



# 2025 Impact Report



Community Garden

# About Us

BDCA is a community-led charity that has been serving the residents of the vibrant but disadvantaged London Borough of Newham since 1998.

We make a lasting difference to local people's lives by addressing the root causes of poverty, tackling isolation, encouraging healthier lifestyles, promoting community cohesion and redeveloping disused spaces into meaningful community places.

Our 2022 - 2027 Recover and Rebuild strategic aims are Joy, Equity, Diversity, and Innovation.

## Our Vision

Newham will 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

- Celebration
- Inclusion
- Empowerment

## Content

- 2 About Us
- 3 Welcome
- 4 Year in Numbers
- 5 Joy
- 6 Equity
- 7 Diversity
- 8 Innovation
- 9 Impact Stories
- 10 Partnership
- 12 Our Team
- 13 Finance
- 14 Looking Ahead
- 15 Thank You
- 16 Get Involved

# Welcome



**David Mann**  
Chair

Hope is kicking at the darkness until it bleeds daylight, according to the song "Lovers in a Dangerous Time" by Bruce Cockburn.

We are living in dangerous times. Inequality is rampant in our society. The very rich get richer while everyone else gets poorer and more and more people find themselves homeless, struggling to feed their families or heat their homes.

In this age of growing isolation, extremism and division, at Bonny Downs we are living out the beauty of inclusion and equity for everyone - old and young, housed and homeless, from all faiths and ethnicities, with differing gifts and challenges.

Margaret Mead said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." We are seeking to live up to that challenge and BE the change we want to see.

We mustn't lose hope and keep kicking at the darkness until daylight shines through for everyone in our communities and our societies. Thank you for your continuing support in this challenging but vital mission.



**Sarah Laing**  
CEO

This past year, charities across the board have faced unprecedented financial challenges. BDCA was not immune, leading to the painful closure of our Youth Service due to council cutbacks, and the departure of some long-standing staff members.

But even in the face of these challenges, the unwavering passion and determination of our staff team and volunteers have shone through. We have found new ways to survive and thrive, including creative money raising initiatives, securing crucial funding to run a summer scheme for 130 young people, and essential youth workshops providing a much-needed lifeline for young people.

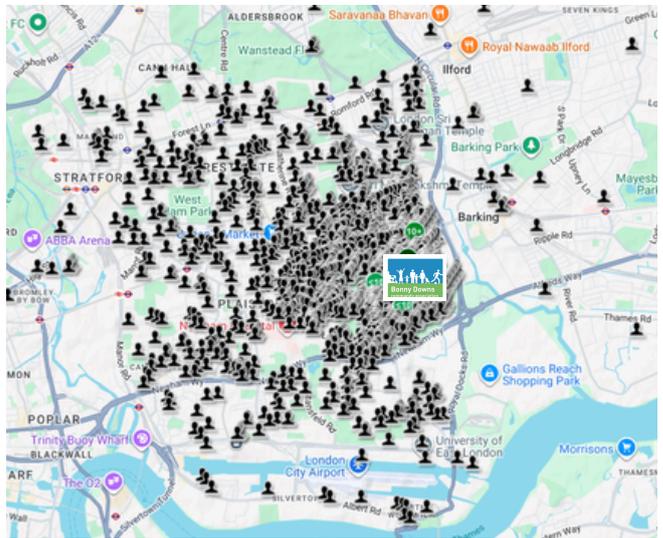
With more people in our community experiencing hardship, the need for our support has never been greater. It's more important than ever that we continue to provide a place of sanctuary where we can journey together, find moments of joy, and celebrate our shared resilience and hope. As Nelson Mandela once said, "It always seems impossible until it's done."

I am immensely proud of the entire staff team for working together to get the job done and for being a beacon of support for our community. They have proven that even in the toughest times, together, we can achieve the seemingly impossible.

# Our Year in Numbers

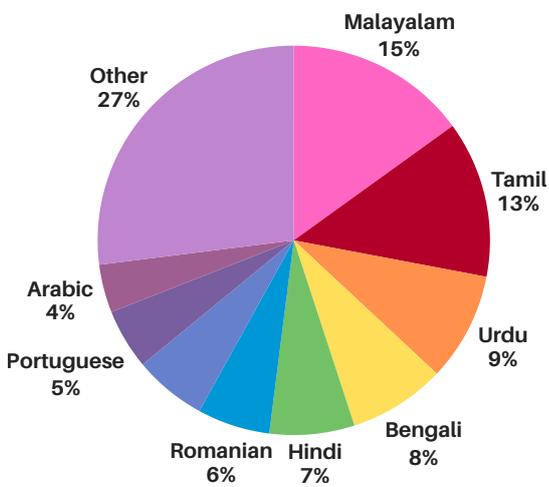


## Where our visitors come from

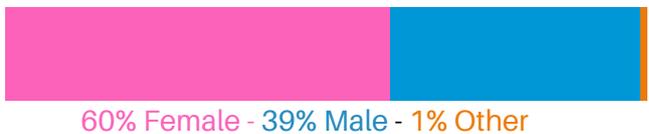


## Our community speaks over 50 languages!

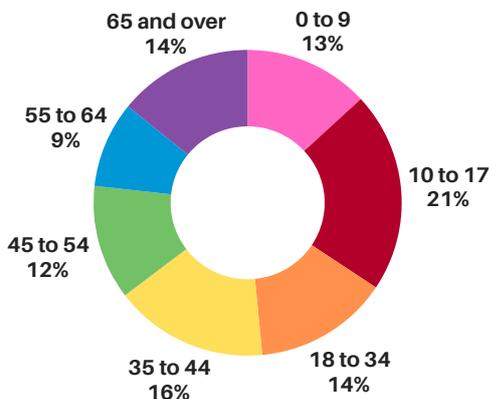
Top languages apart from English are:



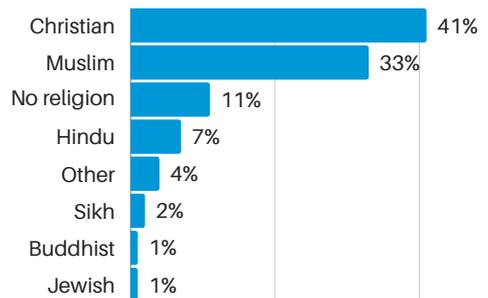
## Gender



## Age



## Faith



Statistics in this report are for the period 1 October 2024 to 30 September 2025, unless otherwise stated. They include people who completed registers at sessions led by BDCA, but not those who accessed our facilities for other services or preferred not to share their diversity data.

# Joy

BDCA creates opportunities for joy and connection through our regular services. These include playgroups, Family Hub, over-65s coffee morning, physical activities, community gardening and warm, welcoming spaces for all to gather in our CommuniTEA Cafe and WELLcome Hub.

Alongside these, we have regular trips and celebration events. For example, our over 65s members enjoyed a variety of daytrips: Polhill Garden Centre, Christmas Lunch at Brewers' Fayre, Clacton-on-Sea, and Canterbury.

Our wraparound support services are instrumental in bringing people joy and relief, when they reach milestones in tackling challenges, such as becoming debt-free through our Debt Advice service.

Our partners at Excel London served their annual traditional Christmas lunch at our Foodbank. Irons supporting Foodbanks provided additional joy by bringing West Ham goalkeepers, Lukasz Fabianski and Kinga Szemik, and Bubbles the Bear to distribute Christmas treats!



Celebrating Onam

**515** adults released happy hormones through fitness sessions from Aerobics to Zumba Gold!

**180** older people enjoyed our Over-65s social activities, celebration events and day trips

**357** parents & toddlers bonded over our indoor & outdoor playgroups

**97%** said they experienced joy through our activities (BDCA 2025 Community Survey)

*“Recently retired, I am just having so much fun. Made new friends, visited places of interest, the exercise programme is fantastic. Our instructors are the best and the staff are always there if we are in need.”*



Christmas at our Food Bank

# Equity

In a borough where many struggle with hardship, our services helped thousands of people tackle financial pressure, food insecurity, health inequality, isolation, and debt.

Our Food Bank gave out emergency food parcels and our Food Club helped households to access essentials at discounted prices. Our team gave out emergency nappies and formula, Vitamin D, free data and devices. Visitors were offered wraparound support and invited to stay for our Community Hot Lunches, so that they felt part of a community and able to tackle the roots of their hardships.

Our partnership with Cadent enabled our Family Hub guests to cook together whilst learning about fuel efficiency, safety, and saving on energy bills. We gave out hundreds of slow cookers to help with this.

Our over-65 members were educated about scams, fraud and wills through our partnership with the East Ham branches of Barclays and NatWest and with Brampton Estate Planners.

Thanks to our free physical activities, improving physical and mental health was accessible to those on low income, and the sense of community around our sessions increased participation from those least likely to be active.

Our partners at NewLife employed people experiencing homelessness to re-build our Community Garden's polytunnel.



Food Club

**505** households used our Food Bank for emergency food parcels

**450+** steamy bowls of soup served free to older people during winter

**95%** said they're eating more fruit and vegetables since making use of our Food Club (Feeding Britain Spring 2025 Survey)

**99%** said their quality of life improved as a result of accessing our services (BDCA 2025 Community Survey)

**200** children experienced the joy of receiving gifts - delivered by Santa, Elf and Rudolph!

*"I've become fitter, stronger, and more flexible, but I have also noticed a real boost in my mental health and overall wellbeing... I don't have the spare money for a gym membership, so being able to attend these classes for free has been a lifeline. I'm honestly so grateful. I don't know what I'd do without them."*

*"Food club and money saving advice is very helpful, my family and children are very happy here."*



Cooking in Family Hub

# Diversity

BDCA has always celebrated the rich multicultural tapestry that makes up Newham. We serve people of all ages and from all different backgrounds. Our activities brought together participants from many cultures and faiths, all sharing space, experience and connection.

Our teams co-produced diverse events from religious festivals such as Christmas, Diwali, Eid, Holi, and Onam, to fun themes like Valentine's Day to awareness days such as Black History Month. Our Family Hub members even learned to sing Christmas Carols in Malayalam, which they performed in public!

During our inter-faith Eid event in our Community Garden, visitors came together to decorate our planters with their names and pictures of their dreams.

Thanks to Tahira Food, we were able to provide halal meat in our Food Bank during Ramadan for our Muslim guests.

Though sadly our WELLbeing Wednesday project ended, our Singing Well Choir continued for people with dementia and their carers.

Our Summer Scheme Young Leaders programme helped local young people develop skills and work experience.



**98%** said our activities helped them meet neighbours from different backgrounds, ages, and cultures (BDCA 2025 Community Survey)

**98%** said our activities made them feel more connected to the community (BDCA 2025 Community Survey)

**357** women participated in our physical exercise sessions

**0-96** age range of everyone who used our services

**70** individuals attended ESOL classes to improve their skills and prospects

*"I've made new friends and connected with people from all walks of life. Bonny Downs is so special in how it brings together such a huge mix of cultures and backgrounds reflecting the fantastic diversity of Newham."*



# Innovation

BDCA uses innovation to not only meet evolving community needs, but to also sustain our charity.

In June 2025, our community centre, The Well, went fully solar-powered, in a major step toward environmental sustainability and long-term cost savings — allowing us to reinvest resources into support services.

Our new Community Kitchen funded by Tate & Lyle was put to good use as our garden volunteers hosted workshops such as making elderflower cordial and baking pumpkin pie from produce in our Community Garden, as well as using it to serve snacks and hot drinks for interfaith community events.

Our volunteers created a new vertical area in our Community Garden this year that helped keep the snails at bay and grow our biggest crop of strawberries.

We secured a grant from London City Airport Community Fund to give local children and families more access to green space and nature-based activities.

We ran a 10-week Exploring Creativity course, where older people enjoyed activities ranging from making wreathes to preparing mini kebabs.

We launched a pilot Pensioners' Benefit Advice funded by EECF, to support local pensioners in claiming all the benefits to which they are entitled.

Our community members came together for a Crafternoon where they designed BDCA Christmas Cards to sell to fundraise for our charity.



Checking new solar panels



Toddler group in the Community Garden

*“How refreshing to walk into a place be greeted with friendly faces and free tea, coffee and usually Aneta’s cooking delights.”*

*“I was helped with food bank and the family activities inspired me to refer my friends and neighbours to join BDCA.”*

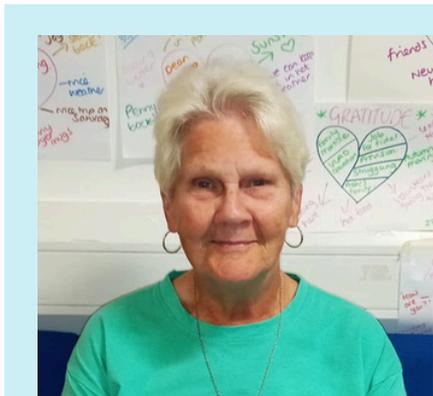
*“BDCA was the first thing I joined after suffering from severe anxiety and depression. It really helped me to get up and running again. Forever grateful.”*

*“It's been powerful to connect with other parents in the community. I have created bonds and friendship. It's been so valuable to both me and my children.”*



Over 50s Creativity workshop

# Impact Stories

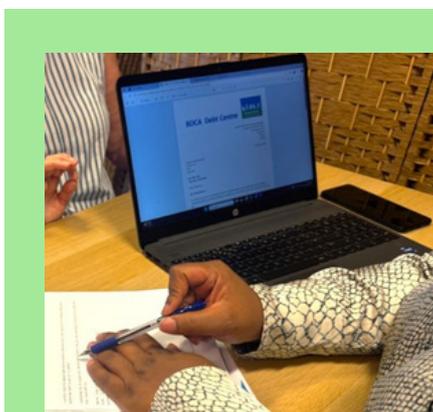


## Meet Doreen: “My children have noticed the difference in me.”

Doreen, 84, was used to doing everything with her husband, until he passed away 6 years ago. The grief got easier with time, but she often felt lonely and down. Last year, Doreen’s daughter brought her to BDCA’s Over 65s Arts and Crafts and Doreen has been attending ever since.

“Coming here has changed my life. It has really helped my mental wellbeing. I’ve made many friends, even a best friend who I go out with every week,” said Doreen.

“It’s so nice to have someone to do things with again, as my closest friend passed away a few years ago. I don’t feel as lonely as before. I look forward to days I come to BDCA and enjoy all the activities – the arts, bowls, events and trips. I just wish I had joined earlier! People are so friendly here, it feels like being part of a family. I love it here.”



## Meet Cynthia: “I wouldn’t have known how to cope without their support.”

“I was in huge debt,” said Cynthia. “I was behind on my rent, they wanted to evict me, I thought it was all over... I thought there was no hope for me.”

Cynthia’s turning point came when she was referred to our debt advice service. “The team really, really helped me 100,000 percent. They didn’t judge me.”

With BDCA’s help, Cynthia learned to manage her finances, and came off benefits entirely. She is now working, paying her rent in full and supporting her family. Cynthia feels mentally happier and physically healthier.

“People are sick. People are committing suicide. With debt you think you cannot do anything, you feel condemned. But the debt advice team show you the way to build your life back.”

# Partnerships

BDCA is all about working together and partnerships are key to our impact. We are so grateful for individuals, businesses, grantmakers, delivery partners, and volunteers who enable us to support our community.

This year with the sudden loss of Newham funding for our youth club, we are thankful for the East End Community Foundation for awarding us a grant to provide some term-time youth sessions, so young people of East Ham are not left bereft.

An extension to our generous partnership with Cadent Gas meant we continued our Food Bank, Food Club and Family Hub, all with wraparound advice. These are also supported by small grants, donations of food and other supplies, the work of partner charities, and vital volunteers. It's a real team effort.

Our Crowdfunder raised nearly £15,000, thanks to match funding by the Aviva Community Fund to keep our debt advice service going, along with funding from The Trussell Trust. We loved the friendly rivalry between the managers of Barclays and NatWest banks in East Ham High Street, who competed to raise the most money towards this appeal! This is thanks to Misha, who joined us this year to focus on building relationships with corporate sponsors. But we sadly said goodbye to Jess, surely one of the best grant fundraisers, who has been single-handedly bringing in a large proportion of BDCA's income for many years.

Multi-year grants are a massive help, and we are grateful to the National Lottery Community Fund, the Drapers Company and the Mercers Company, who between them fund our free sports for all, and our services for older residents. We are thankful for £50,000 from the Garfield Weston Foundation towards our core costs.



# Quotes from partners

"For over twenty-five years, BDCA has been a beacon of imaginative support in the community I represent. It transformed previously derelict and disused facilities into The Well community centre and Flanders Field recreation ground. They hum with life and energy today, providing crucial support to people of all ages and backgrounds."

**Sir Stephen Timms,**  
MP for East Ham, LB Newham

"We're pleased to have a positive association with BDCA through our clothing and food donations, who offer so much and function at the heart of the community.

We're equally grateful for the BDCA matchday volunteers who regularly join us to collect funds which helps us to achieve more, and develop our mutual links with West Ham United."

**John Ratomski**  
Founder, Irons Supporting Foodbanks

"We are really proud to work with BDCA. Their affordable food offer, wraparound support, and inclusive holiday programme for children are outstanding examples of how local organisations can create welcoming spaces, strengthen communities, and provide vital support to families facing food insecurity."

**Andrew Forsey**  
Director, Feeding Britain

"Working with BDCA on the Get Into Dance Ticket Programme will help local residents experience live performance, many for the first time. It's a powerful example of inclusive cultural engagement. We're proud to connect their communities to our new home, Sadler's Wells East, and support such transformative work."

**Natasha Anderson,**  
Head of Community Engagement,  
Sadlers Wells



"For years now, Bonny Downs has provided an inclusive, welcoming hub for all the communities of East Ham. I regularly drop by for exercise sessions and am always struck by the buzziness of The Well, Bobby Moore pavilion and WELLcome Hub where residents will find engaging activities, a safe space, friendship, support and a listening ear."

**Cllr Susan Masters,**  
Councillor for East Ham South,  
LB Newham

"Working with BDCA during the assessment was a productive experience, as we both navigated the new Energy Resilience Fund application process... It was clear throughout the process that BDCA is deeply embedded in their community, and their commitment to delivering meaningful support to local people really came through."

**Jessica Myers**  
Senior Relationship Manager,  
Social Investment Business

"Working in partnership with Bonny Downs has significantly enhanced the quality of services we deliver in the community. Together, we strive to meet the needs of those who are less privileged through collaborative efforts and shared values.

I look forward to a strong and enduring partnership, built on Bonny Downs' remarkable achievements and the shared belief in the power of community care and support."

**William Isiko**  
Head of Community Engagement,  
Calm Minds UK

# Our Team

## Our Staff

We are proud to be a Living Wage Employer that invests in our staff's well-being and professional growth.

This year, we continued our commitment to a healthy workplace by holding weekly "CommuniTEA" breaks, providing a space for our team to pause and connect, and offering staff well-being days. Following a successful pilot, we also made counselling sessions available through Alternatives Trust East London, offering a confidential and supportive space for staff.

We also invested in staff training, including an Enneagram workshop, helping our team to understand themselves and each other better, and Dementia training, helping us to foster a greater understanding of individuals living with Dementia.

## Our Volunteers

Our valued volunteers make up a large percentage of our workforce, and our services simply could not run without them.

We recognised their commitment to being joy bringers in our community by hosting a Pie n Mash and Pizza lunch during National Volunteers week, as well as celebrating them at our annual Christmas party with certificates and gifts.

From cleaning our kitchens to cooking, setting up our services and collecting donations, we are so thankful for their contribution to making BDCA such a warm and inclusive space for all.

**65** people employed, all at or above the London Living Wage

**99** volunteers gave their precious time, equivalent to £45,582.05 at London Living Wage



## Goodbyes and Welcomes

This year, we were delighted to welcome new staff members, including Misha, Serena, Tian, Ethan, and Ben. We also welcomed three new Trustees, Ajitha, Andrew, and Nancy, who all bring a wealth of expertise and experience to our board.

We also said goodbye to staff members Tracey, Jess, Tanya, Maya, Chrispin, Kevin, Adam, Kamilah, Amiira, Melissa, and Ben, and to our finance consultant Paula. We want to give special thanks to two long-standing staff members, Jess, with us for 12 years, and Tracey for 22 years – incredible! Their hard work, unwavering passion & dedication have been instrumental in shaping our organisation, and we extend our heartfelt thanks for their invaluable contributions.



# Finance

Despite increasingly tough times for charities in the UK, in the 2024-2025 financial year BDCA managed a balanced budget. The accounts show a planned deficit of a little under £50,000 as the Trustees agreed to carry forward £50,000 from the previous year. That was an unexpected surplus that came about due to intense and successful fundraising during 23-24, to try and recoup the losses made on the nursery social enterprise.

At the start of 2025, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations predicted, "the 'perfect storm' created by funding falling, costs increasing, and demand climbing" would continue throughout the year, and that has been our experience.

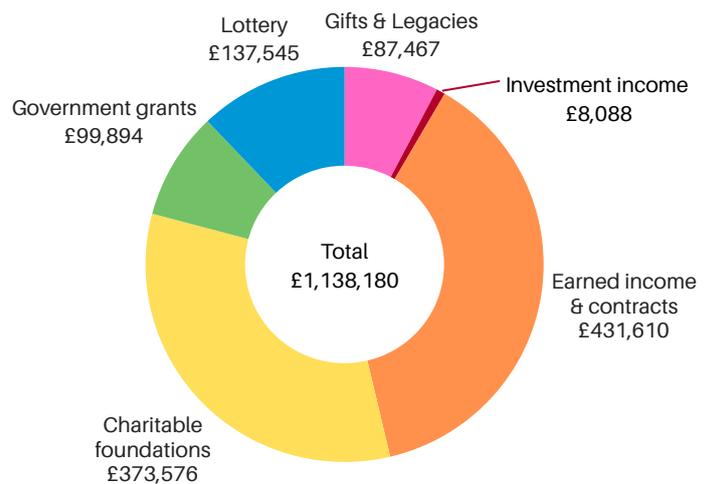
We sadly had to close the excellent Empower Youth programme, which reached 599 children and young people in 2024, due to the local authority ending its contract two years early at short notice. We have worked hard to review and reduce what we spend on central costs, which led to the tough decision to outsource our finance function this year. On the sunnier side, the installation of solar panels on The Well should reduce our future electricity bills; mixed grant/loan funding from the Energy Resilience Fund made this possible.

Although there is less funding out there, we are grateful for the grants we have in place and the ongoing support of Cadent Gas. And this tricky situation makes our generous individual supporters even more valuable. Since our BDCA Friends campaign in June, we have over 80 regular donors, and in the second half of the year we were blown away by some incredible one-off gifts and the magnificent response to our Crowdfunder in aid of our debt advice service. We really couldn't do without this outstanding local support.

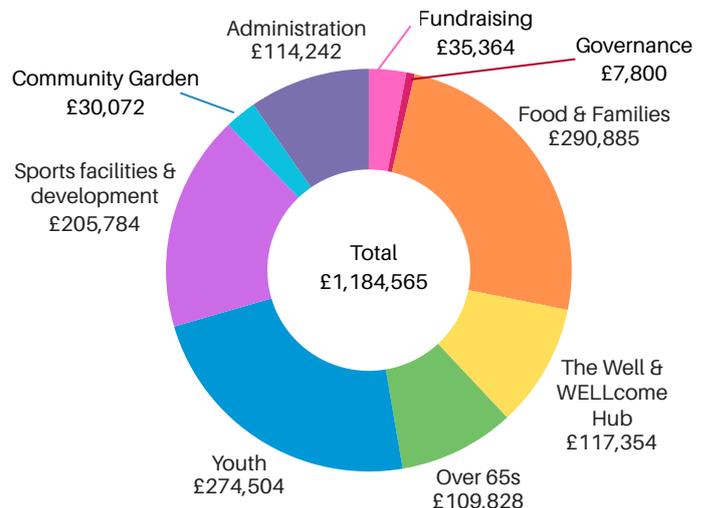


Toddler group Christmas

## Income 2024-25



## Expenditure 2024-25



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](mailto: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

Every week we read news of another charity closing or making 100s of staff redundant. The financial crisis facing our local council has worrying implications for all of us in Newham. But at BDCA we have a deep and long-term commitment to supporting and journeying with our community. We strive to not just offer one-off services, but to be a thriving community where everyone feels connected, valued and fulfilled. In the current climate in the UK, community venues and activities that bring different people together with a common purpose are more needed than ever.

BDCA is going to be a leaner organisation in the next years, with the loss of the youth and finance teams. But the number of people in need who come through our doors does not look like it's diminishing. Trustees and leaders are needing to think creatively about how we move forward with scarcer resources, building on our long-standing partnerships, talented team, and relentless optimism for our community.

Our friends at Bonny Downs Church are on the verge of starting to build their Abbey on the site of the old church hall. In partnership with NEWway Project and J49 Housing Association, they are creating supported housing designed to help people with experience of homelessness transition into independent living, within an intentional community. We're looking forward to seeing that dream start to be realised over the next year and delighted that such an innovative project is happening right here in our neighbourhood.



Women's fitness class



Volunteers packing our Toy Appeal



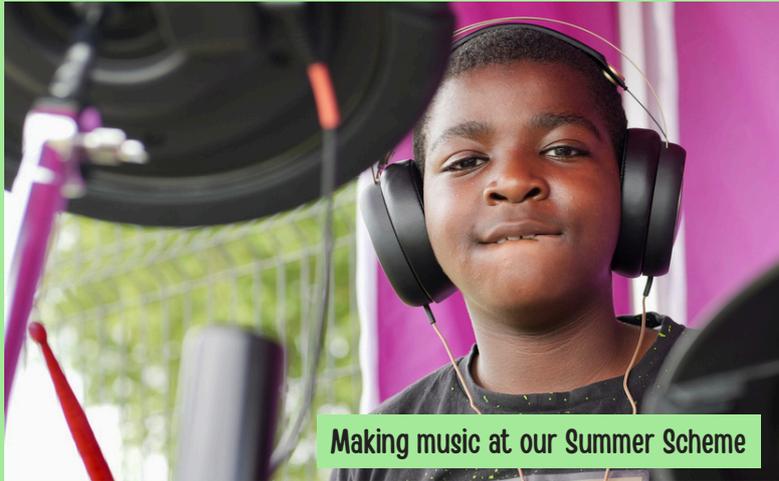
Youth Club



Community Garden mini explorers



Donations to the Food Bank



Making music at our Summer Scheme



Community Garden pumpkin harvest



Excel Christmas Lunch at our Food Bank

# Thank You

This year we have been more reliant than ever on the generosity of our community. A heartfelt thank you to our employees, volunteers, trustees, funders, partners, donors and neighbours for helping us to change lives and transform our community.

Thank you to everyone who supported our 2025 Debt Centre fundraiser which raised £14,682 plus Gift Aid, our 2024 Christmas Toy Appeal, which raised £1,436.96 plus Gift Aid, and our Jollof-y Good Night event which raised £1,500.

Thank you to Alex, Ashley, Carol, Christopher, John, Neil, Olivia, Pauline, Rana, Sinead, Sue, Valeria, Zeenat and other anonymous supporters for their incredibly generous large donations.

## **Thank you to Friends of Bonny Downs:**

Alan, Alice, Amar, Andrew x2, Annmarie, Anthony x2, Babu, Benjamin, Beryl, Beverly, Bill, Carla, Deborah, Deepa, Denise, Elizabeth, Ellen, Fenella, Harry, Helen, Jacqueline, James x2, Jay, Jessica, John x2, Joshua, Katherine, Lesley, Liam, Linda, Luan, Lynn, M, Mary, Margaret, Michael, Michaela, Michelle, Minh-Hung, Miriam, Nancy, Nargis, Neil, Nicola, Nigel, Odetta, Olivia, Paris, Philippa, Rachel x2, Richard, Robert, Ruth, Sandra, Sarah x4, Sean, Sharon x2, Sian, Stacey, Susan x3, Vicky and all the other Friends who wish to remain anonymous.

## **Thank you to our Trustees:**

David Mann (Chair), Brian Dexter (Treasurer), Adjoa Kwarteng, Ajitha Sadanandan, Andrew Brown, Deborah Crawford, Ife Okuwudili, Nancy Maguire, Nigel Brook, and Patricia Isaac.

## **Thank you to our Leadership Team:**

Sarah Laing (CEO) and Co-Directors, Jessica Craig, Philippa King, Stacey Cordery, and Sulthana Begum.

# Get Involved

- **Partner with us** by funding projects or signposting people to our services
- **Volunteer** with us and give back to neighbours in need
- **Attend** our free activities to get more active and connected in your community
- **Sign up** to our e-newsletter to for good news stories and current campaigns
- **Follow us** on social media and interact with our content
- **Share** our flyers and posts with your contacts who might benefit
- **Donate** non-perishable food, toiletries, quality second-hand clothes or brand new toys
- **Be a Friend** of Bonny Downs by committing to give monthly to help sustain our services
- **Hire our venues** for your meetings, parties and activities
- **Include us in your will** to benefit future generations
- **Organise fun activities** with your friends to fundraiser for us

Find out more at

**[bonnydowns.org/giving](https://bonnydowns.org/giving)**

or scan the QR code below



*“I’ve always been impressed by the work BDCA do and I’m sure you’ll be able to make good use of the money. It means a lot to me that it will go towards helping people in Newham.”*

*- Alex, supporter*

## **Bonny Downs Community Association**

Registered Charity Reg No: 1071625 and  
Company Limited by Guarantee No: 3625785

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