

high

trees

Annual Report 2019 - 2020



Meeting everyone as a person of great potential

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A Word From Our Chair



The 19/20 year for High Trees ended just as the pandemic hit, and looking back past this to the year ending in March 2020 seems in some ways like a different time. It was however a year High Trees can be proud of – in a very challenging climate we further expanded and refined our services to meet local need while continuing to prioritise user voice at the heart of all our decision making.

Alongside the delivery of our charitable services, the organisation also saw a rebrand including the launch of our new website, a review to strengthen our governance and a refresh of many of our internal policies and procedures.

High Trees continued to focus our delivery across our core service areas of Education and Training, Children Young People and Families services (at our Adventure Playground), Employment Support and Community Action and this report will hopefully give a flavour of our work throughout the year.

We also continue to focus on our Partnership work within a diverse, vibrant and effective Lambeth VCS sector and will continue to focus on collaboration and learning as we look forward to a post-pandemic landscape.

Once again I must express my gratitude to High Trees' staff and my fellow trustees, without whom none of our work would have been possible. I am also thankful to our partners and funders who continue to work with us to deliver the services that our communities need.

We look forward to the year ahead which we hope will be another of stability and organisational development and growth.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Saleha Jaffer".

Saleha Jaffer
Chair of Trustees



Thank you for your interest in High Trees

Founded by local residents 21 years ago, we've grown and changed considerably since then, but what has not changed is our core ethos of being firmly rooted in the local community and making sure all of our services are responding to local need.

This annual report provides a snap shot of our services across the 19/20 financial year and we hope you find it informative. All of High Trees work is aimed at tackling the impact of embedded structural disadvantage, though of course what this looks like in practice varies significantly across our different services areas and our aim is to provide an integrated service offer, based on a solid evidence base and designed to tackle different needs. We know that the individuals and communities in Tulse Hill and the surrounding areas that High Trees serves face multiple long-standing structural disadvantages impacting education levels, employment rates, living conditions, financial security and health and wellbeing which is further compounded by being significantly under-represented and disenfranchised in decision making over issues that affect their lives.

High Trees understands that there is no one solution or way of working and we are proud to be part of the committed and vibrant VCS sector in Lambeth – we also recognise we have grown over the last few years in particular and this carries with it a commitment and obligation to support smaller groups with lesser capacity and champion collaborative working practices that can lead to the systemic changes that no one organisation can achieve alone.

This report will give you a flavour of what High Trees work looks like in practice, whether this is how we embed user voice across our departments, our summer programme with our children and young people or the achievements of our employment service. For more information about any of our work, please visit our (new!) website or contact our team and we'd be very happy to talk it through.

Best wishes,

Anna Coffey and Grace English
High Trees Co-CEO's

children

families and

young people

ANNUAL SUMMARY

254 individuals worked with throughout the year

162 of these were new to our services

72 individuals recieved 1:1 and group coaching

300 coaching sessions were provided



children
families and
young people

This year we wanted our children and young people to have even more of a say in our services, and we've worked hard to ensure this. We know no one model works, and this year we introduced a regular youth steering group to put young people at the centre of decision making, including giving them ownership of some event budgets (including our Christmas party) alongside our 'You Say' wall and working with the young people to plan and design the coming terms activities.

The children and young people also worked to design a new timetable of optional activities for evening sessions, including choosing the recipe for our cooking sessions each week, which has resulted in a positive impact on our in-week attendance figures, with more young people coming 3-4 times a week than ever before!



The young people were keen to embrace the natural world this year and through London Youth's Keeping it Wild programme the children and young people worked to make the Adventure Playground more wildlife friendly. They visited Sydenham Woods as part of the project and now have exciting plans to build a pond and nature garden in the playground.

This year the Children, Family and Young People team launched our additional Saturday sessions, ensuring the playground is now open 4 times a week after school until 7.30 and every Saturday afternoon too.

Another highlight this year included achieving the London Youth Bronze Quality Mark, a testament to the hard work and dedication of our team. It's now onwards to Silver and then Gold!



Our summer got off to a very rocky start with the old play structures from the 1970s finally being declared beyond repair and being pulled down. However, the team responded to the creative challenge, and our summer programme included constructing a treehouse out of the materials of the old structures, building hay bale mazes, having huge water fights, building ramps and swings, making assault courses and cooking up delicious meals!

We were also delighted to host the Building Young Brixton summer party, featuring a live band encouraging everyone to have a go at the open mic and bringing together young people from 8 organisations across Brixton and Tulse Hill.

In Autumn Our Youth Coaching continued to be a success with Elm Green School joining St Martin's School for Girls in the programme. Our team deliver weekly coaching sessions throughout the year and are continually developing resources to benefit the needs of young people attending both schools.

Case Study

Tasha was identified by her school as falling behind with her homework and struggling with punctuality and attendance. She was referred to our coaching programme and had regular one-to-one sessions.

Tasha opened up about several losses she had recently experienced that she hadn't disclosed at school and the impact this was having on her, the sessions gave her space to reflect on her feelings alongside tasks to help identify her strengths.

At the end of the coaching programme, Tasha shared how valuable the experience had been for her, and that she felt better able to navigate her feelings and seek support. Her coach also worked with her to speak to her teachers about her challenges, who were then better able to support her.

education and training

ANNUAL SUMMARY

73 courses held overall

147 learners completed accredited training and gained a qualification

715 unique learners enrolled on our courses

72% of learners progressed onto higher level training, volunteering or employment



High Trees' continued to offer a wide range of accredited and non-accredited courses across our sites in Tulse Hill, and other venues across Lambeth including libraries and Children's Centres (with over 50 parents enrolled on our ESOL courses with creche facilities for children under 5).

671 Lambeth residents attended courses through our Lambeth Adult Learning contract, providing them with an exciting wide range of accredited and non-accredited courses focused on basic skills and employability.

In our family learning programme, we were able to support parents and children through a diverse range of non-academic courses including 'I am not naughty, I have Autism', Family Yoga for Mother and Toddlers, Mosaic workshops and Wellbeing classes.

Working with Lambeth Housing we provided capacity training for 130 residents which included the delivery of our Level 3 Award in Education and Training, Level 2 Resident Scrutiny, Level 2 Food and Hygiene, ICT for Beginners and the newly introduced Level 3 Award in Housing Practice.



We had another great year of our "Strength in Words" ESOL programme, funded by City Bridge Trust with 117 learners attending our ESOL courses and conversation clubs, which were more popular than ever.

Our ESOL programme has a tangible aim of seeing more ESOL representation in local decision making and ESOL learners becoming more active in their community. 70 of our learners were able to get out and put their skills into practice by attending museums and local attractions on learning trips.

Our ESOL learners stepped outside the classroom again as they organised and delivered a Summer Learner Forum on the environment and resilience in the community in July 2019. More learners were able to connect socially through an ESOL learner event in March 2020 where they began setting up a peer club to collaborate and share skills amongst the community.



This year our partnership with the Battersea Academy for Skills and Employment (BASE) and funded by GLA meant we were able to offer ESOL courses to employees of Battersea Power Station directly at their workplace. This pilot engaged 35 learners in their workplace in a combined ESOL and customer service course.

We were also able to intensively support 15 individuals with low literacy to improve their English skills through 1:1 literacy support thanks to funding by the Big Lottery Fund.

Celebrating achievement and ensuring all of our courses are designed in a way that meets the needs and wishes of our learners is at the heart of our work. This year we hosted 3 learner forums attended by 65 learners to celebrate their accomplishments and provide feedback on their experiences.

Case Study

Malak joined our ESOL course in September 2019, after only finishing primary school in his home country, Eritrea. During his 16 years in London working as a butcher, he picked English up from his colleagues but never had the opportunity to advance his reading and writing skills.

Due to his excellent speaking skills, Malak quickly advanced to a higher level ESOL course and we worked to connect him to the internet so he could independently study and translate new words.

The new skills he has learnt have had an enormous impact not only on his life but on his autistic son's life too. His son regularly sees specialists and Malak is now able to confidently translate medical letters, technical vocabulary and fully engage in his son's medical care and decision making. Malak has gained countless new skills and most importantly to him, he can better understand his son's condition and needs.

employment

and welfare

ANNUAL SUMMARY

263 individuals supported

108 individuals supported into employability or better & more secure jobs

89% reported an increase in employability



High Trees Employment support continues to be aimed at those with multiple barriers to gaining employment and this year's programmes were targeted at the over 50s, those with long term health conditions, individuals who have been unemployed for significant lengths of time and those stuck in low paid or insecure work.

Each beneficiary's journey is unique, but all worked one-to-one with our advisors to identify barriers, and the steps needed to overcome them – this included creating or brushing up CV's, identifying job opportunities, interview techniques and identifying training gaps alongside identifying strengths and skills. This year, more of our Employment beneficiaries than ever were referred to our Education and Training team to undertake courses that would help them gain employment, and more than ever of our course

Our weekly jobs club provided additional support to those receiving one-on-one sessions, but also provided drop-in support for Lambeth residents who needed a space with computer and internet access to search for jobs, receive peer support, talk through any challenges with our advisors and receive on the spot advice before submitting applications or heading to interviews.

The feedback from our jobs club sessions told us how invaluable they were, with most of our users reporting that not only were they applying for more roles, but they had more confidence in the applications they were submitting and felt they had improved or significantly improved their confidence that they would move into a role within the next 6 months. The peer support element of the job club was particularly well regarded by participants and we're looking ahead to see how this can be embedded more widely in our service.

At the centre of all our employment work remains understanding the value of our beneficiaries gaining secure employment that they will thrive in long term, and that suits their other commitments, rather than seeing any job outcome as a success.



Case Study

Olga came to us for help to get a job. During our first appointment, we improved her CV so that it would reflect her broad experience. She expressed a strong interest in setting up her own food business.

In fact, as part of her wide experience, she had once run her own bar. We scheduled an appointment with the Food Health and Safety team at Lambeth Council. In the meantime, Olga looked for a place to let in Brixton and identified a small unit in the Brixton Mall which would perfectly fit her needs in terms of space and price.

By the end of August, Olga had proudly sent me a leaflet of her new tapas bar opening event!

community action

66 people received one-to-one mentoring

16 events delivered

641 people attended events



Our Community Action Team continued to support residents to help them take action on issues that are important to them. This year we carried on our work with the St Martin's Tenants' and Residents' Association, helping them with capacity and strategy in their campaign to tackle the widespread damp in properties on their estate after years of inaction by their housing associations. We also worked with our partners IRMO (InterAmerican Refugee and Migrant Organisation) to support a group of Latin American parents to organise around their concerns, which were mainly focused on their housing conditions.

This year, the team also held a series of 'Space to Think' events. A Space to Think brings together diverse groups of people – social and community activists, Community Organisers, third sector and civil society organisations, people who aren't part of any formal group, and policy makers at Borough and London-wide levels – to discuss some of the key issues and concerns that Londoners face. Topics addressed included school exclusions, issues that Latin American women and parents face in London and Green Spaces, partnering with Black Thrive, IRMO and the Selby Trust to hold these events.

Our Community Action team was also approached to carry out research on the impact of youth violence on both young people and the local community. We trained peer researchers to conduct community conversations and listening campaigns. At the end of the listening campaign, we produced a report analysing the findings and then designed and facilitated a discussion around the topic with over 100 people in attendance.

What our community says:

"We experienced a true sense of family union here. We can improve our situation when we are being heard."

"I have been to similar courses in the past, this one was by far the best."

"I strongly and passionately recommend this seminar, the tutoring was clear and informative."

"The workshop was well structured so each step reinforced previous learning."

partnerships



Our Building Young Brixton partnership expanded further, with Grove Adventure Playground and Juvenis joining us in October. Across the 9 partnership organisations, we worked with over 800 young people, offering a range of services. The practitioners and

managers attended joint training, delivered both internally and externally. This included Trauma Training, Practical Safeguarding and Confronting Conflict. This year saw us launch our Building Young Brixton's Youth Steering Group, who focused on ensuring young people were represented in the design and implementation of services, and planning for the future of BYB.

Partners worked together to bring the young people together in a series of events including a bake off between the Grove and Tulse Hill Adventure Playgrounds, young people from High Trees, Baytree and Grove taking part in a 6-week horse riding programme at Ebony Horse Club and Spiral Skills delivering a 3-day work experience



The Youth Steering Group successfully planned two joint events: the Summer Day Out at Tulse Hill Adventure Playground with over 90 young people and 22 youth workers attending, and the BYB Christmas party which saw 77 young people from 7 partners

PLACE FOR ALL

This was the year that our Place for All partnership became firmly established. Set up in January 2019 with High Trees, the Baytree Centre and IRMO it focuses on the Adult services of the 3

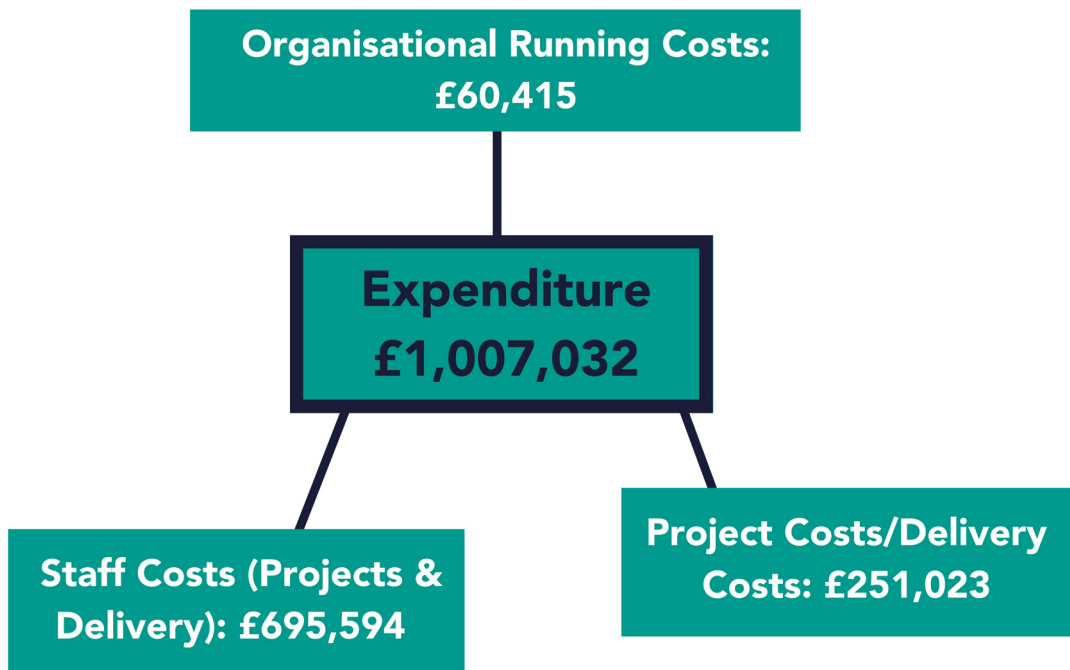
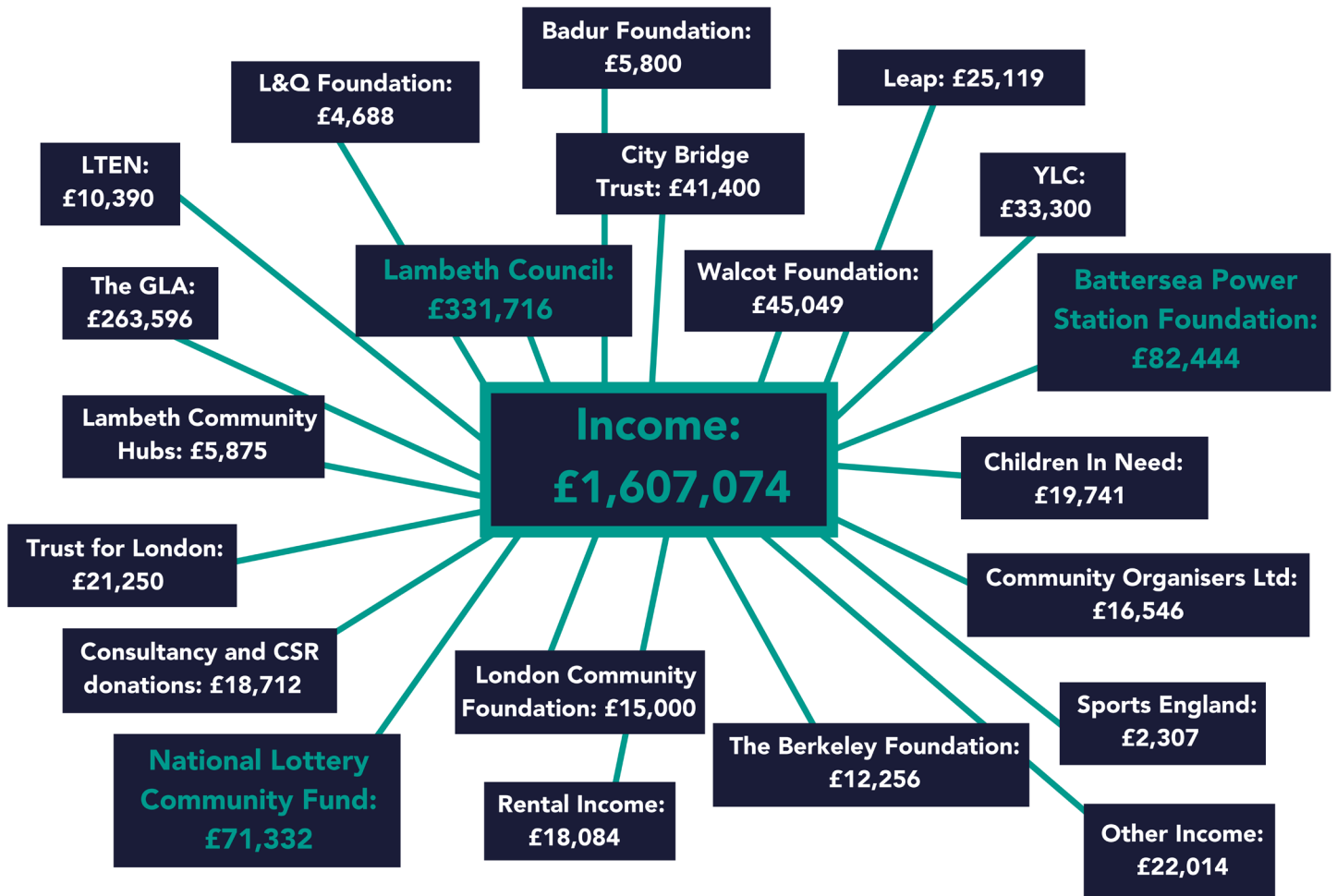
organisations, aiming to provide multifaceted services to socially and financially excluded adults, with a particular focus on lone parents, minority ethnic communities including a focus on Latin American and Spanish-speaking individuals and those over 50. The partnership seeks to not only focus on improving the breadth of services on offer to these groups, ensuring that our collective expertise and delivery can reach all of our users, but also look at how partnership working can strengthen the capacity and practice of the 3 individual organisations. Over the year, PFA collaborated to deliver EU Settlement Scheme support, as well as ICT courses and employment support. They also celebrated Black History Month with a photo exhibition that was made available to view at all sites.



Lambeth Hubs

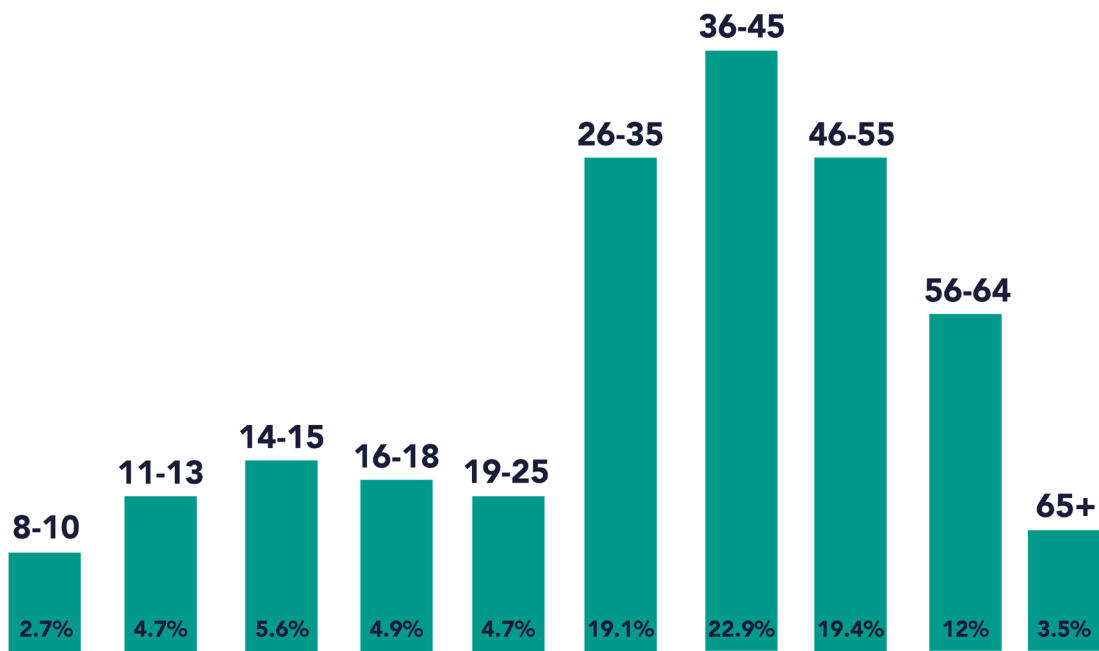
Lambeth Hubs continued to bring together 5 community anchor charities in Lambeth that provide place-based provision in their local areas. The Hubs continued to look for further collaboration that could strengthen our reach and practice, focusing on improved referral routes across the partnership and opportunities to share our learning and experience with smaller and newer organisations in the borough with organisations working to capacity build and where needed share best practice or resources in their immediate area.

Throughout the year High Trees continued to look for opportunities to work with partners across Lambeth in a variety of ways, whether this was via more formal partnerships, informal collaboration, effective referral routes or capacity building or mentoring via our Community Action team.

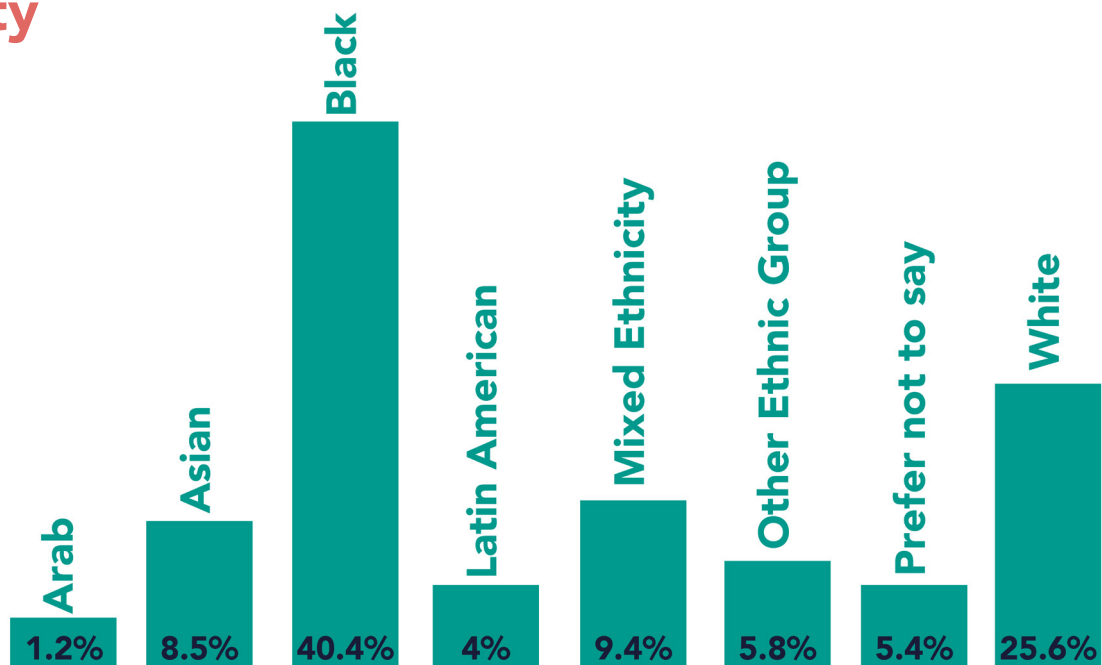


Our services are available to all Lambeth residents, with a particular focus on Tulse Hill and the other central Brixton wards, though our funding necessitates income requirements for some of our free adult education courses. While open to all, High Trees particularly focus on certain groups who are traditionally underserved by services and this is reflected in these numbers. 70% of our service users are from minority ethnic communities, our Employment services has a particular focus on over 50s (alongside lone parents and those with disabilities and long term health conditions) and 76% of our users are women and girls.

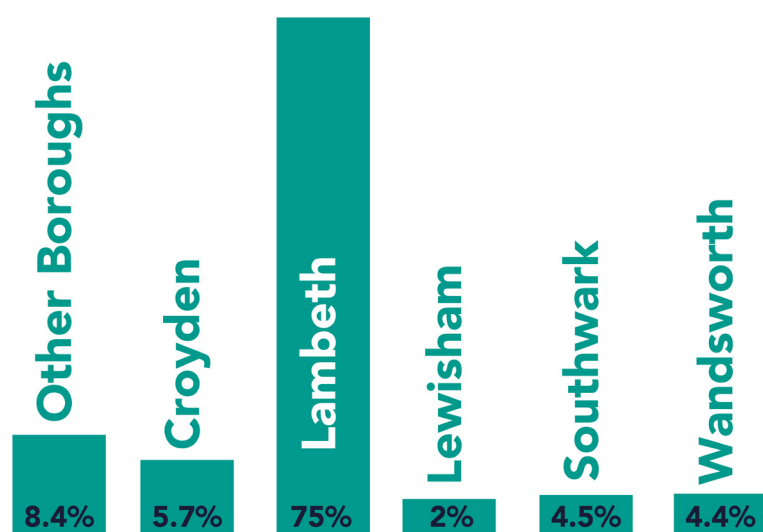
Age



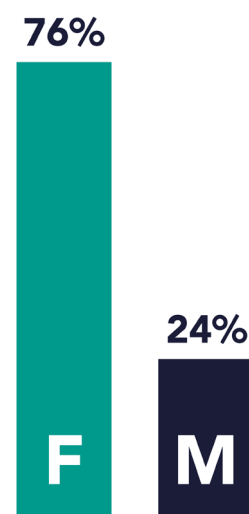
Ethnicity



Local Authority



Sex



Future Plans

In the coming year and beyond High Trees will continue to implement its 5 year strategic plan. We will seek resources to undertake the refurbishment of St Martins Learning Centre to provide a state-of-the-art community and learning space for the residents of Tulse Hill.

As an organisation we will continue to implement our Quality Improvement Plans across all of its service areas, to ensure a continuous cycle of improvement to make sure our services are examples of best practice and are meeting community need.

High Trees will also continue to embed user voice across all of our services and ensure that our users are instrumental in the design and review of our services. Furthermore, we will seek out and develop further partnerships to ensure collaboration rather than competition continues to be the cornerstone of our approach.

High Trees will develop opportunities to share our learning and best practice with our partners and decision makers. Finally High Trees will undertake a full review of our organisational policies and practices to ensure they are fit for our growing organisation.

**With Special
Thanks to:**



Patron:

Bell Ribeiro-Addy (Member of Parliament for Streatham)

Trustees:

Saleha Jaffer (Chair)

Ewa Pawliczko

Julie Say

Nina Morris

Sina Taiwo

Terry Curtis

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