



# Our Impact in 2023

Changing Lives and Transforming our Community



### ABOUT US



### Our Vision

For Newham to be a thriving community where everyone feels connected, valued and fulfilled!

### Our Mission

We work to break down barriers, bring people together and build people up

### Our Motto

Changing lives and transforming our community!

### Our Values

#### **INCLUSION**

Every person is a valued member of our community. We care for and support each other by celebrating diversity, challenging prejudice, breaking down barriers, building bridges and broadening horizons – for everyone!

#### **CELEBRATION**

We adopt an attitude of thankfulness – even in the midst of life's disappointments and challenges. We celebrate our community's many strengths, efforts and achievements. We see Newham as a place of potential and possibility!

#### **EMPOWERMENT**

We encourage everyone to be the best they can be. We support people to overcome the barriers which stop them fulfilling their true potential, and we partner with them to build a strong and resilient community.

## WELCOME



The key to community organisation is to use what's strong to address what's wrong.

It starts with focussing on people's strengths and local assets and doing what you can with what you've got.

When we set up BDCA 25 years ago I soon realised we were on the wrong side of the A13. Half a mile south in the Dockland regeneration area it seemed they were awash with money for community investment. It was far harder to persuade anyone to invest in Bonny Downs. At the time it was frustrating and disheartening but I'm now so grateful that we had to learn community organisation the hard way.

We used our own skills and labour to start rebuilding The Well community centre and volunteers used strimmers to cut down the nine-acre jungle on Flanders Field. We developed strong relationships in our community and laid foundations for the way BDCA has been able to help so many people and projects

use their strengths to come up with innovative ways to address the challenges we face.

I'm immensely privileged to have worked with so many inspirational people and partners over the last quarter century. Thank you for your support in the achievements detailed in this report and everything we've achieved together.





**David Mann**Chair
Bonny Downs Community Association

\*\*This year has been hugely challenging. The aftereffects of the pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis and soaring energy bills may be all around us, but so is courage and hope. I see this in the passion and energy shared so freely by our staff, volunteers, partners, supporters and service users. I hope that like me, you will see the positive impact this has had on local lives, as you read through this report. I could not be more proud of the determination and hardworking team spiri here at BDCA.\*\*





**Sarah Laing**Managing Director

## THE YEAR IN NUMBERS

Our gender breakdown of our visitors Female **41%** Male Other



71,289 HOURS

hours of services delivered for our community



**2,918** PEOPLE people used our services 25,083 TIMES!

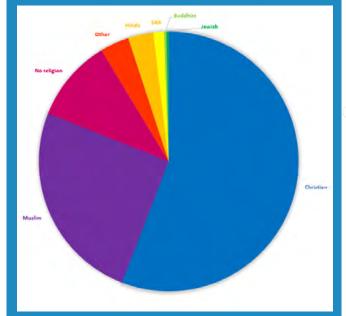


The age of our visitors ranged from OTO 99 YEARS OLD



6,978 HOURS given by 134 volunteers

Our visitors represent 8 DIFFERENT FAITH BACKGROUNDS





85 PEOPLE

employed all at or above the London Living Wage



338 HOURS HIRED

by locals for meetings, events, and parties at The Well



**2,213 HOURS** hired for sports and activities

Our guests speak more than 43 LANGUAGES FROM AKAN TO YORUBA!





### JOY



Our community told us through our Voices for Change consultation that they desperately needed to rediscover joy, after Covid-19 and the Cost-of-Living Crisis. It is now one of our strategic priorities to enable local people, including our staff and volunteers, to experience more joy and connection.

#### **CELEBRATING TOGETHER**

We brought our communities together to celebrate many occasions: we had inter-faith events for Christmas, Diwali, Easter, Eid and Onam. We marked the Coronation with food, gatherings, and a cut-out of King Charles! We had parties to celebrate the legacy of our After School Club and the first birthday of our social enterprise Nursery.

#### **PROVIDING NEW EXPERIENCES**

Our Go Wild! Summer Scheme helped 200 local young people experience joy through a vast variety of exciting activities including skateboarding, cooking, dancing, personal training, inflatables, music production and more.

Our Over 65s members enjoyed many events and trips, including a Summer Staycation event, a day at Leigh-on-Sea and a 'Turkey & Tinsel' weekend away for Christmas.

Our Children & Families trip to Stratford Theatre was the first time for many of our Malayalee couples to leave their children with a babysitter and enjoy a date night!

#### **FACILITATING PERSONAL JOY**

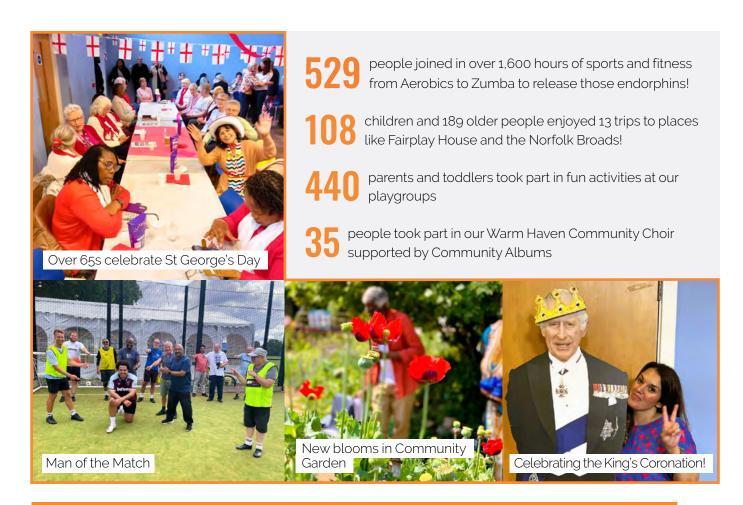
Thanks to generous donors to our Christmas Toy Appeal, 179 children from low-income families experienced the joy of receiving gifts.

Our Community Support services provided personal joy and relief when our guests had their struggles resolved, such as having their debts written off or housing issues sorted.

There was much laughter and joy in our Community Garden when volunteers shared stories over tea break after each morning's hard work. The fruits of their labour also brought delight to volunteers and visitors alike, such as the red and yellow blooms of tulips.



"The Well Elders' Group was the first thing I joined after being ill for a long time and so it has a special place in my heart. Lovely people and staff."



"I have depression. But now I feel very good because I have made lots of friends. The people are so, so helpful."



### Meet Enza

## "Joining the BDCA playgroups was lifechanging for me"

nza joined BDCA's Parents
& Toddlers groups when
she moved into Newham
nine years ago. As a firsttime mum with no family in the
area, she felt lonely, bored and
sometimes anxious. Joining the
playgroups gave her a lifeline:
she found a support network and
strong friendships with fellow new
parents who understood her. It
helped her mental wellbeing by
giving her a fun break from her
daily routine and the ability to
enjoy a cup of tea whilst still hot!

Enza now feels so connected and rooted within her community thanks to BDCA that once, when she and her husband considered moving out of London, they decided not to as they would miss the friendship and sense of community they have in East Ham

"I love walking round our neighbourhood and meeting so many familiar faces thanks to the playgroups," Enza says. "I know if anyone is facing any issues, they can go to BDCA where someone will find a way to sort it!"

## EQUITY

Based in a borough with high levels of deprivation and poverty, BDCA is committed to providing holistic support to enable our neighbours to thrive. Our wide range of free services help our neighbours have their basic needs met and the tools to improve their situation.

#### ADVICE AND SUPPORT

Our Family Hub provided immigration advice, and support around form filling, housing and Universal Credit to families on low income and those with no recourse to public funds.

We expanded support for our Over 65s through our Advocacy service, and our volunteer befrienders continued providing friendship and connection to isolated older members of our community.

We also expanded our Community Support team to meet the growing needs caused by the Cost-of-Living Crisis. Alongside our Debt Advice Centre, we added budgeting workshops to help people to manage their money better, and our ESOL classes provided an encouraging space for locals to improve their English language skills.

#### **PROVIDING ACCESS**

Our Community Garden provided a tranquil natural space for local people, many of whom live in flats without gardens. Our volunteers loved the opportunities to grow, harvest and bring back the produce they cooked to share with fellow volunteers.

Our free sports sessions enabled physical wellbeing for locals who face barriers such as high gym prices or childcare issues. Our CommuniTEA Café opened last year, providing everyone with free hot drinks and a warm place to be all year round. During Winter, we provided hot soup and a Community Choir to spread warmth and cheer for locals.

#### **ENABLING LEARNING**

Our free youth club continued to provide young people with fun activities, learning, and new experiences such as Healthy Cooking in partnership with Eden Eat Club, and a gym with a qualified personal trainer.

Our Go Wild! Summer Scheme helped 40 young people gain leadership qualifications, work experience and paid employment, whilst providing 103 disadvantaged children with access to free hot meals and activities during the school summer holidays.

We supported 18 young people in their applications to the Youth Empowerment fund for much needed tech equipment. We worked with Renewal Programme and PEPPO to offer free tuition clubs to support young people in their education.

"BDCA provided a fun and safe space for my kids during the summer time, so that I could continue to work and provide for my family."





### Meet Naomi

# "It is nice to have someone outside the family to speak to."

aomi suffers from various health conditions, causing her constant pain and poor mobility. This prevents her from regularly venturing out on her own

Whilst using our Over 65s Advocacy service for welfare advice, Naomi was encouraged to consider our befriending service. She had struggled during lockdown, feeling lonely and socially isolated.

Naomi was matched with befriending volunteer Eric, who makes weekly telephone calls to Naomi

"He makes me laugh," says Naomi. "I have been through some difficult periods this year, the loss of my father, then my brother. Eric has offered me encouragement and helped me through it all.



"I used the services (baby groups) when I had my first child, and it was a great support for us both. Now I come alone to lots of the fitness classes. Things I would not be able to access otherwise. I'm so grateful for Bonny Downs."

"It's uplifting to be amongst others in the same boat and to see everyone thriving and supporting each other."





### DIVERSITY



Newham is still one of the most diverse locations in the UK (2021 Census). BDCA strives to bring together neighbours from different cultures and we employ staff who represent our vibrant local population.

#### **ENGAGING OUR DIVERSE COMMUNITY**

We carried out surveys to engage our community and staff members in shaping our charity and services to better meet needs. Our projects supported participants in taking active roles within their sessions, helping them become leaders, volunteers and ambassadors.

We listened to our community: at their request we started Yoga for All and Bhangra Fitness to engage under-represented audiences. Both have been extremely popular, with Bhangra Fitness reaching maximum hall capacity in the first session!

We partnered with Greenwich University to campaign about the injustices facing newly arrived migrants especially those with No Recourse to Public Funds.

#### LEARNING ABOUT EACH OTHER'S CULTURES

Our interfaith events brought together different communities and helped explain how we all celebrate various religious events, such as the Onam Festival. Our partnership with Stratford East taught music and a Malayalee song to our families.

Our Family Hub provided support for migrant families and opportunities to share each other's cultures. This included cooking favourite recipes from home together every fortnight, breaking barriers and creating connection through sharing food and personal stories.

#### **FOSTERING CROSS-CULTURAL FRIENDSHIPS**

Our free sports are led by diverse local instructors and target people who are often left out. Our Family Yoga helped people meet other mums in their area. We recruited a multi-lingual project attendee to help welcome newcomers to our female exercise classes. Our Walking Football continued to serve men over 40 at risk of isolation and our Footy & Friends session connected younger men. These sports helped people meet neighbours they might not otherwise have crossed paths with.

Our free Community Garden continued to bring diverse intergenerational volunteers together (and promote biodiversity!). Young people working on their Duke of Edinburgh Award, retired pensioners, and little toddlers with their parents, all joined together to weed, learn, and grow an interesting variety of produce from quince to chocolate mint plants!

"BDCA has improved my mental health massively being able to connect with so many different people of different cultures/backgrounds and religions."



women took part in our sports and fitness programmes

volunteers from 2 to 76 years old spent 1,589 hours helping our garden grow!

individuals spent 201 hours improving their English language skills

said they would recommend our youth club to their friends, in our Youth survey



"It's been a lifeline, it's made me feel more integrated within the community, helped me meet new people who live locally, it's been amazing.

"In an area with a transitory population BDCA provides constancy and familiarity. It's an asset to Newham."



### Meet Fatima

### "This place feels like home."

### INNOVATION

Innovation is important for BDCA to help us respond to the changing needs of our community and increase our future sustainability.

#### **IMPROVING OUR INCOME SOURCES**

Thanks to a grant from Suez Communities Trust, we improved income from venue hires by installing new air con units, new flooring, a new partition door and improved CCTV at The Well Community Centre.

We secured funding from the Football Foundation for a brand-new tractor and other equipment to maintain our well-used football and cricket facilities at Flanders Field.

We appointed a new Fundraising Assistant to improve our income opportunities. This includes selling clothes donated by residents on the Vinted app and creating social media videos to encourage more donations and volunteers.

#### **INNOVATING WITHIN OUR PROJECTS**

This year we launched 'Mini Explorers' trips for under 5s and their parents during the summer holidays, providing community connection during the weeks that our Children & Families service is normally closed.

Our Community Garden volunteers loved growing new varieties of vegetables; this year the Pattypan Squash was a particular success, as were the chocolate cherry tomatoes. We partnered with NewLife Newham to build a chicken coop for hens rescued from a battery farm. The birds are lovingly fed every day by a rota of locals.

Our Sports and Over 65s projects created Whatsapp groups to enable better communication of changes to activities and events. Our older members appreciate the new level of connection this has brought.

#### CONSULTING WITH OUR COMMUNITY

We asked our current project guests for new project ideas to help them and for feedback on ways to improve our existing services (results on the next page).



"BDCA are helping all ways they can. Clothes. Vouchers, formula milk, nappies. All are really helpful for poor people who are suffering to make our daily expenses."



### Meet Sharmin

# "BDCA has helped me get fitter and stronger physically and mentally."

harmin is a local parent used to working throughout her adult life. So, when she was made redundant from her long-term job after lockdown, it had a huge impact. She says, "My confidence went, and I felt very insecure and lost"

Sharmin started attending our fitness classes to improve her wellbeing. The

classes helped her make new friends and discover her passion for fitness as well as secure a new job as our Women's Sports Facilitator.

"After joining, I regained my confidence," says Sharmin.
"I love encouraging new people to join and seeing them flourish. And everyone coming together as a community and having a good laugh with one another."



"BDCA has me learning new things, going on outings, meeting new people and feeling better in myself by doing exercise."



"BDCA has been a constant feature in my family's life. From early years til today with exercise classes for adults. It's always been welcoming to anybody who visits."

"Loved the community choir - so good for well-being and making friends."

### PARTNERSHIPS

Driven by the vision of our staff member, Elkie, we secured a generous £25,000 grant from Kusuma Trust to launch a playgroup for preschool children with Special Educational Needs. We brought together experts from Mencap, LCIS and West Silvertown Foundation to teach parents basic sign language training and play therapy techniques then signpost them to available services.

We also received pilot funding from the NHS to provide early intervention and preventative mental health services for young people. We linked up with Eko Pathways (a local school for pupils who have been excluded elsewhere) and music specialist charity Community Albums to launch mentoring, accredited courses and therapeutic singing workshops. We are so proud of how this cross-sector project is enabling youngsters to develop their talents, express their stories and build confidence.

Cadent Gas Network have blown us away with their generosity. After completing some pipe maintenance road works nearby, they approached our charity and asked us to help tackle fuel poverty during the cost-of-living crisis. After testing out some ideas together in 2023, they awarded us a huge grant of £321,178 in September which will cover all our Family Hub and Community Support project running costs for two whole years! They also came to teach our guests about carbon monoxide safety and donated energy-efficient slow cookers to give out to low-income residents.

We celebrated another pivotal partnership when The National Lottery Community Fund approved a game-changing grant of £496,520 over five years. This is funding all our free community sports, gardening sessions, CommuniTEA Café and minibus outings to help residents Recover and Reconnect post-pandemic.

Finally, we threw a pizza party in our Youth Club when Newham's Youth Empowerment Service confirmed they would be re-commissioning our youth programme delivered in partnership with Renewal Programme. This means our six-day-per-week programme can continue until 2027!



### WHAT OUR PARTNERS SAY

"Bonny Downs Community Association has made an immensely positive, consistent contribution to the community I represent in Parliament. Its assessment of local needs is invariably sound, and it responds quickly and flexibly when new needs arise — most remarkably during the pandemic. Activities at The Well, and at Flanders Field — both now vital local facilities — are among the most hopeful in the area."

– Stephen Timms, MP for East Ham

"We've long been admirers of BDCA and the amazing work they do, so it's been a privilege to be working closely in partnership with them this year. In the 6 months we have been based at The Well I have been so impressed at the scale and breadth of projects they deliver right across the community. From every age group to every section of East Ham's diverse demographic, no group is overlooked and the work is truly inclusive. It's been humbling to be able to work alongside these life-changing projects to help develop people and give the community a voice, through music and media. We look forward with excitement to what we will be able to achieve together in the coming months and years."

- Rob May, Co-founder, Community Albums "I want to express my deep appreciation and gratitude to BDCA for their unwavering commitment to our community over many decades. BDCA's tireless efforts have not only contributed to the overall well-being of our community but also made a significant impact on the lives of our most vulnerable and marginalised residents. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the entire staff of BDCA for their invaluable service. Your commitment, compassion, and hard work have created a stronger, more caring community for all of us."

– Cllr Lakmini Shah, Councillor, LB Newham

"Bonny Downs has been East Ham South's anchor charity. During the pandemic they showed their incredible flexibility, coping with a more-than-five-fold increase in attendees at their food bank. Since the pandemic they have continued to make East Ham South a better place to live, both in terms of creating wonderful spaces like the CommuniTEA Cafe and garden and their myriad of activities for all ages."

– Cllr Susan Masters, Councillor, LB Newham

"Our partnership with Bonny Downs (supported by Higgins) has ignited a culinary revolution in the centre. This collaboration has enabled us to merge two passions: culinary education and community building. By joining forces, we have expanded our geographic reach to Newham and helped nurture young people's culinary talents by imparting life skills taught by our team of professionally trained chefs. Our shared value and commitment to improving the futures of young Londoners has meant this relationship has blossomed and we look forward to future programmes with the centre. The proactive nature of both Chrispin and Maya has transformed our ways of working with partners! Thank you for being a beacon for your members."

- Eden Lunghy, Head of Projects, Eat Club "We have loved partnering with Bonny Downs this year for their Living Well Oral Histories project to celebrate BDCA's 25th anniversary, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. It has been a privilege to interview staff and learn about the history of this incredible community organisation and the wonderful work that they do. This spring and summer, we also worked closely with the Family Hub to take members on guided heritage trips and visits around Newham, including the Thames Barrier Park and West Ham Stadium. We've been proud to display our exhibitions for Refugee Week and Black History Month at The Well and it's been amazing to get to know and work with the thriving community there."

– **Freya Hope**, Digital Community Officer, Malayalee

### OUR TEAM



As always, a huge thank you goes to our staff and volunteers who work tirelessly, with passion and dedication, to support our community.

#### **OUR STAFF**

In June, we were accredited as a Living Wage Employer. We are proud to pay our staff the London Living Wage. It is a long-term investment in our staff and organisation.

We recruited staff from our service users: for example, our Women's Sports Activator was a Zumba attendee, our Football Coordinator was a New Day guest, and our Over 65s Advocacy Assistant was a volunteer for Voices for Change.

Our staff trained in areas such as: first aid, mental health, mentoring, food hygiene, autism awareness and more.

We hosted a Staff Away Day and we celebrated the personal milestones of our staff: the retirement of our Over 65s Advocacy Manager, Clem; 20 years of service from our staff members Tracey and Kevin G; and the achievement of qualifications by many others.

#### **OUR VOLUNTEERS**

Our volunteers are a crucial part of our team and enable us to provide a wide range of services for the community. We celebrated our volunteers at our Annual End of Year Celebration event and with a Tea Party during Volunteers Week.

We are also grateful for our corporate volunteers from Mastercard this year who helped with big one-off tasks in our garden and community centre.

**£83,387.10** is the equivalent cost of the time given by our volunteers (measured at the London Living Wage rate)

Team Tea Breaks enjoyed by our staff members with countless cakes in our CommuniTEA Café!

agreed in our Staff Survey with the statements: "My work makes a difference to the community" and "I'm proud to say I work for BDCA."



### Meet Mike

## "I love meeting new people and getting to know them better."

ike is a teacher at a local school. He started his journey as a BDCA volunteer at age 15 with our Summer Scheme. Currently, he volunteers for our Footy & Friends session, which has helped him physically, mentally, and socially.

"I get to use my skills and gifts as well as develop my confidence and leadership qualities," says Mike. "I love that I can host football right in the heart of this community, where I have been born and raised, and even better that it is free for everyone to attend! Sport is universal... It is such an easy way to remove any cultural, language or any other barrier you can think of."

### FINANCE

It has been another challenging year for BDCA – and the whole voluntary sector - as the cost-of-living crisis led to increased need and increased costs. It's a particularly hard time to run community buildings. Since January 2023 we've been paying £1,000 more each month for electricity at The Well! (With huge rises for gas, and the Pavilion bills, too). But we are committed to providing warm places and vital help for people who are struggling. We are grateful for our loyal supporters and funders who have helped us to sustain, and even increase, the support we provide to our community, to meet the growing need.

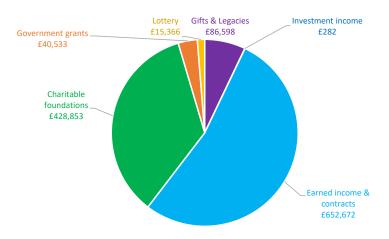
Income during the fiscal year to 31 March 2023 remained high, at a similar level to last year, and 53% of it was earned income. This came from venue hire, commissioning, and the After School Club and nursery.

Expenditure was higher than income, partly due to spending down grants secured in the previous year, but partly due to the After School Club and nursery costs exceeding income. Trustees took the difficult decision to close the After School Club in July, and later in the year to transfer the nursery to an experienced provider. BDCA worked hard to increase occupancy at its beautiful new nursery, but it continued to be too great a financial risk. We look forward to a positive partnership with Tiny Town, who have run a successful nursery in another community centre in Newham for the past 12 years.

We are delighted that new restricted income awarded later in 2023 (so not in these figures) from Cadent Gas Ltd, the National Lottery Community Fund and the London Borough of Newham – over £1.5 million in total! – will secure the future of BDCA's Community Support, Sports and Youth work in the coming years.

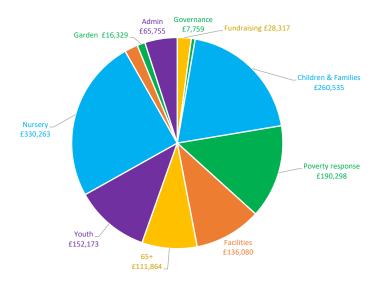
#### **INCOME 2022-23**

This year our funds totalled £1,224,304. Here's where they came from:



#### **EXPENDITURE 2022-23**

Our total expenditure was £1,326,085. Here's how we used it:



The summary accounts have been extracted from BDCA's annual accounts and trustees' report, a full copy of which can be obtained by contacting us at info@bonnydowns.org or downloading from the Charity Commission website.

The auditor's report on the accounts was unqualified and so was the auditor's statement under S.496 Companies Act 2006 in respect of the trustees' and directors' reports.

## LOOKING AHEAD



We're proud of our amazing progress towards all four of our charity goals during the first year of our new post-pandemic 'Recover and Rebuild Strategic Plan'. But the best is yet to come! BDCA is determined to keep bringing more joy, fighting for equity, celebrating diversity and fostering innovation throughout 2024. Here's a taster of some of our exciting plans next year:

We will continue to help our friends at Bonny Downs Baptist Church and NEWWay Project night shelter with their vision to redevelop the old church into a purpose-built community support hub where BDCA's staff can assist residents in crisis. We love their dream to create affordable flats on the two floors above so rough sleepers can move off the streets. Their new 'Bonny Downs Urban Abbey' building project was held up by the backlog of planning permission applications but we're hopeful that the redevelopment will finally get going in the coming year!

We're also looking forward to strengthening BDCA's newer partnerships formed in 2023. For instance, we will build upon the success of our recent pilots with the NHS helping dementia carers and young people with mental health challenges. We'll continue collaborating with LCIS, Mencap and WSF so preschool children with additional needs can thrive. We also plan to run more choirs and music therapy sessions with our friends at Community Albums.

We're striving to upgrade our venues so they have maximum community benefit. For instance, we're adding an 'outdoor kitchen' to our community garden so volunteers can teach cheap, healthy, homegrown recipes.

To mark our 25th anniversary, we're working with local historians from Eastside Community Heritage to record the inspiring 'Oral History' life stories of BDCA staff (past and present) who have pioneered projects here over the years. An exhibition in March 2024 will celebrate how our diverse local team have been "changing lives and transforming our community" these past two and a half decades.

Bring on the new year!



Jessica Craig
Co-Director



### THANK YOU



e are immensely grateful to all our employees, volunteers, trustees, funders, partners, donors and neighbours for their incredible generosity and support in enabling us to transform our community.

A special thank you to Richard Rule for running the London Marathon and raising £825 plus Gift Aid for us. We also want to say thank you to everyone who supported our 2022 Christmas Toy Appeal, which raised £1,330 plus Gift Aid.

We also have 34 BDCA Buddies committed to donating monthly to our charity so a huge thank you to Anthony, Benjamin, Bill, Deborah, Ellen, Harry, James, Jess, Jessamy, Katherine, Lynda, M, Michaela, Minh-hung, Neil, Nicola, Pamela, Sarah, Sharon G, Sharon N, Sian, Sue, Susan, Vicky and all the other Buddies who wish to remain anonymous.

"I have seen first-hand the amazing work that BDCA do with the local community. Today, the cost-of-living crisis means that even more people need their help"

Richard Rule, London Marathon Runner

If you would like to support us, you can make a monthly or one-off gift quickly and securely at **LOCALGIVING.ORG/BDCA** 





Learn more about our
BDCA Buddies programme at
BONNYDOWNS.ORG/GIVING







David Mann (Chair), Michala Dobiasova (Vice Chair), Brian Dexter (Treasurer), Deborah Crawford, Ifeoma Okuwudili, Nigel Brook, Tricia Isaac

### THANK YOU TO OUR LEADERSHIP TEAM

Sarah Laing (Managing Director) and Co-Directors Angie Allgood, Jessica Craig, Philippa King, Sulthana Begum and Stacey Cordery

#### **CONTACT US**

Find us on Facebook | Twitter | Instagram | YouTube

Donate at localgiving.org/BDCA

info@bonnydowns.org 0208 586 7070 bonnydowns.org

#### **Bonny Downs Community Association**

Registered charity no 1071625 and registered company limited by guarantee no 3625785. Registered office: The Well Community Centre, 49 Vicarage Lane, London E6 6DQ