

BMCA LTD.
Barlow Moor
COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION
@ The Julie Mrozek Community Centre

IMPACT REPORT 2021-2022



CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION JOANNA MIDGLEY

It is with great pleasure and pride that I introduce the Barlow Moor Community Association Impact Report for 2021/2022. It has been another challenging year as we continued to deal with the ongoing impacts of the Covid pandemic and then started to open the centre and relaunch the face-to-face delivery of sessions whilst keeping service users and staff safe. I would like to thank our amazing staff team, volunteers and Board for being caring, adaptable and flexible as always as we met those challenges together.

It is brilliant to see the centre so full of life again and so much has been delivered to improve the quality of life, aspirations and enjoyment of our local residents.

A major highlight of 2021 was Merseyfest – back bigger and better. It felt joyful to be together again in person enjoying each other's company, music, fun, food and a wide range of activities on the playing fields; and it didn't rain!

This was followed by other very successful and well attended events like Spookyfest for Halloween and our brilliant Christmas festivities including Santa's First Stop.

Our day-to-day support for local people is second to none, and helping people get back into work and achieve qualifications can have a huge impact.

Food and fuel poverty and the cost-of-living crisis are big issues locally, and we are aiming to support people wherever we can – this has been a major focus over the last year and will continue to be as we move forward.

Children and young people suffered greatly during the pandemic and missed out on many opportunities, but BMCA has been a constant source of support throughout. Our Youth and Play team are adept at thinking of new experiences and challenges to engage our young people.

Our links with the community are stronger than ever and the Charity Shop on the shopping parade is a firm favourite. The Community Café is now open again for two days a week and this is proving to be a great place for people to meet and socialise. These valuable community assets and many activities and events at the centre would not be possible without our fantastic volunteers who staff them. We genuinely appreciate their time and input. A small group of volunteers were able to attend a thank you afternoon tea with the Lord Mayor of Manchester arranged by local councillors.

Barlow Moor Community Association continues to gain respect around the city and with our many partners, and we work collaboratively with many organisations to better the lives of our residents. We were shortlisted for a Manchester Be Proud Award and a Spirit of Manchester Award for our work.

In December 2021 we said goodbye to our outgoing CEO Julie Mrozek. Julie has been the lynchpin of BMCA for 28 years and an inspirational leader. We will miss her very much, but have wonderful memories of her time at BMCA and her many achievements. The building has been renamed The Julie Mrozek Community Centre in her honour. Toni and Becky are now our joint CEOs and have hit the ground running and slipped seamlessly into their new roles.

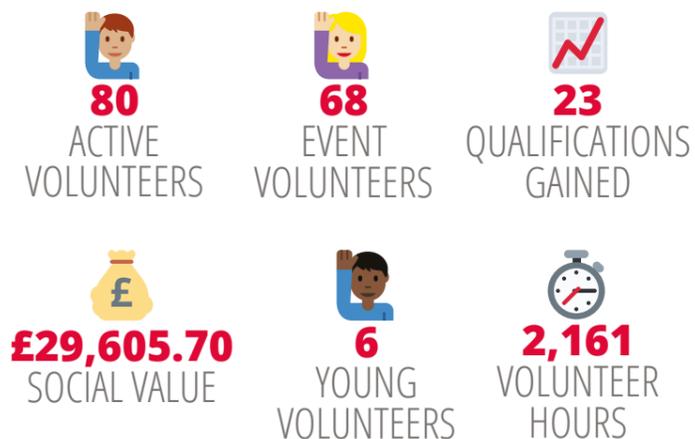
A final thanks to all our funders and partners without whom we would not be able to do the things we do. And to all our service users who make BMCA the fantastic community-focused, vibrant place that it is.

Here's to another amazing year ahead!



VOLUNTEERS

"When you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in."
– Author Unknown



AFTERNOON TEA WITH THE LORD MAYOR

In November our volunteers received an invitation to afternoon tea with the lord mayor in his chambers.

Our volunteers enjoyed tea and sandwiches, with a bit of cake and a natter with other volunteers from across the city.



A VOLUNTEERS JOURNEY

L had an existing connection with the centre through family and was aware of the service that BMCA offered, so decided to register as a volunteer in 2019. After completing their induction, they expressed an interest in supporting the health and well-being activities and events within the centre.

During regular conversations with the volunteer coordinator L discussed their previous job roles and that they had an interest in **training** and developing their skills to start on the road to returning to the workplace. L felt that after being at home with their family they wanted to reconnect with the community and start to make a difference to others as well as use their free time in an effective and worthwhile way.

L completed a number of short courses which could enhance their job opportunities but also enable them to do more within the centre. By completing a food hygiene course L could start to serve and prepare food, this opened up the opportunity to volunteer in a new BMCA venture, The Den, a local community café.

Along with developing the knowledge needed to work in the catering sector, L was able to refresh their IT skills, re-learning something they had not done for a while.

L started to work as part of a small team to prepare The Den for opening, this was to be a grand event and linked to our AGM, both taking place on the same day. L was a key member of the team and was proud of their role. L demonstrated skills including team work, time management, flexibility, communication and customer service. The event was a success and L couldn't wait to get started, sharing ideas of how the community café could move forward.

Then Covid hit and everything stopped!

This was not going to stop L from continuing their journey and so when offered the opportunity to achieve a volunteering qualification they joined. This was a new way of learning for everyone involved. Using zoom to attend a class and sending completed work via email. This was another opportunity to update and refresh IT skills. As well as home schooling their own children L completed their qualification with a great sense of achievement.

Over the summer of 2020 L returned to the centre to reopen the community café, very much looking forward to welcoming customers, preparing teas and coffees (having received some training on the coffee machine) and being part of the team.

Unfortunately, this was not able to happen as extensive building work was needed on the café. This did not deter L and they came up with the idea of using a space in the centre to serve take away teas, coffees and breakfast to the local community. This worked and was greatly appreciated by all, but more importantly allowed L to continue their journey and be back volunteering. This not only helped others but their own well-being after not being able to see others for such a long period they felt that they could refocus.

Christmas 2020 was going to be very different but L was committed to being part of any event and was very much involved in the planning and preparation of BMCA taking Christmas into the community. Using their design and creative talents L worked to create Santa's sleigh. The response from the community was overwhelming and L had assisted in bringing the community together in a memorable event for everyone.

When the centre was asked to put together and deliver in excess of 2500 play scheme in a bag for children within the South Manchester area to 10 different schools we asked L to help. Happy to assist, as a driver this meant they could assist with the delivery to schools. Due to the numbers and locations this meant excellent time management was needed.

As L became more confident and motivated they decided to update their CV and apply for suitable work. Attending job club and through employability support L successfully gained an interview and was quickly offered a job.

Feedback from L

*"I have really enjoyed my volunteering journey at BMCA. Even though I have **gained employment** with their support I hope to continue being a volunteer when I can. I came to the centre as I want to help my local community more and have had a connection with the centre for a number of years.*

*Whilst at the centre I can't believe how much I have managed to do, participating in the **training and gaining my qualifications** has really help my **confidence and knowledge** when applying for work.*

*My **social skills** have developed along with my **motivation** and I have already been asked to apply for a **promotion** at work, which I have done.*

*I am most **proud** of being able to help in general, making people smile and gaining my qualifications."*

POSITIVE CHANGE

"For every positive change you make in your life, something else also changes for the better – it creates a chain reaction." – Leon Brown

WALK AND TALK

Walk and Talk has massively increased since restrictions eased. With around 8 – 10 regular service users joining us on a weekly basis for a walk around Chorlton Water Park. This year we have worked in partnership with the Conservation Volunteers to offer an eight-week project to promote nature in the local community. Within this the group have been bird spotting, looking at nature in the water and identifying trees.

'Thank you to Rachel, Rebecca and Ruth for today's walk, I loved looking at the local nature, it's good to know what we can do to help the nature in our local area.'



GARDENING

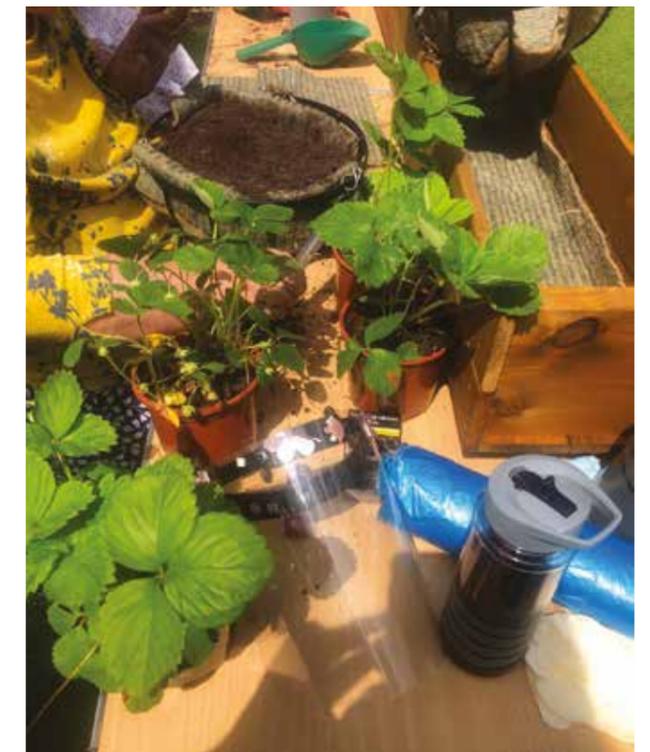
We have introduced a new Gardening project, with service users showing interest and keen volunteers wanting to make a difference to the area turning an unused space into a welcoming environment. The gardening project has enabled local people to learn **new skills**, increase **community cohesion**, expand on **communication skills**, **improve mental and physical wellbeing** along with **reducing loneliness and isolation**.

'It was an amazing experience getting involved with the gardening project. Seeing the fruitfulness of my handy work.'

'The best bit was seeing the produce from my hands' work.'

'I was so at peace in the garden.'

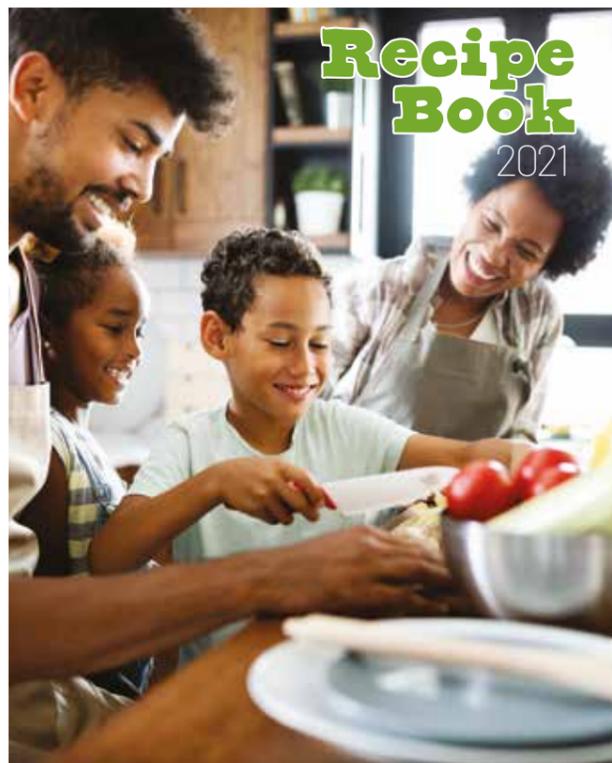
'The support you and your colleagues gave me was amazing.'



This year we have seen an increase in the support needed around food and financial support. We continue to offer Food Bank Vouchers, Food Parcels and other activities around food such as Community Lunches and introducing food provision into existing sessions.

RECIPE BOOK

Over the summer we offered an additional 'Lets Cook' session for parents and carers to attend while their children were enjoying Play Scheme. Some examples of the meals we learnt to cook included; Sausage, Mash and Onion Gravy, Spaghetti Bolognese, Chilli and Pasta Bake. Through this we have also been able to produce our very own BMCA Recipe Book to enable our service users to take the recipe's learnt home with them to cook for their families.



HOLIDAY SUPPORT FUND

BMCA became a referral hub to enable local people access to the Household Support Fund. Through this we supported 16 individuals to receive grants of either £70 or £100 with a total of £1390 applied for. This money supported individuals who are struggling financially to purchase food, pay bills, or put gas and electric on their meter.



217

ADULTS SUPPORTED



66

ACCESSED FINANCIAL INFORMATION & ADVICE



85

LEVEL 1 & 2 QUALIFICATIONS ACHIEVED



15

JOB OUTCOMES



35

CPD STAFF TRAINING COURSES



86

ACCESSING HEALTH & WELLBEING

HATE CRIME AWARENESS



During Hate Crime Awareness week, 25 of our young people got involved in creating a campaign to end hate crime and encourage people to report it; making posters, holding candle vigils, designing t-shirts, baking cakes and making street art. The young people were very involved and vocal in early discussions around types of hate crime and their own experiences as well as very enthusiastic and creative when deciding on ideas of how to convey their message.

All elements of the project were designed to be age appropriate with Junior club 5-8 years focusing on ideas of unity, compassion and equality and created flyers, posters and flags conveying these messages. Senior youth 13+ went into the more complex ideas and specific types of hate crimes and the effects these can have on individuals and society. They then created the t-shirts and the video concept relating to these messages. Junior generation, 9-12 years, then took this material as well as some of their own and wore the t-shirts whilst walking around the local area spreading awareness, putting the posters and flyers in local shops.

The young people filmed the project from start to finish with some of the older ones volunteering in the younger sessions. This youth led approach and its successful outcomes have definitely given many of the young people a sense of ownership, pride and self- belief, which they have vocalised through the project and since.

Comments made by the young people

'Projects like this are good, what else can we do next'.

'I enjoyed researching the songs and hearing their messages'

another stated

'I really enjoyed the filming and I now want to buy my own camera'

Local people who spoke with the young people during some activities and the campaign around the local area commented on what a good idea this was which helped with changing perceptions of young people and increasing community cohesion. The final video we created for this campaign is available online <https://youtu.be/t1eAeR2zgw>



724

CHILDREN & YOUNG ACCESSED PROVISION



8 WEEKS OF PLAY SCHEME



32

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE TOOK PART IN SOCIAL ACTION



28

ACCESSED FOOD VOUCHER SUPPORT



15

EHA'S AND FAMILY SUPPORT MEETINGS

CONSULTATIONS

It was a busy summer full of fun activities and consultations, the children and young people took part in a survey for the plans to upgrade Chorlton Park playground.

Manchester Play Network, Manchester City Council and Young Manchester are working together to update the Manchester Play Strategy. Our children and young people also had their input in the Play strategy consultation completing an online survey which will feed into the updated play strategy later this year.



BUILDING CONFIDENCE

Service user J came to the Centre to enquire about the courses that we run in the Learning Hub. They had recently bumped into an old friend who they had not seen for a number of years and the friend told them about a course that they had recently completed at the Centre.

J explained that having completed qualifications whilst at school and then at college, they had not been employed since having young children and would like to start learning and gaining qualifications which would help them return to work.

Whilst completing an initial advice and guidance session with J they explained that they really wanted to look for a role that would fit in with their children who had all recently started school.

J decided to enroll on the Level 1 Preparing to Work in Schools course. From the first session, J engaged with all the other learners and seemed comfortable in the setting, answering questions when asked and sharing experiences.

The sessions allowed J to develop friendships and this also developed their confidence. Towards the end J expressed an interest in continuing their learning and asked to go onto the next level of the qualification.

During the time between the courses J attended the Centre to receive support in completing an application form for a role found within a local school. We completed the application process and J was invited to attend an interview. Unfortunately, J was informed that due to a change in circumstances the role had been put on hold indefinitely.

This did have an effect on their confidence but through discussion we were able to identify that they had been successful at part of the process and this in itself had been a learning curve.

J started the level 2 support work in schools and colleges course with a strong desire to achieve the qualification. Once again, confidence, self-belief and motivation grew and J became aware of a volunteering opportunity in a local primary school.

Supported by their peers and through discussion within the group J received some hints and tips around what to expect at an informal chat with the deputy head teacher regarding the volunteer position.

J has been offered the volunteering role, which will allow J to put their knowledge into practice and gain excellent skills and experience.

Whilst attending the Centre J has received help with accessing benefits available through completion of a benefit checker. J attended job club and 1-1 employability support; writing a CV, producing a cover letter and completing an application form.

By attending the Centre J has become more motivated, gained confidence and gained a social circle whilst achieving 2 qualifications in the professional area J wishes to pursue a career in.

VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

“Alone we can do so little; together, we can do so much” – Helen Keller



YOUTH LED PLANNING

We held an ‘Away Day’ type session with our young people, the session was modelled on how we plan our sessions and event timetables. We first mind mapped what types of activities and trips the young people would want to have going forward - we split these into three categories, food and cooking, sports activities and general activities and for each we discussed what we would need to do or get to do them i.e. shopping list for meals/cooking, new dodgeballs and trips down to the field for football, music/video equipment etc.

We then looked at important causes, issues the young people felt affected them, or that they felt strongly about and discussed ways in which we could put on events or activities to raise awareness or campaign around these topics. These included things like improving the local area, Hate crime awareness, Knife crime, LGBT & BLM awareness campaigns and events, community fairs and social events and more. We then put these into a calendar, planning which activities could be done each week with the aim of creating a diverse set of events and activities in line with the skills for life principles.

Just from the planning alone the young people **demonstrated organisation, communication and teamwork skills.**



CRAFT GROUP

Our craft group has continued to expand with individuals coming together to enjoy a range of craft activities including; card making, crocheting, painting and knitting. The cards are sold for a small donation to enable the group to buy more resources to produce more cards. The group were happy to be back in the Centre



AUTUMN FALLS

Our older people enjoyed a two course meal, falls prevention information pack (including leaflets, slippers and safety tools) along with an information talk around Climate change thanks to our partnership with Groundwork.

after the closures due to Government restrictions feedback included:

‘I am so looking forward to coming back for the card making group, I have missed it.’

‘It is so lovely to be able to come out of the house to the centre on a regular basis after such a long period of time.’

‘I thoroughly enjoyed today, thank you so much, it just shows how we all need to work together to help tackle climate change too.’

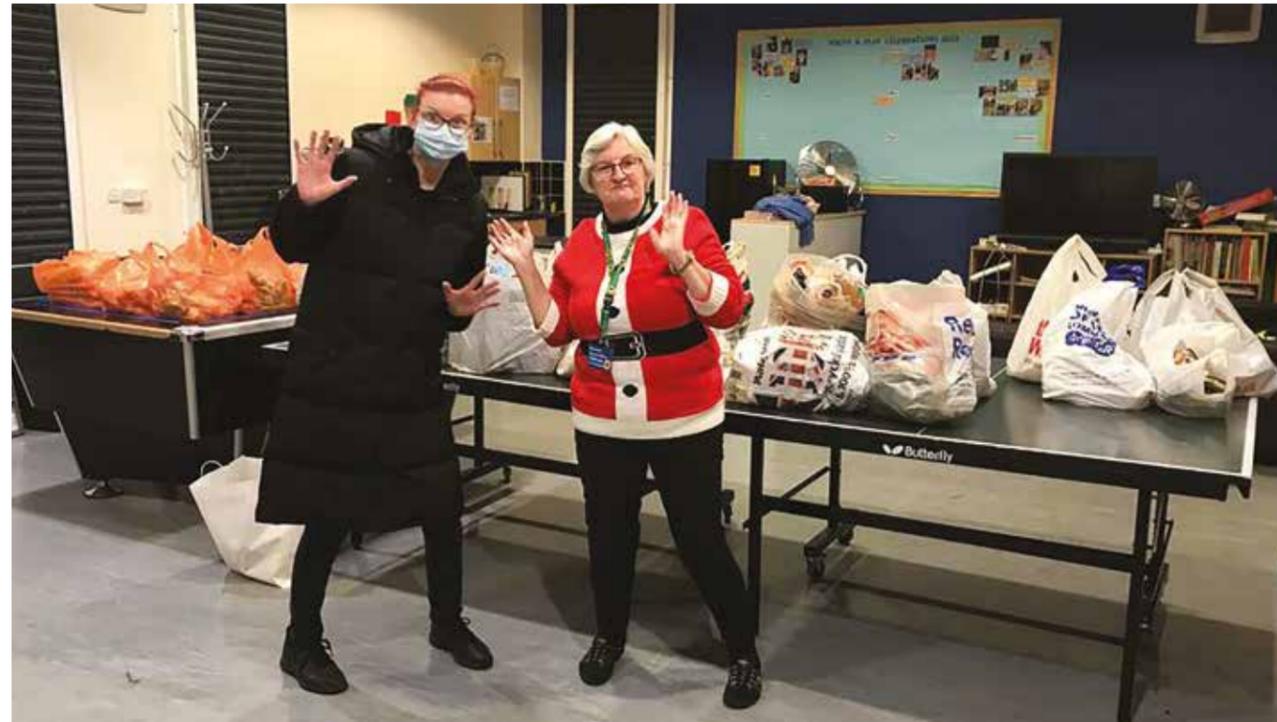
‘The information in the bag will be so helpful, I can now have torches around the house to be able to help move around when it is dark, thank you.’

CHRISTMAS DINNER IN A BAG

This year we offered families in financial difficulty, Christmas Dinner in a bag, this included everything you need for a Christmas Dinner – Turkey, Pigs in Blankets, Crackers, Napkins, Shloer, Biscuits, Mince Pies and more. Feedback from this provision included;

'Wow, thank you so much, this is amazing, I didn't expect this at all.'

'Thank you so much, I literally have everything I need here for Christmas Day, this is a massive help.'



£ **£1390** APPLIED FOR TO SUPPORT 16 INDIVIDUALS

109 COMMUNITY LUNCHES ENJOYED

30 HALF TERM 'FUN' FOOD PARCELS CREATED

140 BREAKFAST PACK DISTRIBUTED

OVER 200 FOOD PARCELS ISSUED

CHRISTMAS DAY DINNER

This year we adapted our Christmas Day dinner from face to face delivery to home deliveries to ensure the safety of our service users. Although we would have preferred to have our face to face Christmas dinner the alternative option still had a positive impact on those service users who accessed this support. Through this 13 older people received a Christmas Day dinner, dessert, present, mince pies and drink to celebrate Christmas Day. Services users enjoyed seeing and speaking to our volunteers on Christmas Day reporting **reduced loneliness and isolation and improved mental health and wellbeing.**

NEIL SAND'S CHRISTMAS MEMORIES – THEATRE TRIP

Our yearly theatre trip to watch Neil Sands was enjoyed by all; our older people enjoyed a sing-along to Christmas songs and hymns with a live performance. The older people enjoyed it so much that they requested to attend the mid-year performance in June 2022 for the Jubilee celebration.

COMMUNITY LUNCHES

In January 2021 we re-introduced our monthly Community Lunches with over 30 individuals attending per event. Each session saw a hot two course meal with either a game of prize bingo or quiz, the lunch was enjoyed by all.

Feedback from this included;

'Thank you so much for lunch today, it was lovely'

'It was nice to have these back, thank you so much.'



The community lunches increase community cohesion, reduce loneliness and isolation and improve mental health and wellbeing.

 CHRISTMAS DINNER IN A BAG – **29** FAMILIES/**99** INDIVIDUALS

 CHRISTMAS EVE SURPLUS FOOD – **28** FAMILIES

 CHRISTMAS DAY – **13** INDIVIDUALS

 NEIL SANDS CHRISTMAS MEMORIES THEATRE TRIP – **13** OLDER PEOPLE

During our annual Blackpool trip local families enjoyed fish and chips, a walk along the sea-front and of course some shopping.

'I really enjoyed myself today, I have had some fish and chips, got some fresh air and had a change from being in Chorlton all the time'

'I really enjoyed today, I'm shattered now but I really enjoyed myself.'

Our Llandudno day trip enabled older people to go out of their local area and explore and discover new things, some older people enjoyed a meal out with friends, some explored the shops and some enjoyed a very wet and windy walk around the town centre.



 BLACKPOOL – **18** LOCAL PEOPLE

 WAR TIME TEA DANCE – **25** OLDER PEOPLE

 LLANDUDNO – **26** INDIVIDUALS

 CRAFT MAKING – **9** INDIVIDUALS ON A WEEKLY BASIS

MERSEYFEST

This year we held our third annual Merseyfest on the Parkway Playing Fields off the Mersey Bank Estate; a fun day and information sharing event that is completely free to access for the local community. After the turbulent year we have had, the event was much enjoyed by the community with activities including:

- Inflatables
- Reptiles
- Face painting
- Covid Vaccination Van
- Information Stalls
- Live entertainment including a Magician and singers
- Free food for all

Through partnership work we were able to expand our offer this year with many local organisations coming to support the event including; Chorlton Arts Festival, Citizens Advice, Be Well and RSPB. Overall Merseyfest brought a much needed sense of 'normality' to the community allowing community members of all ages to enjoy the event.

<https://youtu.be/KwGsF3iTxBI>



ATTENDEES – 600



WAR TIME TEA DANCE

Our War Time Tea Dance was a great success bringing people together to communicate, reduce loneliness and isolation and meet new people. During this event we had live entertainment singing War Time themed songs, a themed quiz, complimentary raffle and Afternoon Tea. The event was enjoyed by all with feedback received such as:

'The Tea Dance was amazing, the tables and room looked amazing, the staff was so helpful and although I was nervous going into the room for the first proper event in 17months I really enjoyed it, thank you.'



SPOOKY FEST

Our senior youth group really wanted to give back and make a difference within their community and show themselves in a positive light, as a staff team we supported the young people to plan and deliver a family fun day event for Halloween. This was all delivered in a local park and the young people planned activities that would suit all age ranges; they did this by looking back at other community events BMCA have delivered and evaluated what had worked well.

Overall the event was a massive success with 203 individual children and young people in attendance as well as many more adult family members; we estimate over 300 people in total.

Quotes from members of the community

"It was fantastic"

"Frightened to death, Fantastic"

"Excellent loved it"

"The young people of this community should be proud of themselves"

"Great fun for families in the half term"

OUTREACH

CHARITY SHOP

With the help of a small team of our volunteers the charity shop has remained open (when restrictions allowed) throughout the last 12 months. Our aim for 2022 is to open a third day to expand our community assets and provide further opportunities for volunteering, retail experience and shopping!

THE DEN

This year we have re-opened The Den, our community café. This has enabled local people an alternative, affordable place to meet new people, have light refreshments and a safe space to go to. Re-opening the café has had a positive impact on the local community with feedback including

'It is so lovely having the café open again, it's really what the estate needs'

'I really enjoy being able to go somewhere for a coffee and sandwich.'

PARTNERS

CHRISTMAS EVE SURPLUS FOOD

Working in partnership with Aldi and Lidl, BMCA collected a large amount of surplus food from stores to be given out to local families in need. This prevented a large amount of food being disposed of and enabled families to receive food bags on Christmas eve to help over the Christmas period.

From session delivery to large events like Mersey fest we couldn't do it without the support of our partners.





LIFE AFTER COVID



Although Covid hasn't gone away we are learning to readjust to a new way of living; social distancing has become a habit and face masks are the new norm. As we try to find our feet again, re-establish relationships and re-engage with the wider community we are now facing another challenge in the Cost of Living Crisis. BMCA will continue to provide support and work in partnership to strengthen our community and ensure no one gets left behind.

Case study – no funds, no food, no phone

Service user A originally came into the centre to use the library computers, whilst signing in and speaking to the reception staff they were told to help themselves to a cup of tea if they wanted from the tea trolley. Service user A was very grateful and started to explain they were having some problems. The member of staff advised them to take a seat and she would ask someone to come and talk to them.

Once seated with a cup of tea and some toast the service user started to explain what had happened. They had recently had their benefits stopped (sanctioned) due to failure to attend a job centre appointment. They went on to explain that they had been waiting for a workman to attend their property after damage had been caused by a third party which made the property unsecure. As they had at that point not received a crime number the job centre had explained that until this was provided they had to withhold their benefits.

This meant that the service user had no money and was unable to buy food so had not eaten or had a hot drink for the last 2 days. In order to be able to heat their home they had sold their mobile phone and so could not contact any support agencies.

Within the centre we quickly pulled together a food parcel for them to take immediately and completed

a foodbank request for a food delivery the next day. We then booked in an appointment so we could complete a mandatory reconsideration with the DWP. This could be completed once service user A had gone to their appointment at the job centre with their crime number and police report to explain fully what had happened.

The outcome was full reinstatement of benefits, along with receiving back dated payment. Service user A was very thankful for the support we had been able to offer.

We have continued to offer support recently providing surplus food on Christmas Eve along with delivery of Christmas dinner on Christmas day. We were also able to provide a mobile phone with free minutes, texts and data.

We will continue to work with and support service user A as they are aiming to attend some of the health and well-being sessions that are on offer within the centre.

This case study highlights the need for intense holistic support in order to help those living in poverty address immediate need in order for them to begin the process of looking for work, reaching their potential and being successful.

CEO STATEMENT



As we sit and write our first CEO statement I think both Becky and myself are marveling at the journey we have been on since joining BMCA. From Learning Hub and Nursery Managers to filling the rather sizable shoes of one Mrs Julie Mrozek it has been quite the experience.

My journey started in June 2015 when I joined the Nursery as the new manager; I hadn't been here 12 months when my future partner in crime joined to head up the Learning Hub in May 2016. We both came from quite corporate backgrounds but clearly showed a passion for a more holistic approach to the help and support we could provide those we work with. It turns out that we also shared our love of dressing up and acting the fool!

Over the next 6 years we both developed our respective areas within the centre and took on additional roles and responsibilities; on becoming Strategic Leads I took over the youth and play delivery, with Becky inheriting all things adults. Working with Julie meant that there was no end to the opportunities to learn and develop our craft, from funding bids, steering groups and scrutiny to partnership development and event management we have (almost) done it all. It has been a process, and not always a successful one but with Julie in the lead and an incredible staff team having our backs we have grown into what are hopefully two competent and (fingers crossed) successful CEO's for an incredible community centre located on an amazing estate.

Saying goodbye to Julie in December and watching the outpouring of love and admiration from service users, staff, volunteers and colleagues across the city, those shoes I mentioned earlier never looked so big; but I'm confident that with the support of the board, staff and volunteers and the endless drive and enthusiasm of service users and local people Becky and I have got this!

BMCA is home and the people in it are family, it's not a conventional family but who has one of those? It's a family that provides a space to feel safe, support and encouragement to achieve and a full cheer leading squad that ensures everyone meets their potential.

How long was it Julie sat in this chair?

28 years?

OK here's to the next 21 years

Wish us luck!

Toni & Becky X



BE PROUD AWARDS FINALISTS

BMCA – BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY

JULIE MROZEK – CREATIVITY IN THE COMMUNITY

SPIRIT OF MANCHESTER AWARDS SHORTLIST

PARTNERSHIP & COLLABORATION

CREATIVE COMMUNITY SPIRIT

23 Merseybank Avenue,
Chorlton, M21 7NT

 **0161 446 4805**

 **07 760 117 235**

www.bmcaltd.co.uk



Registered Charity No: 1142217

