idea what that meant apart from its usual meaning. I kept wondering what was zoom.

As I slowly realised what it was from the context, I came across a short article looking at it from both positive and negative sides. The positive is how amazing the technology is in that you can get in touch with people easily not just to speak but also see each other on the computer screen and the negative side is about privacy and personal data issues.

An opportunity to learn about it came up when Nicola, our Volunteer Co-ordinator asked whether I would be interested in using Zoom so that we users of BMCA could get connected to help us through this lockdown period.

I said yes and Nicola sent me an invitation to join her on Zoom on a certain date at a specific time. The time came and through trial and error, with Nicola guiding me through each step over the phone and with the help of Rachel too, another staff member, I got connected. At last there was this picture of Nicola smiling at me. Getting through (to me) the maze of technical details and at the end to see both Nicola and Rachel made me laugh with joy.



One last hitch though, when I asked them whether they could hear me, they said yes but indicated to me to put the phone down as I was still clutching it. Once I'd done that they couldn't hear me any more so I had to find the button to 'unmute'. Anyway all's well that ends well. We had a little chat and that was that. And I had learned something new.

So I'd recommend Zoom to anyone who wants to try. It can be used for one to one conversation or with a group where small pictures of each individual can be seen on the screen. If you want to initiate a call yourself, you need to register as the host to send out an invitation. I find it fun and easy to set up, in my case with help but I'm sure a lot of people who are more proficient with computers will sail through it.

And after what's not to like when you can see friendly faces and listen to kind voices?

Khin Thant Han - 4 April 2020



PARTNERSHIPS

#Nevermoreneeded has been trending this year in acknowledgement of the work of charities and community projects across the country - this extends to partnerships. Without our partners we wouldn't have been able to reach as many service users as we have this year.

THE DEN

After re-launching The Den – Community Café in partnership with Ivy Church (Eden project) as part of the OPeN's project in March, we were only open for one day before we closed as part of the National Lockdown.

September we were able to re-open on a takeaway basis only with our newly employed Community Chef and two Volunteers.

During the period of opening (and before the second lockdown) we received feedback stating 'my sandwich was lovely' and 'I am so glad to see the Café back open.'

The Café provides a low cost meal helping to reduce Social Isolation, and increasing Community Cohesion.

WINTER WARMERS

Through our strong partnership work and jointly funded Winter Warmer project with Southway Housing and Buzz we have produced and delivered 320 Winter Warmer Bags

We have worked closely with Buzz to continue distribution of the Winter Warmer bags to other local groups including Merseybank Quids in and Arrowfield Quids in and local Good Neighbours groups.

NHS

BMCA is an important partner in the neighbourhood contributing to improving health inequalities. They're regular contributors to the

neighbourhood landscape through participation in our partnership meetings and particularly the mental health task team. They also supported a targetted initiative looking at hard to reach patients with chronic conditions that resulted in an engagement event at BMCA in November 2019.

BMCA were also a partner in supporting the design and delivery of a SAD lightbox mental well-being project on Mersey bank over winter 2019-20, and actively engaged and showed flexibility and innovation to ensure the project got off the ground.

Their ability to adapt and still provide important services throughout the pandemic has been invaluable, taking over a cooking project that had started through mutual aid when the individual could no longer do this, and maintaining contact with members through phone contact and delivering supplies and packs to vulnerable individuals in the Community.

More recently BMCA were able to support the development of targeted work to encourage the flu vaccine in harder to reach groups within the Estate, and hosted training sessions and clinics to enable access to the vaccine for the most at risk. We look forward to the continued development of the partnership through related work to support the Covid !9 vaccine and mythbusting as well as the development and continued contribution to health and challenging inequality in our neighbourhood.

Fiona Vincer - Health Development Coordinator

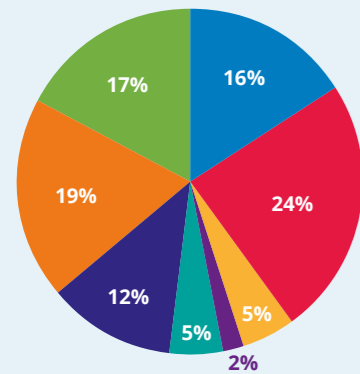


LESSONS LEARNT



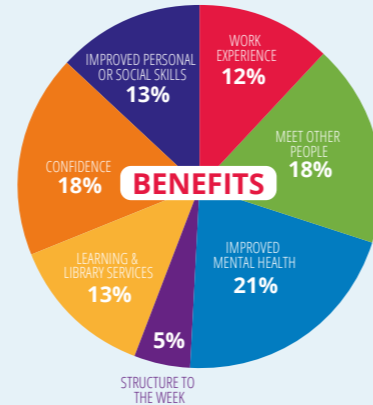
VOLUNTEER CONSULTATION REPORT DEC 20

This report focusses upon the volunteers at BMCA including the Board, themselves all local people volunteering their time and expertise. Our People, Our Place determined three primary outcomes and it is against these outcomes that BMCA will be measured at the conclusion of the funding cycle.



WHAT WAS YOUR ROLE WITHIN THIS PROJECT?

- LIBRARY
- EVENT/GEN VOLUNTEER
- IT SKILLS TRAINER
- CREDIT UNION
- KITCHEN VOLUNTEER
- CHARITY SHOP/DEN/CAFE VOLUNTEER
- SUPPORT WORKER
- SERVICE USER



Respondents were asked how they think BMCA might do things differently or better...

MARKETING

- "Marketing locally"
- "Feel that the Centre is under used by the local people"
- "Increased signposting in the Volunteer opportunities in-house"
- "Cost of printing reduced or removed for struggling families"
- "Website updated - more user friendly"
- "Advertising and marketing could be better. More use of social media might help"

STAY THE SAME!

- "Nothing - Hope that the National Lottery will give the Centre some money"
- "Thank you for being there when I needed you all"
- "All staff at the centre perfect from what I saw!"
- "Do a great job in everything you do and I don't think you could do anything better"
- "I feel BMCA does so much already"
- "We do a fab job, nothing could go better"

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

- "Do more activities include day trips including family days out"
- "More free dinners"
- "More trips"
- "Sport could be added e.g. archery, rounders"

TRAINING

- "More practical training so people can get experience & get jobs they need in the future"
- "More volunteer meet-ups"
- "More training around emotional wellbeing and managing these things"

ANYTHING EXTRA?

- "Provide transport through a BMCA minibus"
- "Maybe look at more sessions/activities for different faiths/cultures to come together and get to know each other through sharing"

Unsurprisingly given the gushing endorsement of everything BMCA by the people responding to the survey, 100% of respondents said that they would, and in most cases had, recommended BMCA to others.

The full report can be seen on request.



FINAL THOUGHTS

As I read through these pages I am (even after 27 years) in awe of the work and achievements of our community.

Such inspired ideas as the "Christmas Bauble" project, simple yet so meaningful and effective, an amazing, discreet way for local people to gain access to vital information and support when at their most vulnerable, seems to sum up the ethos of our work.

Stories of hope emerging from a place of despair show the strengths and resilience of local people when a kind word is shared and a helping hand extended.

People in need have skills, strengths and ideas, and this project, through BMCA, has harnessed their hopes and aspirations through listening and valuing their experiences and knowledge. They have together achieved so much and with the funds invested have made enormous positive changes to local people's lives and have

truly embraced the philosophy of "Our people Our Place" They demonstrate this through telling us, throughout this report, how they have shared and gained so much through a determination to improve life and services for each other

The pandemic has been and continues to be a global tragedy, but local people are resolute that it does not define them, that they will recover together and realise their ambitions for each other and the community as they embark on the next stage of their journey "Our Lives, Our Futures"

With continued investment together they will succeed

Julie Mrozek - CEO



BMCA

A great place to spend the day.

*If you want a bit of chatter, come
right in and have a natter.*

*A slice of cake, a cup of tea, we'll
even give you lunch for free*

*Exercise! A bit of a chore Mature
Movers you will adore.*

*If you love a bit of baking, cooking
lessons here for the taking.*

*Computer skills not up to scratch, for
you we have the perfect match.*

*Finding work! Not a doubt Janette
is here to help you out.*

*A one to one, we know the score,
all of that and so much more.*

*An open door, a friendly smile,
come and join us for a while.*

By Maddie Dawson

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