

high

trees

Impact Report

September 2022 - August 2023



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Introduction to High Trees

High Trees is a Community Development Trust in Tulse Hill, Lambeth. We were set up by local residents from St. Martin's Housing estate, who campaigned to bring the recently closed public library into community ownership, and as of 2023 we were 25 years old. Initially a small volunteer run association, today we are a multidisciplinary charity with a dedicated team of 25+ staff.



Our mission is to connect people and communities to strengthen the skills, voice and capacity of individuals and communities we work with.

We intend for our impact to be multifaceted, and that it will ultimately result in life being better for individuals and communities in Tulse Hill and Lambeth as well as a stronger, more connected and collaborative community sector who have an effective voice to influence change.

Our delivery operates across a number of distinct service areas, allowing us to offer multiple services as needed to our beneficiaries. 40% of our service users access multiple activities or provisions during their time with us. Our current services include: Education and Training, Employment and Careers, Children, Young People and Families, Community Action, Partnerships, Sector Support and Community Research.

Letter from Co-CEOs

Thank you for your interest in High Trees, and welcome to our 2022 – 23 Impact Report!

This year High Trees worked with more service users than ever before and we were proud to share in their journeys and their successes.

Our services remain targeted and local, available to all those who wish to use them, but aimed at those who need them most. All our work aims to make life better for the individuals and communities who use our services, helping people make meaningful changes that allow them to live happier, healthier, more connected lives. We have developed our services based on the founding principles that all of our work should be responsive to the needs of our communities, have user voice at its heart, be person centred and evidenced based.

High Trees has grown and changed steadily over the years, refining our purpose and offer to the local community, while always ensuring we stay true to our founding vision and roots, to deliver impactful services that are responsive to community need.

Evidence and experience tell us that those most impacted by structural inequalities are most often failed by the statutory services that are needed to allow everyone to meet their potential. As the chronic and cumulative underfunding of essential services continues, whilst the cost of living rises, the barriers many of our beneficiaries face are growing. Our work with the wider charity sector in Lambeth is based on our understanding that while we seek to make meaningful change in the lives of those who access our services, we are often only one of multiple organisations that our users will access – whether these are other voluntary and community sector organisations or statutory services.



The structural change our beneficiaries need to enable them to thrive, can only be achieved by changes to the multiple systems that impact upon their lives. We are determined to contribute to making these changes. Whether through our partnership working, our growing research work, our work to influence policy, the structured support packages we are able to offer our charity peers or more informal avenues of support, contributing to wider change and to a thriving sector is a core part of our mission.

As unashamed champions of the argument that place based organisations are almost always the most effective organisations to understand the communities in which they are based and deliver the needed services, our work to help other place based charities grow and thrive is firmly an organisational priority.

The work we will always be most proud of though is the services we deliver to our beneficiaries – playing a part in allowing them to make the changes they wish to make in their lives and witnessing the outcomes of these changes, reminds us every day of why High Trees exists and why organisations like ours are so needed.

Anna and Grace
High Trees Co-CEOs

employment and careers support

We provide **person-centred employment support** in the form of one-to-one coaching, pre-employment training and advice sessions delivered across a variety of community settings. Our services are open to all but have a particular focus on supporting young adults aged 18-30, those aged 50+ and individuals with long-term health conditions. We work to improve individuals' economic position through sustainable employment opportunities and career progression.

community education and training

We specialise in **delivering adult education in community settings** to provide individuals with the skills they need for work and life. Our accredited and non-accredited courses include ESOL, English & Maths Functional Skills, Community Organising, Digital Skills, vocational courses and employment preparation.

partnerships

We lead and support the **development of some of Lambeth's most impactful voluntary and community sector partnerships**, creating joined up strategies to respond to the challenges faced by the communities we support. Our current partnerships focus on tackling violence affecting young people, improving community spaces, and supporting individuals facing multiple disadvantages.

Our services

community research

We work with **communities to conduct rigorous and high-quality research** on topics that matter to them. Our work in research aims to lead directly to positive change. With our voluntary and community sector partners, we are founding the Lambeth Community Research Network to facilitate meaningful work of benefit to our communities.

children young people and families

We work on the basis of early intervention and deliver a range of services from Tulse Hill Adventure Playground for 8-16 year olds focused on play, study and social action. We also deliver coaching in local secondary schools and a Young Leaders programme for young people aged 16-19 providing paid work experience and employment support. All our work aims to improve the aspirations and wellbeing of children and young people.

sector support

We offer mentoring and capacity building support to local voluntary and community sector organisations based on our learning and practical experience delivering services to Lambeth communities for over 25 years. We also produce a range of practical open-access resources, such as templates and toolkits for use within the sector. Our approach is designed to be pragmatic and tailored to the needs of every organisation we work with.

community action

We support individuals and community groups to develop advocacy skills and empower them to take collective action on issues that affect them, whilst also improving representation in decision making. We do this through listening campaigns, supporting local groups, 1:1 support, community organising training and peer research.

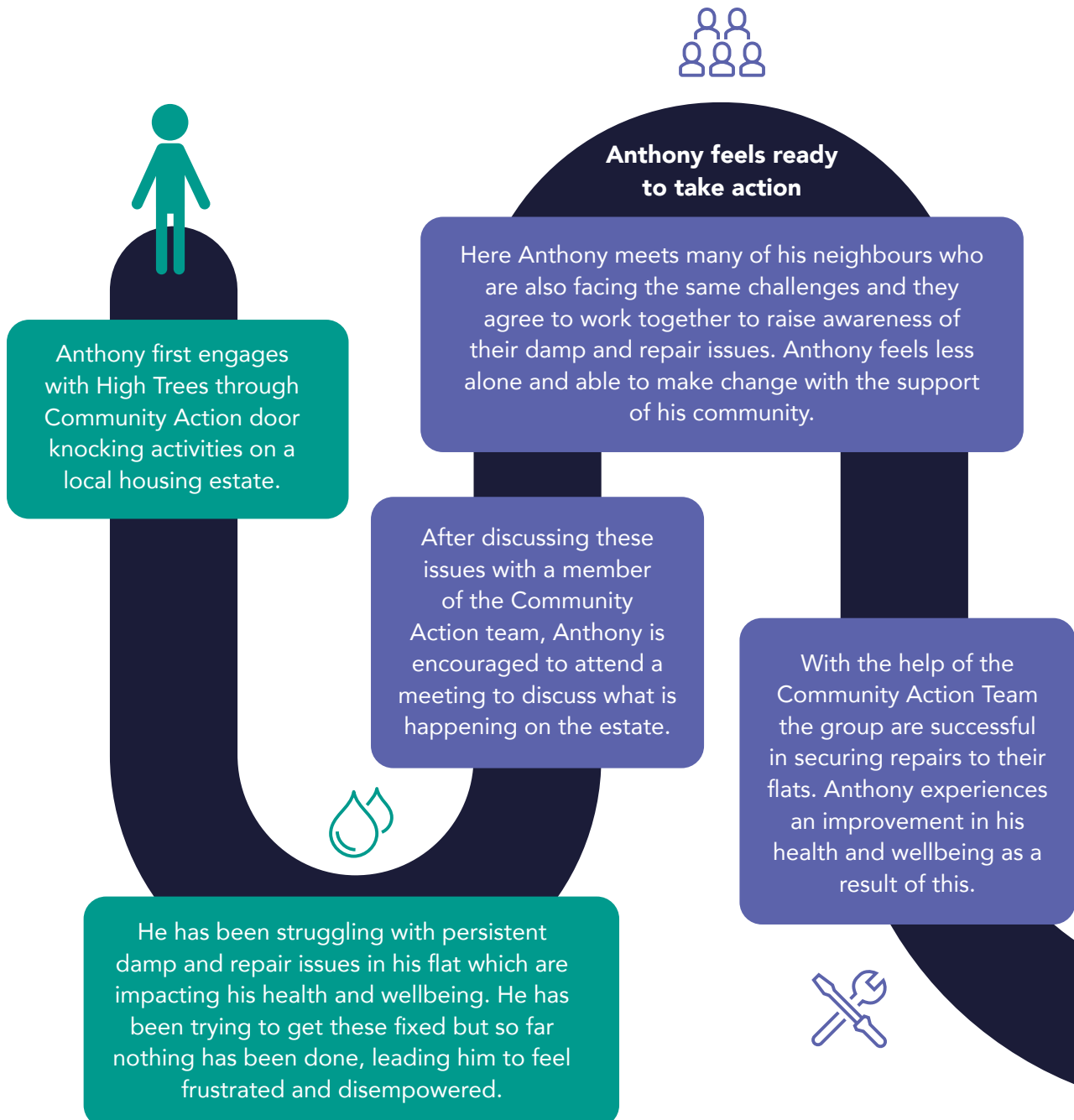
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“For one thing, I would really emphasise what a good job everybody at High Trees is doing, as an organisation to get people aware of what futures they might have if they’re young, what benefits they might be receiving if they’re getting older and different items like that, I think High Trees is a very important hub to have in your community.”

- Local resident

”

Anthony's Journey





Receives 1:1 coaching and advice

A member of the Community Action team refers him on to the Employment and Careers service at High Trees.

Due to improvements in his health, Anthony now feels ready to begin looking for work after being unemployed for several years.

Here Anthony receives 1:1 coaching and advice from an Employment Advisor who supports him on his job search and helps him to build his confidence and recognise the new skills he has developed through working with the Community Action team.



His confidence, wellbeing and financial position have improved, and he continues to engage with the Community Action team to support other residents on his estate.

After completion of the course Anthony is successful in his job interview and moves into his new role as a bus driver.



Takes part in a training course

Anthony takes part in a Pre-Employment Training Course delivered in partnership with a bus company. Here he receives focused preparation for the role of a bus driver with a guaranteed job interview at the end of the course.

High Trees Impact



This year we worked with **1,757** people



High Trees worked intensively with **1,215** people through our Employment and Careers, Education and Training and Children, Young People and Families activities and through our mentoring and capacity building support for community leaders.

We reached **a further 284 adults** through listening campaigns and community meetings facilitated by our Community Action team and a further **258 young people** through our social action work with the Lambeth Peer Action Collective.



We aim to reach those most disadvantaged by structural inequality:



71%

of adults accessing our employment and education services **were in receipt of benefits**



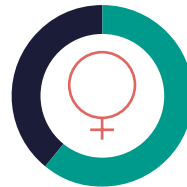
78%

of service users were from a **Minority Ethnic background**



67%

of adults were **unemployed at the start of engagement** with us



61%

of service users were **female**



19%

of service users (both adults and young people) were **living with a long-term condition**

High Trees Service User Demographics

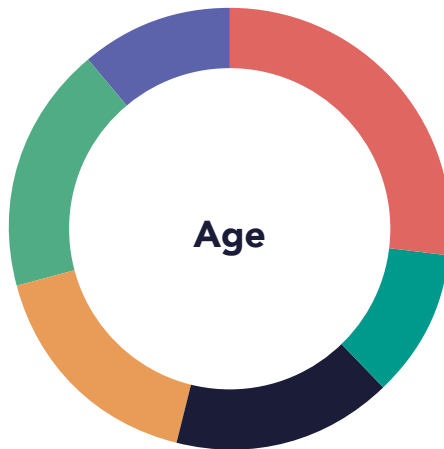


- 7% Asian
- 50% Black, African, Caribbean or Black British
- 11% Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Group
- 10% Other Ethnic Group
- 7% White British or Irish
- 15% White: Any other background

Sex:

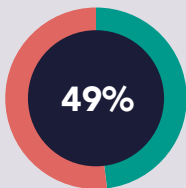
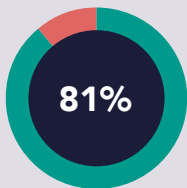


- 19 and under 27%
- 20-29 11%
- 30-39 16%
- 40-49 17%
- 50-59 18%
- 60+ 11%



Our work is targeted and local:

81%
of our participants
live in Lambeth

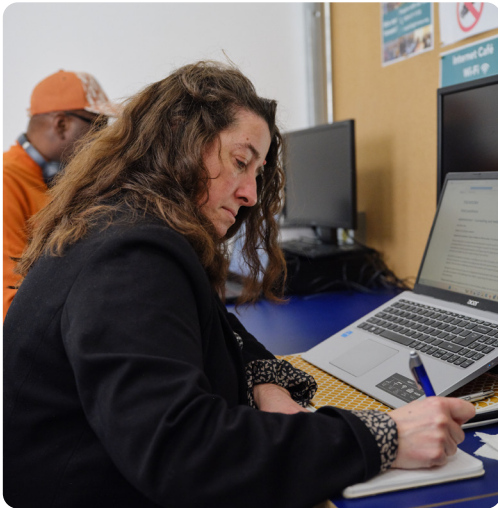


49%

of our participants lived in central Brixton wards (Brixton Acre Lane, Brixton North, Brixton Rush Common, Brixton Windrush, Herne Hill and Loughborough Junction & St Martins)

A Snapshot of our Impact

Improved life conditions and prospects for individuals and communities



635

adults developed their skills by accessing at least **one of the 80 courses we ran.**

154

individuals **gained a new qualification** studying with us.

93%

of individuals strongly agreed that studying with us had helped them get **closer to their long-term goal.**

115

individuals **moved into employment** after receiving one-to-one employment support.

Increased wellbeing of individuals and communities with raised aspirations

99%

of individuals agreed (13%) or strongly agreed (86%) that accessing a course had **helped them to increase their wellbeing and confidence.**

88%

of young people reported **feeling more confident** after accessing our coaching sessions.

77%

of people reported that **their wellbeing had improved** after receiving employment support.



“

“My mindset has changed! It’s different when you are part of the change. Now I feel that whenever I want to see a change, I know I will be able to do it because I have done it before.”

”

More connected individuals and communities working together



77%

of individuals strongly agreed that they **made new friends** whilst accessing our adult education provision.

80%

of individuals felt **more motivated to get involved in their local community** after studying with us.

52

community leaders from The Fields & Tulse Hill Estates **accessed mentoring support**.

A stronger, more connected, and collaborative VCS

The Lambeth Community Hubs Network Resource Library has had

1,400 visits and **over 400** resources were downloaded in its first year.

3,493

young people were supported through the **Building Young Brixton Partnership** this year.

3

open access **toolkits** published



Communities and VCS organisations have a stronger voice and ability to influence change



200

residents **contributed to a listening campaign** on the Tulse Hill Estate to **identify common areas for action**. A new group formed to take action and has already secured improvements to the estate.

22

young people took part in activities to **commission youth reduction activities** for the borough and allocate £150,000 of Council funding.

258

young people engaged through **social action events, projects and meetings** to design and deliver the **Lambeth Peer Action Collective manifesto**.

Increasing Education and Skills

High Trees offer a range of accredited and non-accredited courses that are designed to equip local residents with the skills they need for life and work.





All our courses are designed to support individuals to either gain the skills and confidence they need, and/or to provide direct progression into higher learning, training or employment. We specialise in delivering functional skills courses in Maths, English and digital skills, and we are also one of the biggest providers of ESOL - English for Speakers of Other Languages - in the borough (our ESOL beneficiaries now make up 46% of all individuals accessing courses with us). We also deliver specialised courses in community organising and active citizenship to provide individuals with the confidence they need to get more involved in community life. Alongside this, we offer employment focused training, delivered in partnership with local employers which leads to guaranteed interviews for particular roles. All our courses are also specifically developed to contribute to health and wellbeing outcomes.

We recognise that some individuals have previously had little or negative experiences of education and training, so we aim to offer all our courses in a supportive environment and to provide our users with the best guidance about opportunities for volunteering, accessing further or higher education and training. All of our provision aims to support individuals to reach the personal goals they have set for themselves. This year, 48% of beneficiaries had no qualifications when they registered with us, 63% were in receipt of benefits, 64% did not speak English as a first language and 23% had a long-term health condition.

“

“High Trees helped me a lot to achieve my goals of becoming a qualified health care worker.”

”



This year we ran

80 different courses
with **635 individuals**
completing one or more



213 qualifications
were achieved by **154 individuals**

Our beneficiaries have reported numerous positive changes after studying with us:

Improved skills for life

Our curriculum is designed to support individuals to develop practical skills that help them in their day to day lives.

70% of individuals strongly agreed that by learning with us they had been able to **access new information** about their community and local services.

92% of individuals said they had been able to **apply the skills they had learnt in their daily life, community or at work**, giving examples of writing letters to their child's school, accessing online shopping and better understanding how to use the internet safely. Our ESOL beneficiaries say they most commonly use their new language skills when shopping, visiting the GP, to find places/ for directions and to access exercise classes and the gym.

80% of individuals strongly agreed they **felt more motivated** to get involved in their local community after studying with us.

“

“I speak in the supermarket with confidence and with people around me.”

“In my day to day, I use it to do the shopping, take the children for a walk and to socialise with neighbours.”

“I am using my new skills every day.”

”



Achievement of personal goals

Our courses aim to support beneficiaries to achieve their personal goals and progress in a way that is meaningful for them. This year, **93% of individuals** strongly agreed that their course had helped them get **closer to their long-term goal**.

In addition, **213 qualifications were achieved by 154 individuals**. Gaining qualifications is an essential step for many individuals before they progress onto further education and employment opportunities.



31 individuals gained one or more **vocational qualifications**

63 individuals gained one or more **English Functional Skills qualifications**

62 individuals gained one or more **ICT qualifications**

13 individuals gained one or more **qualifications in Maths**

Improved confidence and wellbeing

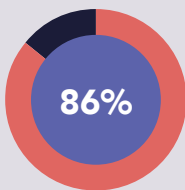
In addition to skills development, our courses also provide opportunities for individuals to improve their confidence and wellbeing, alongside opportunities to meet new people and build their support networks.

77% of individuals strongly agreed that they had **made new friends** on their course.

86% of individuals strongly agreed that their course had helped them to **increase their health, wellbeing, and confidence**.



92%
had been able to **apply the skills they had learnt** in their daily life, community or at work



86%
strongly agreed that their course had helped them to **increase their health, wellbeing, and confidence**



93%
strongly agreed that their course had got them **closer to their long-term goal**



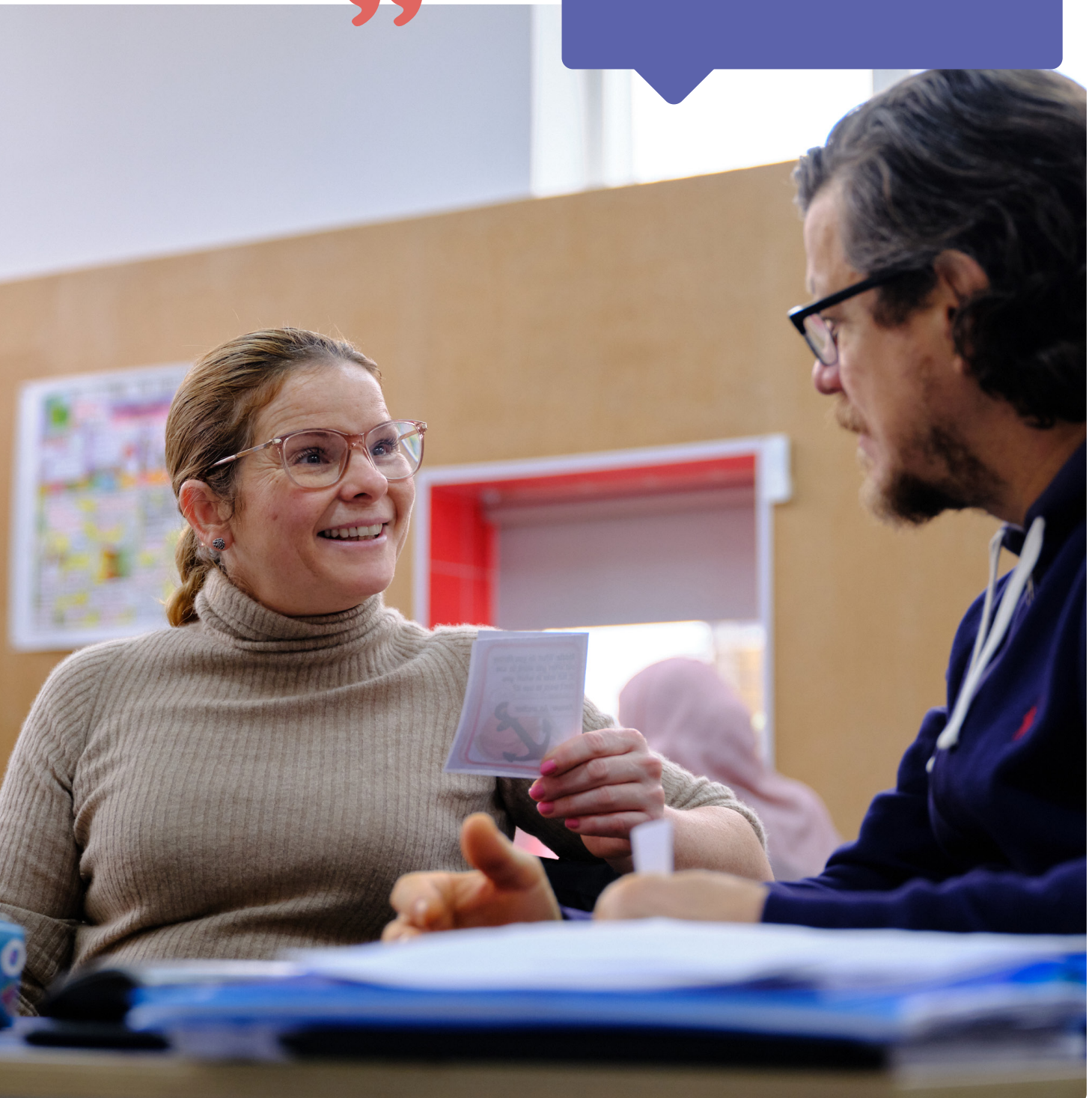
“I would love to have a career in Data and Business Analysis and the courses I have enrolled in at High Trees have given me a foundation to build on to achieve my bigger goals in life. I feel a few more steps closer to achieving my dreams.”

“

“High Trees helped me not lose myself in a new country.”

”

Working with Lambeth's Migrant Communities





This year 227 individuals from 68 different countries studied English with us through our English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision.

Many accessed our expanded offer of opportunities to put their learning into practice through a series of learner trips and workshops. **Our ESOL curriculum focuses on supporting beneficiaries to develop confidence and independence using English in their day to day lives.** Individuals also benefit from the opportunity to study as part of a diverse community and exchange experiences with individuals from many different cultures.

This year we have had a particular focus on learner wellbeing and providing support to access health services, including new stress management workshops and class activities which explored different ways for individuals to manage their physical and mental wellbeing.

25 beneficiaries also attended our workshop to explore current barriers refugees and migrants face when accessing health services and how as a provider we can respond to this. **87% of those attending said the event had helped them feel more confident talking about their experience of health services** and several learnt about aspects of the health service that had previously been unfamiliar to them. The findings of the workshop were shared with the Lambeth Public Health team.

"I learned about the difference between 999 and 111."

"I learned about new services – social prescribers, the NHS app."

Based on beneficiary feedback this year we also expanded our offer of group trips and activities. Beneficiaries visited Vauxhall City Farm, Ebony Horse Club, Brixton Windmill, the Horniman



227 individuals
from **68 different**
countries studied English
with us



Last year

141 ESOL
beneficiaries
progressed onto a **higher**
level ESOL course



"I can tell you that certain changes have arisen in my life, from being able to go shopping and being able to talk to my children's doctor when they are sick."



Museum and Tower Bridge – these trips allow individuals to feel comfortable and connected to spaces they may not otherwise feel able to access and are also a chance to relax, socialise and practice their English in different settings.

Maryna's Story

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“I have gained so much confidence. Before, if I didn't know a word, I would stop speaking. High Trees has given me a huge base of skills in speaking and listening, and grammar. My teacher pushed me to try harder. She believed in me, so I began to believe in myself.”

- Maryna

”



Maryna was the first of many Ukrainians to enrol at High Trees for support learning English. She arrived with her mother and two young sons in the spring of 2022, after leaving her home country due to the escalating conflict with Russia.

Maryna joined our English Functional Skills course at Entry Level 2 and made excellent progress over three terms, achieving her Level 1 qualification a year later. Having reached the highest level of our provision she has now started full-time work in a project management role in July. The job, with CISCA, is part of an apprenticeship programme for displaced Ukrainians.

Maryna was also supported by the Employment and Careers team, which helped her to prepare her CV and practice interview skills.

Her mum, Olga, was also inspired to start learning at High Trees. To begin with, she was doubtful, wondering whether she needed to learn English at all. **“She thought she was too old but I think you can keep learning whatever your age,”** says Maryna. Olga began on an ESOL course and has progressed to English Functional Skills Entry Level 1. **“I help her with her homework,”** Maryna adds, **“When she learns something new she is so proud.”**

Both women have made friends on their courses, developing important links with others in the local community. **“High Trees is such an important place to me,”** says Maryna. **“I hope to return to try your other courses in future.”**





Supporting People into Employment

“

“High Trees got me a job and supported my finances.”

”

High Trees believe that everyone should have the opportunity to find meaningful and sustainable employment and that often this can be the catalyst for individuals and families to make the biggest changes in their lives, with an enormous impact on their financial position, their wellbeing and their sense of place in the world.



115

individuals moved into **employment** this year



293 individuals

accessed employment support this year, of which **153 accessed more intensive one-to-one support** and **specialist Pre-Employment training**



73%

of all those we supported were able to **increase their job readiness**



High Trees understand that those furthest away from the job market, or stuck in low paid insecure work, often face very significant barriers that must be overcome to allow them equitable access to the job market and an equal chance to succeed once in it.

We have been delivering our person-centred Employment and Careers Service for over 20 years, it continues to be open to all unemployed residents in Lambeth while maintaining a particular focus on **supporting those experiencing significant barriers to employment such as long-term economic inactivity, long-term health conditions, those aged 50+, young people aged 18-30, and ex-offenders**. This year, 34% of individuals accessing one-to-one employment support were over 50, 32% were aged 18-30 and 20% reported having a long-term condition.

High Trees provides person-centred employment support in the form of one-to-one coaching, pre-employment training and advice sessions delivered across a variety of community settings. Although we have experience and understanding of the types of barriers our users face, and have designed our service with these in mind, we treat each person as an individual – working intensively with them to identify and overcome the obstacles to finding meaningful employment. Our work involves individual sessions with experienced employment advisors who, after an initial assessment, may work



“Your support means I can look forward to working in a secure role and provide.”



with them on building skills and confidence, CVs or job applications, identifying and applying for roles that suit their personal objectives, interview preparation or making internal or external referrals for courses or qualifications needed to achieve their desired outcomes.



In addition to our primary goal of supporting individuals into employment, we also aim to support people to improve their wellbeing and feel less anxious about finding work in the future.

Increasing wellbeing



81%

said they **felt less anxious** about finding a job in the future.



77%

of those we supported said their **wellbeing had improved**

“

“High Trees built up my confidence and motivated me so much better. I am very happy and excited in my new role.”

”



“

“I’m in a much better place, my confidence and wellbeing was hit by losing my work as a result of the pandemic. I’m now so much more confident and in a great position to move forward with my life.”

“High Trees made me a more confident person and I became employed. I feel more confident going forward.”

”

Improved financial position

Through our employment provisions, we also aim to support individuals to improve their financial position, this year:

62%

of those accessing one-to-one **employment support** reported an **improvement in their financial position**



“

“High Trees helped me find a job in the sector I really wanted to be in and gave me a chance to reach a goal that I have set in life.”

”

“

I have structure thanks to High Trees. I have managed to clear my debts and even increased my Bank Account, my wellbeing has definitely improved.

”



Supporting Children, Young People and Families

High Trees believe that all children and young people deserve to be happy and thrive, to have the stability and opportunities that will allow them to enjoy their childhoods and grow into young people and adults who can meet their potential.



“

“The Adventure Playground is important to me because whenever I go I always enjoy spending time with my friends and staff.”

”

This year:

We worked with **293 young people**, of which **154** were new to the service

64 young people took part in **coaching sessions**

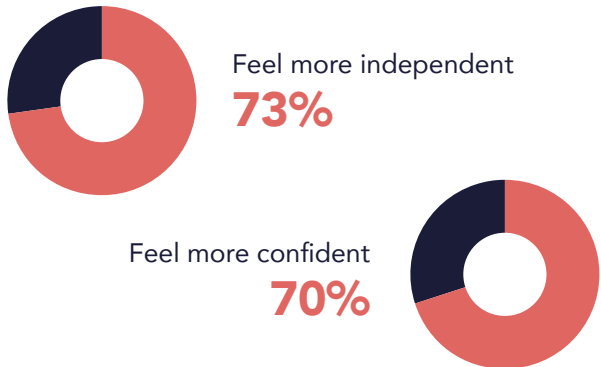
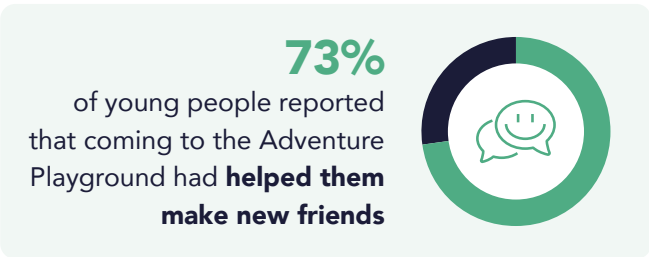
220 young people took part in **adventure play activities** (of which **89** were new to High Trees)



The majority of our work is delivered from Tulse Hill Adventure Playground where our Children, Young People and Families team is based, and where we run our after-school and weekend Adventure Play services six days a week for 8-16 year olds, holiday programmes, a family stay and play service and youth leadership programmes for ages 15 to 19. The team also deliver a coaching programme in local schools.

We focus on the importance of creating spaces where children and young people feel safe to play and socialise, supporting them to build healthy relationships with their peers and trusted adults. We also wish to equip them with the skills and resilience that will allow them to thrive well beyond their engagement with us and to offer them experiences and opportunities that would otherwise not be available to them.

Improved relationships, increased confidence and self esteem:



Increasing independence and confidence



“

“I feel better about school because I didn’t feel like I was achieving much, but now I do.”

”

“

“I know that if I set myself a goal, I’m going to do my best to achieve it and make it reality.”

”

Coaching

This year we delivered our coaching programme in partnership with City Heights Academy and St Martin in the Fields.

Through this programme we engage with young people aged 11+ who are identified by their schools as facing challenges with confidence, peer relationships and overall school engagement. Over a period of 6-12 weeks, young people are supported by our team of qualified youth workers to develop strategies to recognise their strengths, manage their emotions, set personal goals, develop communication skills and improve confidence working with others.



This year

64 young people

took part in group coaching as part of our work with local schools:

“

“It gives me time to focus on myself and socialise with others.”

”



Young people reported that coming to coaching has helped them in the following ways:



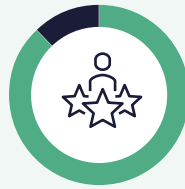
88%
said they had
learnt new things



88%
felt more
independent



78%
made **new**
friends



88%
felt **more**
confident



86%
felt **more**
positive

Tara's Story

Tara* first started engaging with our Children and Young People's coaching sessions as she was struggling to manage her behaviour both in and out of school.

She was often finding herself getting in trouble during lessons which led to her receiving an increasing number of detentions and isolations, which was also beginning to impact on her personal life.

Through one-to-one coaching sessions with a High Trees Youth Worker, Tara was able to discuss how these situations made her feel and reflect on the reasons why she was finding it difficult to regulate her behaviour in the classroom. She was supported to create self-reflection worksheets to constructively think about her actions and began to understand where she was making the wrong decisions, and how this was impacting on her ability to achieve her goals. Tara was also supported to identify strategies to manage her behaviour and to avoid being removed from lessons and receiving detentions.

Tara's Youth Worker also helped her to reflect on her progress and things she was proud of each week and Tara began to show a significant improvement in her outlook and self-belief. On the final week of coaching sessions Tara expressed how she is now much more focused on working hard in and out of school and has a clear vision for her future and achieving her goals.

*name changed



Community Action

“

“We began to understand [that] we can actually interact with our landlords, through coming together and forming a united voice...”

- Community Leader

”

For High Trees, Community Action is about focusing on working with individuals and groups in defined localities— normally at housing estate level. We support these groups, who are often left out of decision making, to take collective action on issues that are affecting them as a community.



52

community leaders
received mentoring



284

adults took part in **listening and engagement activities** facilitated by
Community Action



63

adults accessed **community organising training**



We support groups to organise within their community, build the power that's required to influence decision making at a very local level, and support the development of 'Community Leaders' to deliver campaigns and take action to secure improvements on issues that are important to them. Building on our 10 years' experience of community organising, the foundational principles of not doing for others what they can do for themselves, using the community's starting point as our own and only moving at a pace that works for the community remain present in all our work.

Our Community Action work begins with listening activities to understand the key issues people are facing and to identify potential community leaders who are able to encourage and support their neighbours to organise and achieve change in these areas, for example securing repairs to blocks on their housing estates. Community Leaders receive one-to-one and group mentoring, practical support and, if interested, accredited training in community organising. This approach is designed to allow people to develop their skills and enable them to build more active, represented and civically engaged communities within their neighbourhoods.



Case Studies

Tulse Hill Estate Unites

In 2022, the Community Action team initiated a [listening campaign](#) on Tulse Hill estate to understand the experience of residents living there. Over 200 residents shared their thoughts and these door-to-door conversations were written up to create a [listening report](#). Primary issues identified through the listening campaign included damp, poor repairs, safety, and environmental problems.

In April 2023 a dedicated group of Community Leaders formed 'Tulse Hill Estate Unites' to explore what action could be taken in response to the concerns raised. Through regular meetings, structural damp and mould emerged as the top concern. Since April, the group have been supported by High Trees Community Action team to undertake a variety of campaigning activities.

Through coming together, residents realised that many of them had been reporting needed repairs for years without receiving an adequate response. They were also being told that the issues in their flats were either being caused by their own actions (for example not adequately ventilating the properties) or that only cosmetic work was needed to fix them. It became evident to the residents that the volume and type of issues they were facing individually indicated widespread structural issues which were not being dealt with.

Continuing to receive inadequate responses from those responsible, in September, the group were successful in generating coverage in the national press - an article in the [Guardian](#) told their story and highlighted one group member's 6-month struggle to secure repairs to their ceiling which collapsed due to a leaky roof. The publicity prompted an immediate repair for the group member and led to senior Lambeth Housing officials attending a public meeting with residents to apologise for their failings and to address the group's concerns. Through the public meeting several of the group's individual repair issues were also picked up, with many of these now being resolved.

These important wins are only a step toward the group's vision of a damp-free estate. The group is demanding an independent environmental inspection which they believe will confirm that structural defects, not individual actions, are to blame for the state of their homes and would be the leverage needed to push for the widespread structural work needed.

High Trees Community Action team are continuing to support the group as they take their campaigning activities forward.



Tulse Hill Estate Unites

The Fields

“

“Community Organising is something that has become a living thing for me...in the sense that you can actually achieve something by doing little bits and pieces of organisation... but have a huge impact.”

”

This year we have continued to work with Wandle residents from The Fields Estate. Over the last two years, a group of Community Leaders have been active in campaigning for improvements to the Estate and the High Trees Community Action team have supported them in their engagement with local housing associations. This work has involved exploring how Wandle residents can best raise issues through Tenant and Resident Associations on the Estate.

Partnerships, Research and Sector Support



Meaningful partnership working and contributing to a thriving sector is a core part of our work – this is because we recognise that no one organisation, approach or service will be the totality of the help our beneficiaries may need and that no one organisation can possess the expertise and experience needed in every area.

It is also because we recognise the obligations that comes with growing into one of the larger organisations in our locality, and the extra capacity this allows us to support others.

Our work on Partnerships, Research and Sector Support brings together our expertise across our other service areas and our experience as a long-established community development trust in Lambeth.



We lead and support the development of some of Lambeth's most impactful voluntary and community sector partnerships, creating joined up strategies to respond to the challenges faced by the communities we support. We are passionate believers in what the voluntary sector can achieve through working together, pooling resources and expertise and building a sector of collaboration not competition.

Over the last seven years we have led the development of several formal partnerships - Building Young Brixton, Lambeth Peer Action Collective, Place for All and Young Tulse Hill as well as being founding members of the Lambeth Community Hubs Network. This year we have also started work to build a new collaboration around community-led research in the form of the Lambeth Community Research Network. This is based on the understanding that more community-led and action-focused research is needed to better understand how local organisations can best serve and support local communities as well as advocate for the change they want to see.



We are currently working formally in partnership with
15 partner organisations

64 resources
published



19 organisations
receiving one-to-one mentoring support



This year, High Trees has also developed a range of open access resources, tools and guides to share with the sector based on our areas of expertise. Our resources have all been designed and developed with the intended audience of other Lambeth place based organisations working with beneficiaries facing barriers caused by structural inequalities, but are available to any organisations that may wish to use them.

Resources produced so far include a **Guide to Collaborative Working, A Guide for Organisations Delivering Person-centred Employment Services and a Community Organising Toolkit**. High Trees have also produced over 20 templates and tools for organisations operating from community buildings as part of our work with the Lambeth Hubs partnership. All of these resources are designed to be pragmatic and of tangible benefit for placed based Lambeth organisations (though have been used by organisations further afield as well).

Alongside access to new, practical resources, we are providing tailored capacity-building and mentoring support on a one-to-one basis to local voluntary sector organisations. This support is based on our experience as a locally based organisation dedicated to service delivery and our growth over the past 25 years. It's designed to be accessible, efficient and tailored to the needs of every organisation we work with, helping them to identify their needs and ensuring our support results in a direct and measurable benefit to each organisation worked with.

The logo for Building Young Brixton features the words 'BUILDING' and 'YOUNG' in white uppercase letters on a teal background. Below them, the word 'BRIXTON' is written in large, bold, yellow uppercase letters, with a purple 'X' integrated into the design.

BUILDING YOUNG
BRIXTON



Building Young Brixton

Founded in 2016, Building Young Brixton is now a partnership of 10 Lambeth-based youth service providers. Within the partnership, each organisation uses their unique approach to youth work, to ensure that we collectively increase opportunities for young people to thrive.



This year, Building Young Brixton welcomed two new members, ensuring the breadth of our expertise and offer is a priority and ensuring that the partnership continues its focus on supporting smaller and newer organisations in the borough.

Supporting young people to access new opportunities

Over a third of the young people we work with attended activities across the BYB partnership, demonstrating the extent to which the partnership has been able to provide an enhanced offer to young people in Lambeth. This year, work has taken place to increase referrals between partner organisations and to support young people to access new activities through taster visits. **88% of the young people taking part** in visits told us that **they would not have accessed this activity or service otherwise.**

Developing youth work practice

A core aim of the partnership is to create opportunities for youth workers across the partnership to learn from each other, to ensure that all young people in Lambeth receive the highest possible standards of support. This year, we have introduced new 'Staff Swap' sessions, for staff to visit a partner organisation and learn about how they deliver their youth services. All staff who have taken part in these sessions said they had learnt something new, and that this knowledge would help them to be more effective in their role. Over 30 staff also took part in training through the partnership, with **71% of staff feeling more equipped in their role following the training.**

Overall



3,493

young people **accessed services** through the Building Young Brixton Partnership



1,305

of these young people accessed activities **for the first time**



85%

of young people accessing mentoring provisions **reported improved mental health and wellbeing** as a result of engaging with the partnership



80%

of young people accessing group sessions **reported improved relationships with peers**

Youth leadership

This year we have introduced a new Youth Voice and Leadership programme to further embed youth voice in our operational delivery. In April 2023, 8 young people were recruited as the first cohort of Young Leaders from across the BYB partners and undertook a series of listening activities to explore the theme of 'safe spaces' as well as to co-design the BYB summer event. Following the listening sessions, the Young Leaders reported to the BYB Steering Group on their findings from each of the listening activities and to give their recommendations on how a ring-fenced budget should be allocated to address this challenge.

The young people who took part in the first cohort reported very positive outcomes, with **83% feeling more able to influence local service delivery, 67% reporting improved wellbeing and all Young Leaders reporting improved confidence.**

Mentoring

Building Young Brixton has significantly developed its mentoring offer this year with over **609 new young people accessing mentoring support through the partnership.** Partner capacity to deliver high-quality mentoring support has been developed through the introduction of 'Be Your Best Peer Mentors', a new paid work opportunity for local young adults who want to make a difference in their community and who are ready to support other young people. In addition, all BYB partners have received support from the BYB team to introduce the GLA mentoring framework. This support has enabled each BYB organisation to assess the standard of their existing provision and identify areas for further development.



"I feel that I have grown as a leader, and I have opened up to new opportunities. Before I was closed off to trying new things."





“

My mindset has changed! It's different when you are part of the change. Now I feel that whenever I want to see a change, I know I will be able to do it.

”

Lambeth Peer Action Collective (LPAC)

First formed in 2021, LPAC is a group of youth organisations and young people that exists to better understand the issues affecting young people in Lambeth and to take action to address these issues.



“It’s been an amazing journey with the best team I could have asked for. I’m so grateful for every opportunity LPAC has given me.”



This year:**169 young people**

engaged through social action events/ meetings as part of designing and delivering the LPAC manifesto

89 young people

delivered social action projects in response to the manifesto

22 young people

took part in reducing youth violence commissioning activities



This year LPAC moved into a new social action phase following successful completion last year of a large-scale research project, in which more than 400 young people [shared their experiences of violence](#). The young peer researchers who led the research were recognised for their work with two awards — the Youth Endowment Fund Group Award for greatest insights and the MRS 2023 Research Hero Award.

The Lambeth Peer Action Collective formally launched its research 'Understanding Young People's Experiences of Violence in Lambeth' and manifesto for change in March 2023 at an event attended by young people from across the Collective and policy makers. Those attending the event were asked to pledge specific action to support the manifesto. Since this event, the LPAC

team have been meeting with key decision-makers to secure change, including representatives from Lambeth Council, NHS Southeast London, local MPs, housing associations, and the Metropolitan Police. The research is influencing the development of new Child Friendly Lambeth policies, and the team was commissioned to help allocate £150,000 worth of funding for Violence Reduction in Lambeth.

Many of the decision-makers we have met with commented on how effectively the LPAC Peer Researchers communicated the changes needed to build a safer Lambeth for young people:



"Not only were your own individual life journeys inspirational in their own ways, your description of the step change needed in police behaviour was invaluable and gave me a real sense of hope that progress is achievable."



Partner organisations and young Changemakers initiated social action campaigns around the core themes of housing, opportunities, and education. These actions are ongoing, but some of the campaigns have already resulted in tangible outcomes such as the delivery of a new youth-led financial education programme.

The Collective is now looking at future research priorities and how to ensure sustainability by recruiting and training new peer researchers to join the existing experienced LPAC team.





Lambeth Community Hubs Network

LAMBETH
COMMUNITY
HUBS

 Stockwell
Partnership

we are 336

 SLADE GARDENS
ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND

high
trees



LONGFIELD HALL
WHERE CREATIVITY AND COMMUNITY MEET

Founded in 2011, Lambeth Hubs is a partnership of 5 community anchor charities in Lambeth, providing different place based provision in their local areas.

The partnership aims to achieve a more equal, inclusive and thriving Lambeth, through the work of their own organisations but also by using their expertise and experience to support the Lambeth voluntary and community sector as a whole.

Last year we reported on the launch of the new [Lambeth Hubs Resource Library](#). Over 1,400 people have now visited the Lambeth Hubs website and our resources have been downloaded over 400 times. This year we extended the Resource Library in response to feedback from local voluntary and community sector organisations on the resources they would find most helpful. The Lambeth Community Hubs Network Partners also started exploring how the partnership can best provide tailored mentoring and capacity building support to other VCS organisations in Lambeth and this offer is now being rolled out across the borough, with each partner contributing their differing areas of expertise.

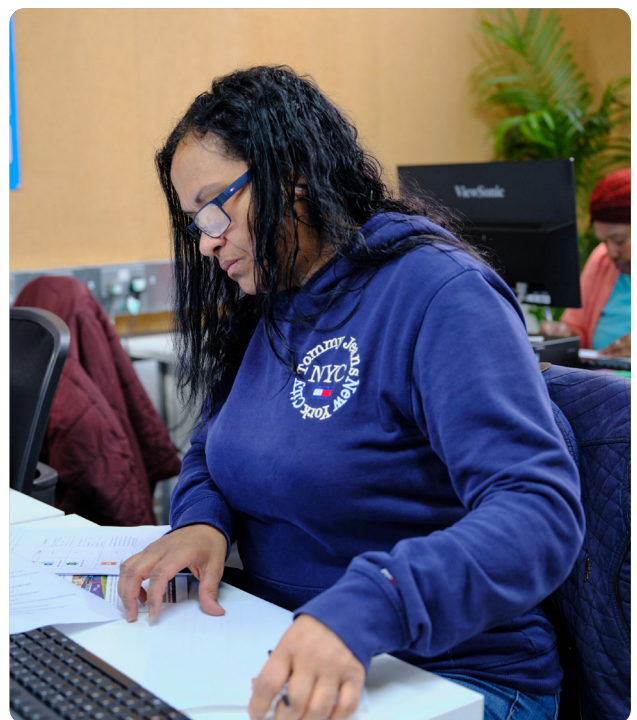
This year:



over **1,400**
people have now
visited the Lambeth
Hubs website



our resources have
been downloaded
over 400
times



Lambeth Community Research Network (LCRN)



The LCRN is a new collaboration of locally rooted organisations with an interest and expertise in community-based research.

Work to develop a Community Research Network for Lambeth first commenced in March 2023, with the aim to **build the capacity of local people and community organisations to lead research on topics that matter to them.** It exists to:

- **Define quality standards** for research conducted in our community.
- **Create a framework** for ethical community research.
- Enable local communities and the organisations that represent them to **set local research priorities.**
- **Bring together** relevant and quality research about communities in Lambeth into a central resource bank for the sector to reduce research saturation previously caused through a lack of coordination and community involvement.
- **Develop the capacity** of local people and organisations to lead research in partnership with our communities.
- **Encourage** funders and local statutory bodies to commission research locally.



Since March, a steering group has been formed and the core activities and operating model of the network have been agreed. Steering group members will be meeting over the next few months to finalise the membership model and proposed resourcing for the first three years of the network as well as the network's approach to research ethics. The network will be formally launched in 2024.



“

“We’re very grateful for the support given. It has been delivered at a manageable pace and been specific to our needs.”

”

“

“I think this is very well thought out and will help so many organisations in considering and taking on partnership work!”

”

Sector Support

Our sector support offer focuses on creating high-quality resources for the sector and providing tailored one-to-one capacity building support.

[These resources](#) are all based on our learning and experience of delivery and are designed to provide practical support for day-to-day delivery as well as strengthening organisations through the introduction of more robust policies and procedures.



The toolkits and guides have already been downloaded by **115 different organisations**

“

So useful and comprehensive, the tools are sensible and straightforward, and the structure makes complete sense.

”

This year we have launched three new toolkits and guides:

Practical Guide to Collaboration



This guide provides an overview of steps to take when setting up a new collaboration or strengthening existing partnerships and contains 29 different tools and templates that can be adapted to support partnership working.

Self-Assessment Guides for Community Organising



Community organising brings people together and helps empower them to overcome social injustice. These toolkits are designed to support both organisations and individuals new to community organising and those seeking to develop their practice.

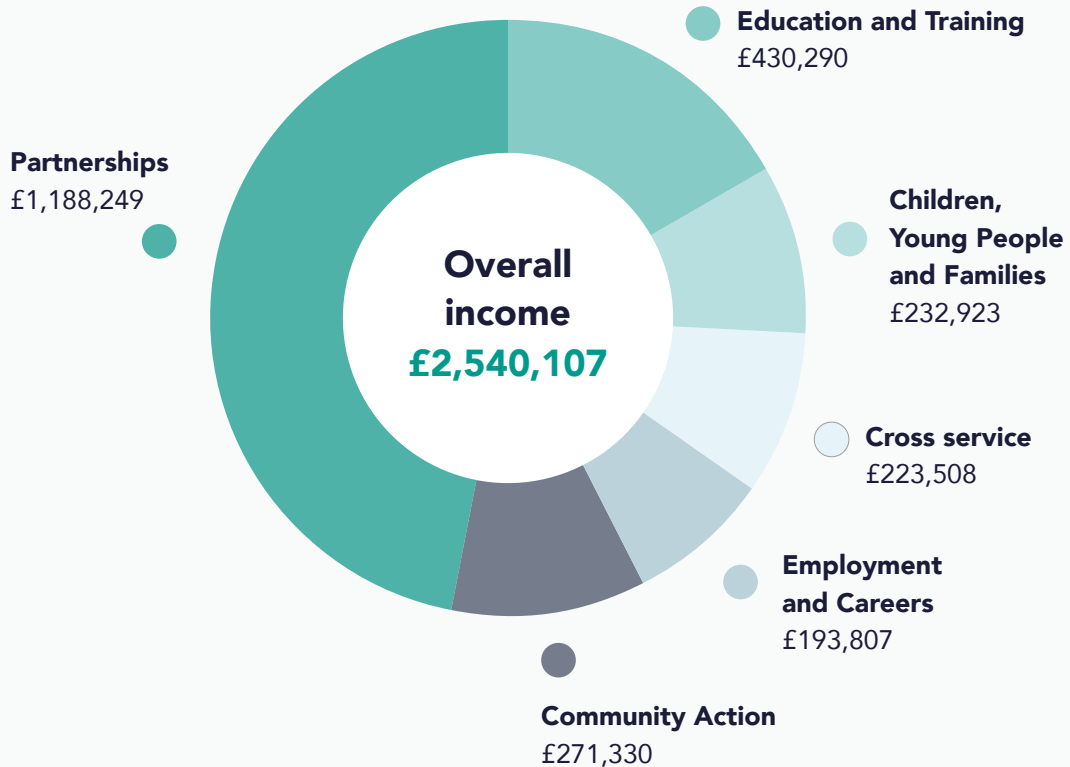
Guide to Delivering Person-Centred Employment Services



This is a practical guide for community organisations delivering person-centred employment support. It provides guidance on setting up services, working with beneficiaries and monitoring and evaluation. The guide also includes 12 editable tools and templates that can be downloaded and adapted to support the running of individual services.

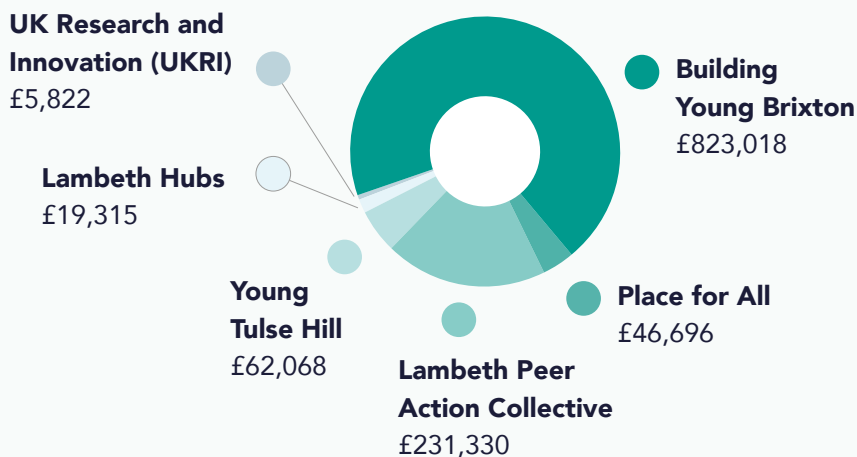
Accounts

The following financial information is taken from High Trees' draft accounts for the 2022-2023 reporting period and may be subject to change. Full accounts, when published, will be available on the [Charity Commission website](#).

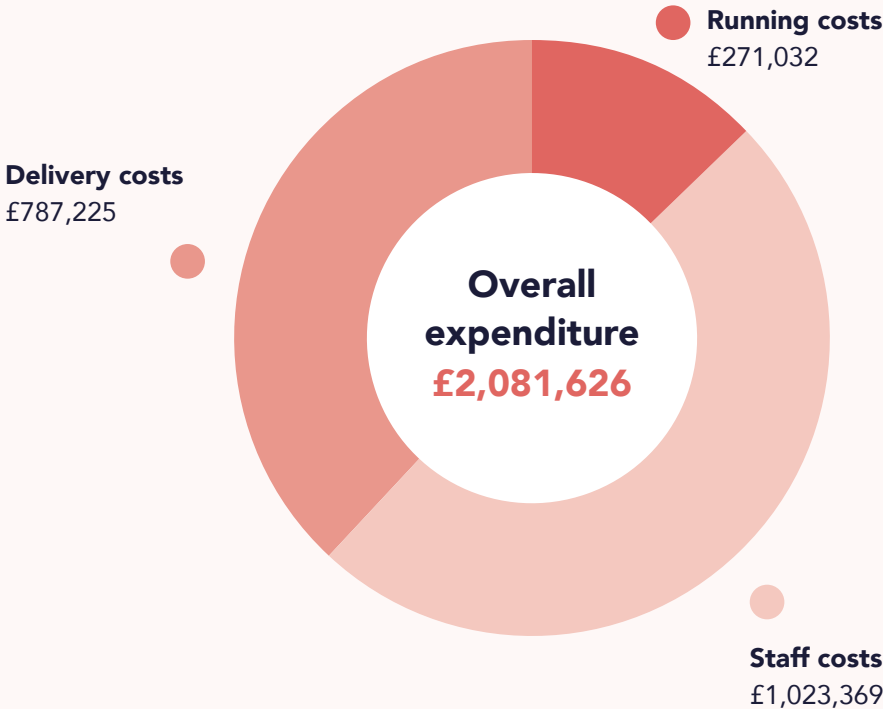


Partnerships Income Breakdown

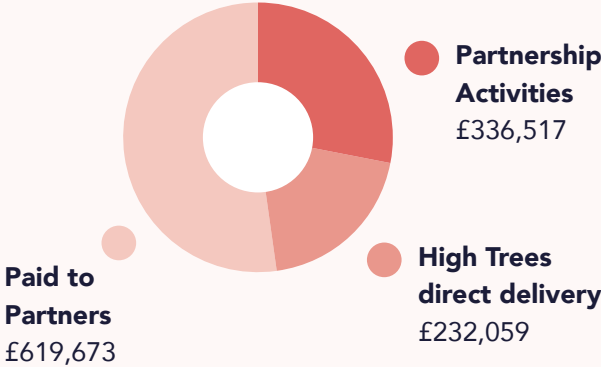
£1,188,249



High Trees are very grateful to our funders, which this year included: City Bridge Foundation, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Greater London Authority, The Henry Smith Charity, Lambeth Council, The Tudor Trust, Trust for London, UK Research and Innovation, Walcot Foundation, BBC Children in Need, Berkeley Foundation, The National Lottery Community Fund, Power to Change, Youth Endowment Fund, Co-op, London Youth, Impact on Urban Health and Jack Petchey Foundation.



Partnerships Expenditure Breakdown
£1,188,249



Future Plans

High Trees are dedicated to continual service improvement, ensuring that the services we deliver are of the highest quality, continue to centre user voice and feedback to look for opportunities to improve and to ensure that the services we offer remain those that are most needed and effective.

Maintaining business as usual in today's funding climate continues to be an ambitious goal, and remaining vision led rather than funding led continues to be something that requires organisational focus.

This report has also given a flavour of some of our emergent work beyond direct service delivery to individuals and 2023-24 will be an exciting year for our Sector Support, Community Research and Partnerships.

Our Vision and Strategy for the next 5 years have been captured in our 2023 – 2029 Strategic Plan, which is available in full on our website - **our future plans are summarised under the following priority areas:**

1

Remaining vision-led and not funding-led. Ensuring consistent, stable services informed by community need, rather than shaped around funding priorities or fleeting sector interests.

2

Ensuring user voice and that individuals and communities are supported to lead the changes they want to see. Maintaining local accountability, ensuring that our strategic direction and our services are set by evidenced community need and that there are appropriate avenues and opportunities for user voice at all levels of decision making.

3

Ensuring high quality and consistency of support across all our service areas. We are an organisation who aims for continual service improvement. Maintaining quality as a key objective holds us accountable to do this - it is not possible that our services are flawless, and they never will be, but we believe we should place ourselves under pressure to constantly strive to improve.

4

Further grow partnerships and collaborative working. This includes maintaining or evolving existing partnerships, developing and incubating new partnerships, or sharing our learning and resources with the wider sector.

5

Supporting wider system change through sector support and development. The next five years will see us consolidating, formalising and expanding our sector support and development work, recognising that this comes hand and hand with our service delivery, collaborative working, and the role we play as a community development trust.

6

Having inspired and fit-for-purpose buildings and spaces to deliver our services. We are now an organisation that manages four community buildings and spaces across Tulse Hill, and over the next 5 years we will be working to ensure that all of these are brought into a similar standard through repairs and the maximisation of space.



With special thanks to:



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