

ST. HILDA'S EAST ANNUAL REVIEW 2023-24



Vision

A world where everyone in our community thrives, feeling connected to those around them and confident in their life prospects.

Mission

We seek to equip our service users with the resilience to navigate modern life. We welcome everyone to our space, work together to deliver engaging activities, promote social contact and ultimately enrich lives.

Values

We are **approachable** and always sensitive to our diverse community, treating everyone with empathy and dignity.

Values

We are **responsive** to the needs of our community, offering support, expertise and connecting them to people, tools and opportunities that allow them to flourish.

Values

We are constantly **evolving**, striving to learn and improve how we support the wellbeing of every generation who has lived their lives with us.

Foundation

We are rooted in our heritage and honour the legacy of doing right by our local community.



ST. HILDA'S EAST

SERVING THE
COMMUNITY SINCE
1 8 8 9

Wonderful sense of community ♡

kindest people I have ever met + ♡!!

BEST TIMES OF MY LIFE ♡



ABOUT ST. HILDA'S EAST

Founded in 1889 as a settlement by the Guild of Cheltenham Ladies' College, St. Hilda's East has long served as a vital, inclusive hub for the Tower Hamlets community.

As a multipurpose, multicultural organisation, we're committed to providing transformative services and connecting local residents with opportunities to thrive, guided by our mission where we seek to equip our service users with the resilience to navigate modern life. We welcome everyone to our spaces, work together to delivery engaging activities, promote social contact, and ultimately enrich lives.

With deep roots in the local community, we co-develop our programmes in partnership with our service users to ensure they are responsive to the current socio-economic and demographic landscape. Our free, high-quality initiatives span a broad range of social, healthy living, educational, and recreational activities.

Core services at St. Hilda's East include early years programmes for children under five and their families, with a special emphasis on supporting those with disabilities; youth initiatives for girls and boys aged 10-19, bilingual advice on welfare, housing, and debt, legal advice, a food co-op and guidance on healthy eating, diverse programmes for older adults, and women-only wellbeing projects. Through these services, we remain dedicated to fostering a vibrant and supportive environment for all who walk through our doors.

2024 marks our 135th anniversary. We want to extend our deepest thanks to all our service users for continuing to attend our programmes and being an integral part of the St. Hilda's East family.

We are so grateful for the ongoing support from our wonderful funders which has enabled us to serve our community for 135 years. Here's to the next 135 years!!



**2024 IS OUR
135TH
ANNIVERSARY**



DAYTIME ADVICE SERVICE

Over the course of the year, our bi-lingual daytime advice service provided over 750 appointments. The advice clinic sees mainly welfare benefit and housing issues, securing £115,000 of new and backdated benefits for our clients including one service user who received a back payment of £25,000 from DWP.

The service was reaccredited with the Advice Quality Standard and benefitted from support from Cadent Gas Limited who have enabled us to also provide advice on energy efficiency and savings to over 300 people. Cadent provided slow cookers, carbon monoxide alarms and service users were signed onto the Priority Service Register.

OVER THE COURSE OF THE YEAR, OUR BILINGUAL DAYTIME ADVICE SERVICE PROVIDED OVER 750 APPOINTMENTS. WE SECURED £115,000 OF NEW AND BACKDATED BENEFITS FOR OUR CLIENTS INCLUDING ONE SERVICE USER WHO RECEIVED A BACK PAYMENT OF £25,000 FROM DWP.

I WAS TOLD BY SOCIAL SERVICES THAT I WOULD HAVE TO PAY FOR SERVICES, WHICH I COULDN'T AFFORD. THE ADVICE SERVICE HELPED ME GET A NEW ASSESSMENT CARRIED OUT WHICH FOUND THAT I DID NOT HAVE TO PAY ANY MORE. "
CLIENT- ST. HILDA'S EAST ADVICE SERVICE



LEGAL ADVICE CLINICS

We continue to be grateful for our ongoing partnerships with Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner LLP and Macfarlanes LLP through which we have offered local people two pro bono evening legal advice clinics a week.

The clinics are supported by law student volunteers from Queen Mary University and BPP Law School. Across the clinics, housing issues dominate- from eviction notices to maintenance and quality of housing. Our support around these critical situations benefits the health and wellbeing of the people we advise as well as their families.

OUR LEGAL CLINICS HAVE PROVIDED OVER 400 APPOINTMENTS THIS YEAR TO PEOPLE WHOSE ACCESS TO LEGAL ADVICE WOULD OTHERWISE BE OUT OF REACH.

YOUTH PROJECTS

We continued to offer a wide variety of engaging activities for young people (ages 10-19), targeting those from disadvantaged backgrounds in Tower Hamlets.

Our programme equips them with various life skills, helping develop their self-esteem, confidence, social connections, and wellbeing.

Our youth programmes expanded this year to include a weekly Boys' Group following the model of our successful Brave Girls programme.

Our young people were supported to enjoy a range of activities to explore and support good mental wellbeing, building resilience, and confidence.

Activities included creative and physical activities, sports, discussions, and problem solving.



WE MARKED UK DISABILITY MONTH BY INVITING OVER 40 PUPILS FROM 3 LOCAL SCHOOLS TO TAKE PART IN AN INTERGENERATIONAL DISABILITY AWARENESS EVENT.

**"DURING MY LOWEST STATE OF MENTAL HEALTH, THE PROJECT PROVIDED A SAFE PLACE TO EXPRESS MYSELF AND REGAIN MY CONFIDENCE AND I WOULD NOT BE WHERE I AM TODAY WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF THE PROJECT"
YOUTH GROUP PARTICIPANT**

FAMILY LEARNING EARLY YEARS

Our families continue to come to St. Hilda's East to our Stay and Play sessions which offer use of our sensory room, garden, hall, and play room.

This year we have particularly encouraged families with children with additional needs to use our facilities and take advantage of our expertise in childcare.

OVER 300 CHILDREN HAVE BEEN SUPPORTED ACROSS OUR YOUTH AND EARLY YEARS PROVISION THIS YEAR.



"THE ST HILDA'S EAST STAY AND PLAY HAS BEEN A GODSEND AND ALL STAFF ARE WELCOMING AND FRIENDLY. " SERVICE USER- ST. HILDA'S EAST STAY AND PLAY

WOMEN-ONLY ACTIVITIES

Through weekly workshops, women have the opportunity to engage with a wider circle of local Tower Hamlets residents, helping to overcome isolation and social exclusion while building personal confidence and self-esteem and attaining new skills.

Our women's group progressed this year as a women and wellbeing project, bringing together a diverse group of women from minority ethnic and working-class backgrounds.



OUR WOMEN'S GROUP GREW FROM 5 TO OVER 40 PARTICIPANTS, BRINGING TOGETHER A DIVERSE GROUP OF WOMEN FROM MINORITY ETHNIC AND WORKING-CLASS BACKGROUNDS.

" I THINK THE PROJECT IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT INTEGRATES EVERYONE IN THE COMMUNITY. ST HILDA'S IS FOR ALL LOCAL WOMEN."

"ALTHOUGH I'M NEW, I FELT WELCOMED AND INCLUDED BY EVERYONE STRAIGHT AWAY."

"I'VE BEEN TRYING TO ACCESS TALKING THERAPIES FOR 2-3 YEARS, SO THANK YOU. TODAY HAS BEEN SO USEFUL."

WOMEN'S GROUP PARTICIPANTS

The weekly sessions have provided the women with the chance to take part in a wide range of creative activities, such as clay modelling, aromatherapy spritz making, and drama improvisation.

NHS Talking Therapies also offered regular sessions providing an opportunity for specialist support to address some issues pertinent to the women attending.



LINKAGE PLUS AND OVER 50'S FEELING GOOD

Linkage Plus and Over 50's Feeling Good have successfully continued to offer a varied programme of activities for older people aimed at reducing social isolation, building community cohesion, and supporting physical and mental wellbeing. Highlights included a wellbeing & mindfulness session with Stepping Stones Farm, health awareness sessions and ESOL classes, a 4-week aromatherapy course, seated exercise, dancing, as well as performing at Sadler's Wells Theatre.



WE HAVE CELEBRATED TOGETHER INCLUDING BLACK HISTORY MONTH, THE KING'S CORONATION, AND OLDER PEOPLES' DAY. WE HAVE BENEFITTED FROM SOME FABULOUS PARTNERSHIPS DURING THE YEAR; SADLER'SWELLS, RICH MIX, DASH ARTS, AS WELL AS LOCAL HEALTH SERVICES.

We have been able to offer services such as Digital Basics sessions, enabling participants to bring in their own digital devices and learn more about how to use them effectively. A 'scam awareness' session was provided by East London Business Alliance, a 'Falls & trips talk' offered by the NHS, and health & wellbeing sessions delivered by Social Action for Health for men who experience poor health.



" IF IT WASN'T FOR THE CLUB, I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WOULD DO" "THANK GOODNESS FOR THE CLUB. " "WE COULD NOT COPE WITHOUT YOU. " "YOU ALWAYS KEEP AN EYE ON US. "
LINKAGE PLUS SERVICE USER

"IT HAS IMPROVED MY SOCIAL LIFE MAKING ME FEEL LESS ISOLATED. INTERACTING WITH OTHERS AND BRAIN STORMING HAS OPENED UP A WEALTH OF KNOWLEDGE. HAVING A JOKE AND LAUGH WITH OTHERS HELPS WITH MY MOODS. "
PARTICIPANT-ST. HILDA'S EAST OVER 50'S FEELING GOOD



FOOD CO-OP

Our Food Co-op supports Tower Hamlets residents through the provision of affordable fresh fruits and vegetables at wholesale prices. We secured a new supplier in June 2023; Watney Fruits who now deliver fresh produce weekly.

We also developed our food bank offer to residents by becoming part of the Tower Hamlets Food Hub and Sainsbury's Front of Store Food Donations Scheme, receiving weekly donations to support families and vulnerable people to access food and household essentials.



OUR FOOD CO-OP HAD AROUND 3,000 CUSTOMER VISITS THIS YEAR. OUR FOOD HUB DONATIONS SUPPORTED AN AVERAGE OF 27 FAMILIES OR HOUSEHOLDS ON A WEEKLY BASIS, INCLUDING PEOPLE ACCESSING OUR OTHER PROGRAMMES.

Food donations alongside our Food Co-op increase food access in the cost-of-living crisis and reduce food waste in the system.

We are very proud of our work with the Just FACT programme, which concluded this year, where we supported the development of a new network of sustainable community-led Food Co-ops in Tower Hamlets.



"IT'S VERY, VERY GOOD QUALITY, VERY GOOD PRICE, VERY ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY."
ST. HILDA'S EAST FOOD CO-OP SERVICE USER

SONALI GARDENS DAY CENTRE

Our Day Centre at Sonali Gardens has continued to welcome older people predominantly from the local Bangladeshi community, six days a week, providing a culturally appropriate person focused service bringing older people together and providing respite for families and carers.

At Sonali Gardens, we have offered people a range of activities to support mental and physical wellbeing as well as reduce social isolation. Seated exercise classes and music remain popular as do opportunities to visit local sites, facilities, and parks.



The beautiful gardens at Sonali offer our users the opportunity to relax outside, to participate in gardening, and to grow vegetables from 'back home' in Bangladesh.



VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are a valued and essential asset at St. Hilda's East. We are so grateful for the time, skill, and commitment our volunteers have given.

This year we have been able to offer two of our committed volunteers the opportunity to take on paid employment, one of whom is a local resident who spent much of her adult life caring for elderly parents and her children.

With more time and wanting to gain more experience as well as develop her skills to enter the childcare profession, we were delighted to welcome her as a volunteer. She became a valued member of our Early Years team and like many of our volunteers, she brought dedication, motivation, and passion to her role.

When funding became available to expand our offer to families to use our sensory room, she took up employment in a paid role.



"I LOVE THE PEOPLE; I HAVE MORE CONFIDENCE AFTER VOLUNTEERING AND CAN NOW RUN SESSIONS MYSELF."

"I LOVE VOLUNTEERING WITH THE FEELING GOOD PROGRAMME. MEETING NEW PEOPLE AND MAKING FRIENDS OF ALL AGES IS GREAT. IT'S AN INCREDIBLY REWARDING (AND FUN!) EXPERIENCE. "
ST. HILDA'S EAST VOLUNTEERS

67 INDIVIDUALS CONTRIBUTED THEIR EXPERTISE AND TIME OVER THE COURSE OF THE YEAR. WE HAVE BENEFITTED FROM OVER 2,000 HOURS OF VOLUNTEERING THIS YEAR.

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

Cheltenham Ladies' College
London Legal Support Trust
The 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust
Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner LLP
Guild of Cheltenham Ladies' College
L.B of Tower Hamlets
National Lottery Community Fund
Tower Hamlets' residents.
National Lottery Community Fund
London Tigers
Toynbee Hall
Cadent Gas Ltd
Mind in Tower Hamlets, Newham & Redbridge
Women's Environmental Network
The Progress Foundation
Merchant Taylors' Foundation
Bupa Foundation
The Henry Smith Charity
Inner London Magistrates' Court Poor Box Charity & Feeder Charity
The FredMill Trust Fund
East End Citizens Advice Bureaux
Macfarlanes LLP

Thank you to all our Individual Donors

 **mind** Tower Hamlets, Newham and Redbridge

BCLP.

 **LinkAge Plus**
A brighter future for older people

 **COMMUNITY FUND**

Cadent
Your Gas Network

MACFARLANES

**SADL
ERSW
ELLS**


ST. HILDA'S EAST
SERVING THE
COMMUNITY SINCE
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