



WEST SILVERTOWN
FOUNDATION

Impact Report 2020



An extraordinary year

Born in 1995, West Silvertown Foundation (WSF) is a local community-led charity. For the past 25 years we've partnered with our neighbours to break down the barriers we face in our unique area of London, offered a helping hand to our most vulnerable residents, and worked to help build a healthy, vibrant and sustainable community for everyone.

At the heart of our work, we manage our area's only two community centres – Britannia Village Hall and, since 2019, the new Royal Wharf Community Dock. From these hubs, we offer a wide and growing range of activities and services for families, young people and adults from all backgrounds.

It's hard to believe that almost a full year has passed since the Coronavirus crisis began. Newham has been among the country's worst affected boroughs, and it has brought huge new challenges to our local community while highlighting the inequalities and injustices that many people here already face. Yet despite these extraordinary challenges, we've seen many extraordinary signs of hope too. Across West Silvertown, neighbours have pulled together to help each other out in remarkable ways. Volunteers have got stuck in to share their time, energy and skills with others – many for the first time. Local community organisations have also partnered together in innovative ways for the common good.



*Helen Fernandes,
Community Development
Manager, West Silvertown
Foundation*

It's against this backdrop that we report a year of growth and progress at WSF. We've been proud to play our part in supporting our community through the pandemic and when lockdown arrived, we rolled up our sleeves and quickly adapted our operating model. We launched a network of response services for the most vulnerable including a help line and support with food and shopping. We consulted with the community on how we could best provide ongoing support through the pandemic and you can read more about some of our highlights on the following pages, including:

- From fitness sessions to art classes, **successfully moving many of our regular activities online while starting new ones** in response to community feedback
- Seeing our **local young people grow in confidence and gain new skills** through our Youth Project, Summer Scheme and Song Project!
- **Expanding our programme of activities for families with under-5s** to five days a week
- Transforming an overgrown space in Britannia Village into **a new community garden** with the help of our local volunteers!

- Despite the challenges of restrictions, **finding ways to celebrate with people from right across the community** at events from Chinese New Year to Christmas

I'm so proud of the way that our team of staff, volunteers and activity leaders has stepped up to the plate, responding to the evolving needs of our neighbours while quickly getting to grips with technology to move things online. We are all hugely thankful too for the collaboration, support and guidance of the community organisations, schools and businesses who partnered with us to make a difference together.

As a result of the pandemic and of doing things differently, we're pleased to have had the opportunity to meet and serve a whole new cohort of local residents and grow our reach and impact. We look forward to building on these relationships in the year ahead and, whatever the rest of 2021 brings, we will continue to support West Silvertown's recovery from the pandemic and work with you to realise our vision of **"a vibrant, integrated community where ambitions are realised and friendships thrive."**

Our impact in numbers

Our volunteers transformed an overgrown space in Britannia Village into a new community garden following



Almost **1,000**
local residents

joined our face-to-face activities across a range of projects – from adult social groups and exercise classes to activities for under 5s and teenagers

We delivered **844**
hours of services

for our community and almost 400 hours of online activities helping to keep people connected, from fitness workouts to a book club!

We supported **189**
young people

to grow in confidence through our youth project, from our song project to our Summer Scheme

The median age of our service users was

21
with the youngest

0
and the oldest

76!



From Chinese New Year to Christmas, more than

300

adults and children

joined our cultural celebrations organised in line with restrictions at the time

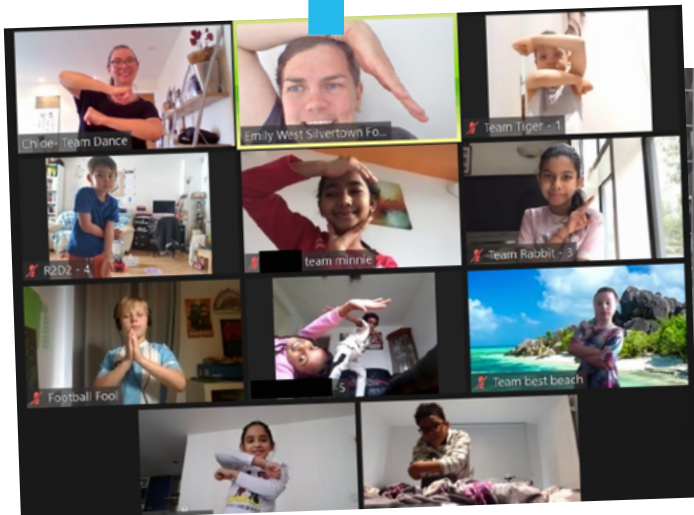
Our service users spoke

53

languages

from Afrikaans to Yoruba

Coronavirus emergency response



An online dance session during Family Fun Hour!

When lockdown arrived in March we quickly got to work, making wellbeing calls to around 45 local households and consulting across our Britannia Village and Royal Wharf communities to understand the practical challenges they were facing and how we could best support them.

During the first phase of the pandemic, we operated a phone help line five days a week. We provided food bank deliveries to families in the greatest need and opened a donation station at Britannia Village Hall where people could drop food and essentials. We also offered a Neighbourhood Shopping Scheme matching up local volunteers with those who were self-isolating and in need of help with their shopping.

Getting creative online!

At the same time, we polished our technology skills and put our creativity to the test, moving our regular face-to-face activities online where we could.

By end of May, we had delivered a total of 93 virtual sessions across a wide range of projects and activities and we

built our schedule further in response to take-up and community feedback. Attendance was encouraging overall, with up to 50 local residents attending some Quiz night sessions and more than 20 at some family time sessions.

At the core of our programme, we ran sessions for families with under-5s such as Stay & Play sessions and Pilates; fitness activities for adults including Mindful Fitness, workouts, meditation and stretching; social activities for adults like Book Club, Board Games and Coffee Morning; and child-focused sessions such as Family Fun Hour and drama classes for kids. Our Royal Wharf Singers Choir also hit a high note, recording new songs every other week!

While virtual activities will never be quite the same as meeting face-to-face, feedback from the community has been positive about how the online programme has helped people stay connected, engaged and mentally healthy. We're particularly pleased that it has allowed us to reach new members of the community and to forge some great new partnerships with other local organisations.

A banner we made with local children to show our support for the NHS!



"Just got my groceries, thank you! Absolutely overwhelmed by Olivia getting us food so quickly and being so kind!" – a local resident who benefitted from our Neighbourhood Shopping service

"My son had so much fun and the drama teachers are so attentive and entertaining. It looked like so much fun from where I was sitting too! Thank you for having these sessions – it really is great to have provisions like yours for young children." – Hannane is a local mum whose son joined our online drama sessions



Making music in our Youth Club song project



Young people filming their 'Lovely Day' video about lockdown

A table tennis champion during our Youth Club summer scheme



Football Academy during our Youth Club summer scheme

Youth Project

Since our youth project began Britannia Village in 2007, we've worked with around 5,000 young people. At the start of 2020, we expanded our youth work to Royal Wharf with a weekly drop-in club for 8 to 13 year-olds that was well attended until lockdown arrived.

Between lockdowns, and after consulting with schools, we delivered a four-week Summer Scheme. We focused on supporting the most vulnerable primary school pupils and helping secondary school students to stay connected and confident during a challenging year for their development.

Our summer scheme looked and felt different this year, with social distancing and careful attention to attendee numbers, but it was no less exciting – and was appreciated more than ever! 82 young people participated with separate daily sessions for 5 to 11 year-olds and 11 to 16 year-olds. Highlights included a close encounter with snakes, tarantulas and reptiles in partnership with Snakes Alive; a high-energy week of Football Academy;

and colourful Tie Dye sessions that helped bring new life to old clothes. In addition, we ran weekly online and outdoor games, online story time sessions, and drama and art activities to help our young people get creative.

We also helped local young people to develop their creative side and gain new skills through a song project based around topical themes. In partnership with Community Albums, more than 30 young people aged from 11 to 18 collaborated during the year to write, record and produce three songs on the subjects of lockdown, Black Lives Matter, and summer. We started online in May and evolved into face-to-face sessions when restrictions allowed.

"I'm quite a shy person, so this has helped me with my confidence a lot, just to get out there. With this video, I had so much confidence in my voice and in my recording!" – Courtney, age 17, took part in our Youth Club song project

Despite the constraints of the pandemic, we created opportunities for older teenagers to build their leadership skills too. A team of 12 young leaders aged 16-21 helped to plan, deliver and evaluate our summer scheme sessions, while older teenagers helped the younger children with their song project, made craft videos for families and online games sessions, and led half-term scavenger hunts!

- **82 young people** joined our Summer Scheme, taking part in activities from snake encounters to football academy!
- **More than 30 young people** joined our song project, writing and singing on topical themes from lockdown to Black Lives Matter

"We've done this song and we've sent a message – but we've walked away with skills from it as well!" – Ricardo, age 15, took part in our Youth Club Black Lives Matter song project

Children & families

Happy new year! Our Chinese new year celebration



Family craft time!



"The lockdown would have been unbearable if it had not been for your Virtual Stay and Play sessions that continued through summer, and I cannot forget the picnic play meet-ups that you had arranged in the Thames Barrier Park that got us something to look forward to in the afternoons!" – Local mum
Pooja moved to the area in late 2019

2020 began on a positive note with two new activities in partnership with local schools: a weekly lunch club for secondary school students, and a parent support group for primary school pupils with special educational needs. Meanwhile, we expanded our programme at Royal Wharf, with Family Time sessions for children with crafts, games, and homework and reading clubs, supplemented with extended sessions during half-term holidays.

Families with under-5s

A lack of provision for children under 5 years old remains a challenge for Newham families. So we've worked hard to expand our offer for parents and toddlers despite lockdown, delivering a mix of indoor, outdoor and online activities in line with the latest restrictions.

Before lockdown, up to 80 people regularly attended our under5s Soft Play sessions at Royal Wharf. We were encouraged to see the friendships between parents and careers grow – many of them new to the area – and these continued to flourish through lockdown, as the camaraderie at the local playground has shown!

At Britannia Village Hall, we continued to run our popular twice-weekly Stay and Play sessions for parents and their little ones and additionally launched two weekly parent support

groups, a Messy Play session and a Baby Sensory group. These new activities were quickly fully-booked and helped us to reach families we had not worked with before. We also launched a new Pilates class for parents that they could bring their under 5s along to.

By autumn, following our merger with local charity Bridges when four of their team joined us, we were offering under-5s sessions every Monday to Friday. We also expanded our range of activities during the year, introducing toddler dance classes, active play sessions before nap time, and even cooking sessions!

Community celebrations

At WSF, we love to bring our wonderfully diverse community together, learn about each other's cultures, and celebrate life in West Silvertown!

Around 45 people joined our Lunar New Year event in partnership with Beckton Chinese Association for dragon dancing, Chinese name-writing and traditional crafts and music. With Easter plans constrained by lockdown, we went outdoors with a community Easter Egg Hunt, a family scavenger hunt and craft activities every day for a week – and 127 children took part. We arranged daily craft activities for May half-term too, delivering free packs to 100 families.

In August, a local mum approached us and volunteered to help run sessions for primary school children during Black History Month. We ran four sessions in October with Black history storytelling and crafts, and we're considering how to build on this in future. We also organised an Family Craft Celebration around Hallowe'en, with almost 100 people taking part and a treasure trail finishing on the green in Britannia Village.

Restrictions affected our Christmas planning, so once again we got creative online. In partnership with Royal Docks Community Church, we organised a Zoom community nativity featuring 20 local children, while more than 40 people took part in our Christmas Craft and Trail to help mark the end of the year on a festive note in Britannia Village!

- **Despite lockdown**, we were hosting activities for families with under-5s every Monday to Friday by the autumn
- **We provided 179 craft packs** to families to help them stay creative and entertained during holidays!

"It's been so long since I've had a conversation like that. It's so nice not to have to talk only about the children!" – A local dad who joined our parent support group

Activities for adults

WSF's programme for adults helps keep the grownups in our community connected, learning and healthy and we added new activities during the year.

Our popular weekly English as a Second Language classes and Craft Group continued until March before moving online. In response to local feedback, we launched a new Adult Art Class at Royal Wharf and our spring and autumn courses both sold out quickly.

The weekly Saturday morning Victoria Dock Park Run, started in 2018 by WSF and now part of an international network of park runs, grew more popular than ever and volunteers also successfully organised a Couch to 5k Challenge for beginners. When lockdown stopped the community running together, people had have coffee together virtually instead, setting

Coffee morning at the Royal Wharf Community Dock



personal running challenges and taking part in scavenger hunts.

We launched a programme of local walks when restrictions allowed, visiting places such as City Island and Royal Victoria Dock. These were particularly appreciated by people with under 5s and single households who may have been isolated otherwise and they allowed us to build deeper relationships and signpost residents to other support services.

Our growing programme of social activities for adults at Royal Wharf successfully transitioned between online and face-to-face sessions as needed. Our weekly Board Games and Book Clubs have become well established as has a new Coffee

Morning supporting younger professionals working from home. A wine tasting event organised with the Windjammer pub also proved a real hit!

- **More than 200 people** regularly took part in Park Run each Saturday!
- **Regular sessions for adults** ranged from art and crochet classes to board games and book clubs

"I really enjoyed the pilates class, thank you. I'm ashamed to say that was the first exercise I have done in a month. Yikes - can I join the mindful fitness class tomorrow, please?" - Local mum Liz became a fan of our adult fitness classes in lockdown!

Community garden

For many years, the garden in Britannia Village had been underused and overgrown. At WSF we've wanted to help do something about this for some time, and the pandemic provided the perfect opportunity as local people found themselves with time on their hands and a desire to help their community.

In the summer, we got to work clearing this overgrown space. 26 volunteers took the opportunity to get outside and get active, giving 179 hours of volunteering time over 15 clear-up sessions. We then partnered with NewLife, a social enterprise that supports ex-homeless men into work, to create a welcoming new garden.

The new Community Garden opened in August with 21 plots. The majority

have been allocated to local residents, prioritising those who volunteered and have no garden of their own. Five plots are reserved for general community use, along with several spaces around the edge of the garden.

Since September, we've hosted a number of outdoor community activities when restrictions allowed. These include weekly gardening sessions for children and adults; outdoor prayer stations for members of Royal Docks Community Church and a community carol service.

A steering group of local residents has been formed to manage the garden and its future. We're excited about restarting our sessions soon and launching new ones, so our neighbours can get outdoors and keep active and learning!

- **The garden now offers 360 square metres of green space** for the whole community to enjoy
- **Volunteers gave 179 hours** of their time to transform this overgrown space

"It's helped to bring a community together and to bring a sense of pride and achievement in what we have built together." - ze is a local resident and volunteer who cleared the garden

"It's great to finally see the garden being used again, for engaging with and bringing together the community in this part of Britannia Village!" - Jamie is a local resident and volunteer who cleared the garden

Looking ahead

2020 brought a huge change to how we do things at WSF. Although things have been different, we have been blown away by the energy and engagement of so many people in our community, and we're determined to build on these positives and work to build an even better West Silvertown together.

Our immediate priority is to continue supporting the community through the ongoing challenges of the pandemic by helping our most vulnerable neighbours and enabling people stay active and connected online. At the same time, we'll keep on top of the latest restrictions and make sure we're ready to restart as many of our face-to-face activities and services as soon as possible.

We're particularly excited to have secured funding from London Borough of Newham to expand provision for young people in the area. Along

with three other local community organisations, WSF will serve as lead partner on this project, allowing us to reach more young people and deliver a broad and vibrant programme of activities over the next two years. We've also made a great start to our new mentoring programme for secondary school students in partnership with Oasis Academy Silvertown, with 39 mentors signed up for training.

Looking further ahead, we began a consultation in January to consider how Britannia Village Hall can continue to serve the future needs of the community. Now more than 20 years old, the hall is showing its age and requires significant investment. This provides the opportunity to develop a solution that's more flexible, more welcoming and makes better use of land.

Our emerging vision is to create an inclusive intergenerational hub where people from all backgrounds can

come and feel welcome. This would include new, state of the art community facilities alongside affordable new homes for local people, with more flexible community spaces that can be used and configured in different ways to meet a wider range of needs.

Around 200 local residents took part in our consultation and we've now formed an advisory group with local residents. We now plan to begin pre-application discussions with the aim of launching the redevelopment next year if possible. If you'd like to have a say and have not yet taken the opportunity, you're welcome to email us at development@wsfroyaldocks.org so we can arrange a discussion. We'd love to have you involved and you can read more on our website at wsfroyaldocks.org/britannia-village-development.

Helen Fernandes,
*Community Development Manager,
West Silvertown Foundation*

Get involved!

If you live in the area and haven't joined any of our activities before or it's been a while since you have, we invite you to get involved. Most of our activities are free – and those that aren't are affordable. We aim to offer something for everyone and we're a friendly bunch!

You can start by taking a look at our website, and following us on social media. We also recommend signing up for email news on our website so we can keep you in the loop about the latest activities we're running and share updates about the redevelopment of Britannia Village Hall. Alternatively, you're welcome to call or email us, and all of our details are on the bottom of this page. We hope to see you soon!

Thank you

We want to add a huge and heartfelt thank you to our trustees, employees, volunteers, activity leaders, friends, neighbours, supporters and donors from across West Silvertown and beyond. It's been an extraordinary year and we simply couldn't have done this without any of you!

We're also grateful to the other community organisations who have partnered with us – including several we have had the opportunity to work with for the first time. We have really valued your support, friendship, counsel and inspiration and look forward to doing more amazing things together!

It feels appropriate to close this report with a special thank you to all of our funding partners. Your support, understanding and flexibility during the pandemic has been fantastic and a great reassurance to us and to our community this year. West Silvertown truly appreciates you!

Thank you Aston-Manfield, Ballymore, The Big Lottery Fund, Bonny Downs Community Association, Bowling & Co, Britannia Village General Management Company, Britannia Village Primary School, Community Led Housing London, East End Community Foundation, Igloo, Jack Petchey Foundation, London Borough of Newham, Oasis Academy Silvertown, RDLAC, The Royal Docks Trust, The Silvertown Partnership and The Youth Providers Partnership.



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