**TRUSTEE’S ANNUAL REPORT – YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021**

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| **The Trustees**  |  |
| John Rockel (Chair) |
| Toby Lovell (Treasurer)  |
| Charles Bowker (Company Secretary) |
| Sandrine Palmer  |
| Gabrielle Melvin  |
| Will Lewis  |
| Thomas Neumark  |
| Barry O’Donovan  |
| Munal Mehta  |
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| **Chief Executive Officer**  |
| Lucy Bingham  |

**Structure, Governance and Management**

**Governing Document**

Holloway Neighbourhood Group is constituted as a Company Limited by Guarantee (No. 01804906) incorporated on 30 March 1984 and a Registered Charity (No. 290493) registered on 9 November 1984. The company is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association and in the event of the company being wound up all members present and twelve months past are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1.

**Recruitment and Appointment of Trustees**

Trustees are sought who have professional skills and experience and who represent the users of our services. The Board of Trustees regularly carries out a skills audit and seeks candidates with complementary skills and experience. We have identified a need to broaden the diversity spectrum of Trustees, both in terms of protected characteristics and lived experience. We are developing a recruitment strategy with the aim of both increasing the diversity of the Board so as to better represent the communities we serve and to fill recently identified skills gaps.

Potential Trustees are asked to observe a number of meetings of the Board of Trustees before the existing Trustees approve their application and formally vote them onto the Board of Trustees. One third of Trustees stand down from the Board of Trustees at the company's AGM, and elections (or re-elections) of Trustees are carried out by the membership. At the first meeting after the AGM, Trustees vote to appoint the Chair, Treasurer, and Secretary.

**Organisational Structure**

The governance of the organisation is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees which delegates to the Chief Executive the day to day running of the organisation, including operational management and ensuring that the organisation's objectives are met. The Chief Executive attends Board of Trustees' meetings but has no voting rights.

**Objectives**

**Vision:** Empowered, happy and inclusive communities where all people are valued.

**Mission:** We provide support and services and build connections to empower people to lead fulfilled lives as part of their community.

**Values:**

1. Respecting diversity
2. Connecting and Connected
3. Listening and Empowering
4. Compassionate
5. Striving for Quality

**Statement on Public Benefit**

Holloway Neighbourhood Group operates solely for the public benefit. When reviewing the charity's aims and objectives and in planning its future activities, the Trustees have referred to the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit.

The Charities Act 2011 sets out twelve kinds of activity that are recognised as charitable provided that there is sufficient demonstrable 'public benefit'. All our beneficiaries are individuals or communities that are socially and economically deprived and Holloway Neighbourhood Group carries out work in the following areas identified in the Act:

- Prevention or relief of poverty - whilst we do not provide grants, our work addresses the causes and consequences of poverty by providing services ourselves, supporting others to provide them from our buildings, or by encouraging local people to help themselves and each other.

- Advancement of health or saving of lives - our work includes health and wellbeing programmes for disadvantaged or isolated community groups as well as counselling and complementary therapy designed to support people with mental health issues.

- Advancement of citizenship or community development - we encourage and support volunteering and community action; we host MP and councillor surgeries, organise community events, support the development of smaller community organisations, and encourage participation in civic life and society.

**ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE**

The year was dominated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the country experienced a series of lockdown restrictions and their easing, the predominant needs of our local communities and hence the nature of our service delivery was constantly changing. At the start of the pandemic, we closed the doors of both the Old Fire Station community centre and the Stress Project therapy centre and our staff set up to work from their homes – gathering intelligence regarding the most pressing needs in our communities, mapping what services were being planned and delivered and by whom, and adapting our services to comply with restrictions and address changing needs.

**Counselling**

The pandemic resulted in an increased need for our counselling service – the national lockdown forced local support services to close, many individuals experienced mental health issues for the first time and others re-lived previous trauma. We responded by adapting our counselling programme to fast-track more people into the support they needed. We supported our counsellors to move from face-to-face delivery of their counselling sessions to delivery online and by telephone. We developed relationships with more referrers (e.g more GPs and psychiatrists), increased our capacity to process referrals and undertake assessments, and in some cases reduced the length of our counselling programme to 12 weeks.

In addition to counselling being delivered by volunteer counsellors on placement with the Stress Project whilst completing their studies, grants from the London Community Foundation, Cloudesley, and the National Lottery Community Fund enabled us to also use paid counsellors to support people with more complex mental health needs. Using the CORE Outcome Measure, of the people who completed their course of counselling this year, 94% were above the clinical cut off score of 10 compared with 79% last year. We delivered 1,821 counselling sessions with 160 individuals benefitting. Despite making rapid changes to our delivery method, the impact of the counselling was similar to previous years. 52% showed improvements above the level of clinical significance – with their levels of distress moving from the clinical to non-clinical (healthy) population. 76% showed a reliable improvement in their wellbeing.

**Online Classes**

Before the pandemic, we delivered a busy timetable of classes from our centres. Throughout this year we have continued these classes online - supporting people in their own homes to maintain their wellbeing and social connections through weekly classes of art, creative writing, tai chi, yoga, Egyptian dance, mindfulness classes for adults and for young people, and 8-week mindfulness courses. During the year we delivered 230 sessions supporting 154 people.

*“Yoga classes improve my physical and mental well-being. Also, it is lovely to see other people as I live alone”*

*“The class is a reminder that the Old Fire Station is still there even though I haven’t been able to visit.”*

***“****The Mindfulness course was excellent and I learnt a lot from Chris and other people on the course. The atmosphere was very supportive and my experience was very positive.” “... the course was BRILLIANT. It was jam packed with meditations, ideas, subjects and suggestions to improve your life and well-being. Chris is a wonderful teacher - calm, patient, real, kind and encouraging. It was also helpful that we each got to share our experience in a safe environment every week via the zoom call. I am starting to live more in the present moment and coping with pain more effectively. THANK YOU.”*

We provided one-to-one support to people who were keen to join us online but needed some help to get started on Zoom.

*“Charles got onto Zoom for the first time today. We hadn’t seen each other for nearly a year. We were both grinning and waving and laughing a lot. He wants to practice again next week so that he can join the online worship with his church.”*

**“In Touch” Telephone Support**

At the start of the pandemic, we quickly established “In Touch” a new telephone support service which offers a regular friendly chat, support in accessing essentials such as the delivery of food and medication, and encouragement to keep active in mind and body. Calls were made to individuals well known to Holloway Neighbourhood Group through their previous visits to the Old Fire Station Community Centre and the Stress Project, but we also welcomed new people, referred to our support from local food banks, mutual aid volunteers, the Council’s “We Are Islington” helpline, care navigators and other local agencies. Our regular calls have been especially important to people who have been feeling very lonely – often without the technical skills or equipment to join our online classes or because their anxiety and vulnerability to COVID-19 meant they weren’t meeting people in-person.

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| *“Before the pandemic I enjoyed a busy life. I used to go to museums and galleries regularly and attended groups with Age UK and Help on Your Doorstep. This completely stopped last year, and I found myself alone with no one to talk to. I never had many close friends and my family live out of London. I also had some health problems that made things even worse.* *I was referred to Holloway Neighbourhood Group for telephone calls and some help with using my computer. I have been receiving calls from you for a while now and they have cheered me up, even when I have been unwell. We talk about cooking and the British Museum, which is my favourite place to visit. The calls are always made by someone who is happy to listen to me moan and cry at times, but we have also laughed as well. They reassure me that I’m not the only person who feels this way. I have also had some help with using Zoom and plan to start some classes soon.* *Now that things are starting to reopen, I have attended a women’s discussion group at the centre. This was joyful, I had never met any of the four other women who attended but they were very friendly.* *Receiving the calls, help with my computer and now starting to attend groups has meant that even as I become less mobile in old age, I can still connect with people and I am learning new things! Life can still be hard, and I do find myself lonely at times, but I am happier and looking forward to some normality in future.”* |

Over the course of the year, we supported 255 individuals through 1,691 In Touch phone calls.

**In-person Activities**

When the easing of lockdown restrictions allowed, we re-opened both our centres. With strict implementation of COVID-safety measures such as 2-metre social distancing and the wearing of face-masks, some of our service users were delighted to return to in-person activities. 49 individuals attended bingo, the older men’s social club, a new women-only conversation group and the film club at the Old Fire Station.

We were able to offer in-person counselling to some clients who had not been able to access sessions online or by telephone. In addition, we were able to deliver 29 sessions of shiatsu, reiki and massage to a total of 16 individuals.

A participant of an Art Class held at the Old Fire Station during the summer: “*Thank you so much. I have missed you so much, it’s been a live saving experience being with nice people again.”*

**VOLUNTEERS AND TUTORS**

As a small team we are extremely grateful for the contributions of our wonderful volunteers. We benefited from many new volunteers joining us, often while on furlough or looking to make changes to their careers. A total of 56 people volunteered with Holloway Neighbourhood Group this year. With great kindness and respect, they exemplify our values of connecting people. They acted in various roles including:

* Providing counselling and complementary therapies for people experiencing mental health issues
* Making regular In Touch telephone calls - providing an all-important listening ear and encouragement to stay active
* Administrative support for our new online and telephone services
* Keeping the gardens at both the Old Fire Station and the Stress Project looking colourful and cared for. The lovely appearance of the gardens contributes to a feeling of care and welcome for all our visitors and provided a safe outside space for some of our groups to meet during the warmer months.
* Our handyperson did an amazing job when the Stress Project building was closed, carrying out decorations and repairs so that people had a bright and safe centre to return to after the lock downs.

Our Tutors had to quickly adapt to delivering their classes online. They demonstrated an admirable ability to ensure participants felt welcome and engaged whilst continuing to teach new skills. Our focus groups with online class participants revealed that people welcomed the structure to their week provided by their classes and they felt more socially connected because the tutors facilitated time in the class for interaction with new friends.

*“Petronella (Egyptian Dance tutor] has been fantastic being very positive and always cheerful. She has made the class accessible and inclusive for everyone”*

**PARTNERSHIPS**

As part of our role as a Community Hub, we support networks and partnerships, providing capacity building support (especially around fundraising) for smaller community groups, and raising awareness of needs within marginalised communities.

The pandemic meant that joined up working was more important than ever and led to changes in the way that service providers and policy makers collaborated with each other. We contributed to new networks looking at issues such as social connectedness, mental health, and vaccine take-up. We also developed new partnerships with local mutual aid groups, food banks, social prescribers, and the We Are Islington helpline.

We led a partnership of local grassroots community groups supporting Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee women to increase social cohesion. Together with our fantastic partners, and with financial support from Comic Relief, we ran women-only physical activity classes – this year online, and provided advice and signposting information in community languages to support women to access services and opportunities. With needs in the community exacerbated by the pandemic, our work included supporting families to access foodbanks, bi-lingual advice around welfare entitlements, supporting women experiencing domestic violence and harmful practices, technical advice to get on-line, and facilitating social networks between groups of isolated women. In this second year of the partnership, we supported 384 women and delivered 436 physical activity classes. Through working in partnership, we are able to extend our reach – in the case of this project the beneficiaries reported 17 different preferred languages and 44% indicated that their English skills were beginner or elementary.

**CONTINUING RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND FUTURE PRIORITIES**

The Trustees are extremely grateful to our funders, whose support has enabled us to expand our service delivery during a year which presented increasing hardships for many individuals and families in our community. It has been an unprecedented year of ups and downs, and we expect to have to continue to operate within high levels of uncertainty for many months to come.

Our service users are significantly impacted by COVID-19, with many experiencing financial pressures and anxiety about mixing with people, leading to high levels of mental ill health and social isolation. The future course of the pandemic is unknown, and it is difficult to predict when and to what extent life will return to “normal”. With continuing high levels of need in our communities, and with different people requiring our services to be delivered in different ways, we are committed to further expansion of our service delivery – ensuring that service users have the choice of online, telephone and in-person support. We plan to continue to offer our In Touch telephone support to those who face difficulties in leaving their home and experience the highest levels of loneliness, to expand our work around digital inclusion, and to offer our other activities which support good health and wellbeing through a mixture of online, in-person and blended delivery. We will continue to implement appropriate measures around COVID security, including reducing class sizes so that we can implement social distancing and using outside spaces where possible.

Our services at the Stress Project are usually low cost, but in the past year we waived our charges to ensure access by those in most need. We will continue to offer services for free over the next year. Organisations that previously used our centres are also delivering fewer in-person activities, meaning that our centres are much quieter, especially during the evenings, and we are generating less income through room hire. As a result, we are more reliant than previously on grant funding to support our service delivery.

**Financial review**

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the latest Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP).

The Statement of Financial Activities shows total income received in 2020/21 of £475,044 (2019/20: £290,736). Expenditure for the year was £358,501 (2019/20: £298,945). This resulted in a surplus, after taking account of gains on investments, of £173,038 (2019/20: deficit of £35,743). Total funds carried forward to 2021/22 are £652,814 (2020/21: £479,776). Cash resources were £165,473 (2019/20: £36,131) and we have invested £525,861 (2019/20: £470,322) in funds to provide a return which can be utilised for operational requirements.

**Reserves Policy**

The Trustees have examined the charity's requirements for reserves in light of the main risks to the charity. The target is to hold between 3 and 9 months running costs in unrestricted reserves, and it is confirmed that the existing level of reserves is appropriate:

- £395,000 is held in a Designated Property Fund - which would allow us to fulfil our obligations under our current leases, and enable us to acquire alternative premises to continue or expand our services. We are likely to draw upon this Designated Fund when the lease for one of our Centres expires in 2023 or when the Landlord at our other centre chooses to commence negotiations about our future tenure.

- £30,000 is held in a Designated Staffing Fund - which would allow us to honour our obligations regarding redundancy or to allow for staff cover during prolonged periods of absence.

- £227,814 is held in a General Fund - which represents 8 month's running costs. This General Fund would help us to avoid closure by ensuring staff could continue working, to seek new sources of funding and support service users to move on to other services. The Trustees review the level of reserves needed yearly, and whenever there are significant changes in our property requirements or staffing levels.

**Risk Management**

On a regular basis, the Board of Trustees actively reviews the major operational and business risks which the charity faces, and confirm that they have established systems to mitigate the significant risks. In the past year, this has included frequent review of the risk of COVID-19 transmission and subsequent adjustments to our service delivery and COVID-safety protocols. In our plans for service delivery, we have also taken account of fast-changing needs in our local communities and a difficult to predict funding environment. Assessment of risks and threats to the organisation is the ongoing responsibility of the Chief Executive and such issues as they arise are taken to the Board of Trustees for discussion and action.

**Responsibilities of the Trustees**

The Trustees (who are also the Directors of Holloway Neighbourhood Group for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Company law requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under that law the Trustees have elected to prepare the financial statements in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards and applicable law). Under company law the Trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and the income and expenditure of the charitable company for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the Trustees are required to:

· select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;

· observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;

· make judgements and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;

· state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;

· prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charitable company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.