

New Generation Community Trust

# Blackfen Community Library

## Progress Report December 2023



“

### Quote

‘The library in Blackfen has become a lovely place to pop into, it's warm and welcoming. In these current times it is needed for members of our local neighbourhood, who want to socialise, seniors sit in a warm comforting space or participate with activities.’

Member

”



Progress and  
Milestones  
Dec 2023

# Reporting On Our Progress

[blackfencommunitylibrary.org](http://blackfencommunitylibrary.org)

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# Project So Far



The community hub has expanded its range of activities and heightened its impact within the community.

### Community Fridge

In response to the growing financial challenges faced by individuals, we've introduced a community fridge. This endeavour not only supports those undergoing hardships by providing complimentary food but also plays a crucial role in reducing food waste. Since its' launch in October, the fridge has demonstrated exceptional success.

### Youth Project

Expanding upon the achievements of Shine, our well-being course tailored for girls, we launched a pilot program for boys called Strength. The favorable reception and evidence of the need in the area has been a source of encouragement to extend our youth project even more in 2024.

### The Community Hub

The space remains actively utilised. We are forging additional partnerships with organisations and charities, consistently adapting and broadening our offering to align with the evolving needs of the community.



**One girl attended saying she hated everything about herself. On week 3 when it came to writing down 5 good things about herself, she really struggled. By the final week, when they had to give feedback she confidently said to a table facilitator 'I really like that about myself now.'**

**Shine Course Participant**





# Project So Far

During the summer, we collaborated with LITP, a free community support project, with a pop-up coffee house. Our special guest, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, delighted in our coffee. Noteworthy figures, including MP Louie French, James Morford the Borough Commander, and the Mayor of Bexley, also paid us a visit. As part of our community engagement, we generously provided 330 complimentary drinks, 173 free lunches and successfully raised over £2,000 to contribute to the project. The event attracted over 4709 visits during its' 5-day run, making it a significant success.





# Community Events

**786**  
Attendees in the library

**576**  
Attendees in the library

**61**  
Attendees in the library

## Valentines Event

On Valentine's Day, we orchestrated a community-wide event featuring local produce and craft stalls. The festivities included entertainment, with many local businesses supporting, contributing raffle prizes and hosting their own activities. It was a heartwarming occasion where the community came together, fostering a sense of unity and celebration.

## Easter Event

During Easter, we organised an expansive community event spanning both the library and High Street. Collaborating with CC Events, a local charity, as well as engaging local businesses and various community and voluntary groups, we created a vibrant celebration. The event featured an array of stalls, thrilling rides, fun and games, appearances by the Easter Bunny, performances by local musicians and entertainers, and a showcase of local crafts. The diverse offerings provided a festive atmosphere, offering the community a plethora of enjoyable activities to take part in and celebrate together.

## King's Coronation

We hosted a royal tea party to commemorate the king's coronation. The event was complete with elegant decor, delightful cakes and an atmosphere befitting the grand occasion. Guests enjoyed a taste of royal celebration as we gathered to mark this significant moment in regal history.





# Community Events

**1186**  
Attendees in the library

**369**  
Joined the scheme

**2070**  
Attendees in the library

## Summer Event

We ran a successful Summer Event featuring a producer's market, amusement rides, games, exciting challenges, the launch of the Summer Reading Challenge, a lively Kids Disco, and a delightful Teddy Bears Picnic.

## Summer Reading Challenge

We visited six primary schools, conducting assemblies to introduce children to the challenge. Throughout the holidays, we organised numerous events aligned with the challenge, distributing certificates, prizes, and more. It was a proactive effort to engage and encourage young participants to read more, making the challenge an enriching and rewarding experience for all involved.

## Blackfen Christmas Fayre

Bringing the community together for Christmas, Santa gave out 300 Christmas presents from our grotto, we made crafts, played games, had entertainment, local musicians as well as local community stalls, a Christmas market, kids rides and lots more. People said they had never seen Blackfen so busy.





# Quotes from our Community.

Our babies are 6 & 8 months old, so much younger than the other children & they love it!! We do too

It was good to share experiences with other parents and realise I am not the only one who sometimes feels overwhelmed.

We really appreciated the hard work and commitment that everyone put in.

Blackfen Community Library is the heartbeat of Blackfen

It would be good to have more sessions during the holidays

It was also valuable to be reminded of the importance of taking care of myself





December 2023

# Community Fridge

Kilos given away

**150**  
kilos  
given away  
Oct-Dec

## Opened October 2023

In response to the escalating cost of living crisis, which is putting significant strain on people's finances, we've established a community fridge. This fridge is open to everyone, providing free access to a variety of produce sourced from the community and local supermarkets, including Tesco. The offerings include canned and dried goods placed on top of the fridge, with a constant supply of fresh produce.

The proliferation of free fridge programs in the UK, particularly since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, underscores the urgent need to address food insecurity. Food insecurity, characterised by the uncertainty of having enough food due to financial constraints, is a pressing issue that community fridges aim to alleviate. The Fridge is also helping to tackle food waste as the community donate unwanted food or excess from their allotment for example.

As a grassroots response to this crisis, community fridges play a crucial role in providing a reliable source of food for those facing difficulties in accessing traditional food assistance. We do not have a local foodbank. The ethos behind our community fridge is encapsulated in the phrase, "ANYTHING'S YOURS. IT'S YOUR FRIDGE, IT'S MY FRIDGE, IT'S EVERYONE'S FRIDGE HERE."

**Blackfen**  
Community Library



# Our Partnerships

We currently partner with 47 local charities and organisations to deliver groups and activities to support the community.



## Digital Inclusion for Mind in Bexley

Case study:

L loaned one of our laptops and attended weekly sessions here. She has made massive progress. Mind have seen her confidence grow in using computers. She is now able to independently attend online workshops and activities.

When she first started she didn't even have her own email account.



## Evergreen

It has been lovely to be able to use this vibrant and welcoming community space to host our Friends Together meetings once a month. Our group is growing in numbers.

We have clients and befrienders who attend the group regularly, reducing their social isolation and we have seen some lovely friendships forming between these regular attendees. Newcomers are also made welcome too. People who attend our group are able to find out about other local groups and activities that take place in the library.

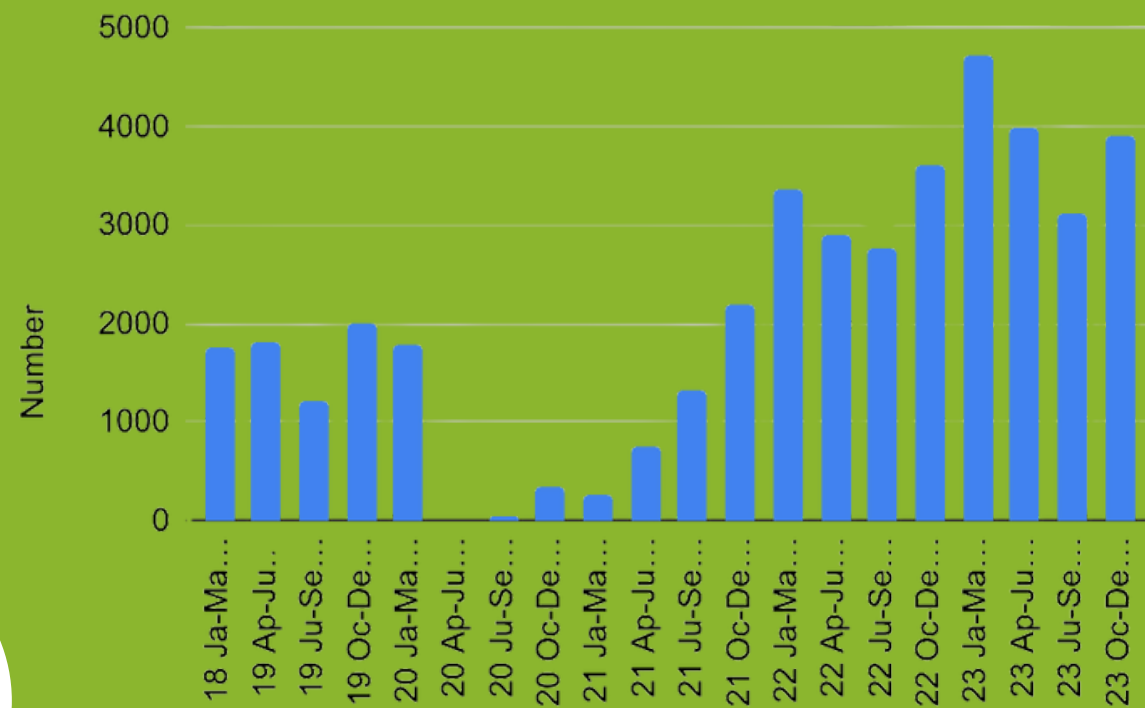
# Quantitative Progress

Our attendance for groups has grown from previous years, as has our footfall. The summer months are always quieter with better weather outside.



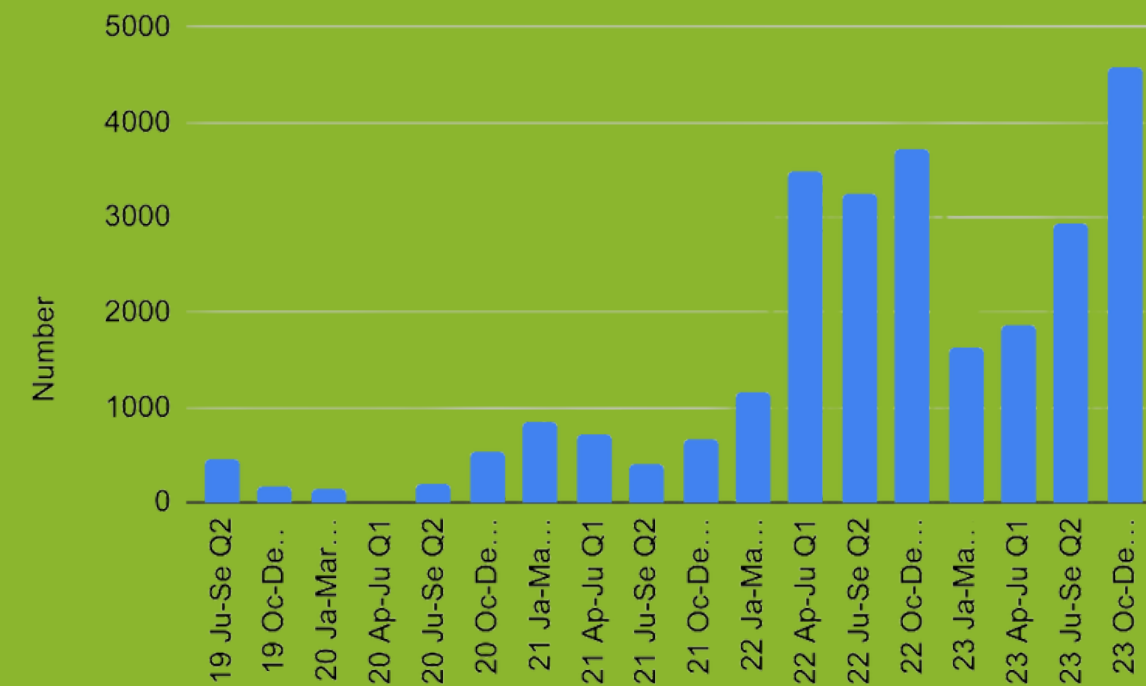
## Group Attendance Jan 2019 – Dec 23

Groups Attendance 2019 to now



## Event Attendance Jan 2019 – Dec 23

Events Attendance 2019 - now



# Measuring Progress

Our Space for partners



## REGULAR GROUPS

- |                       |                     |                       |
|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Friendship Café       | Scrabble            | Post Natal            |
| Bexley Carers         | LEGO club           | Parenting Sessions    |
| Kids Club             | Hearing Aid Clinic  | Couples Evenings      |
| Not Just Books        | Stay n Play         | Digital Champions     |
| Lucy Library          | Shine Course        | Bible Study           |
| Canasta               | SEND Coffee Morning | Financial Advice      |
| Colouring Group       | What's Next Linda   | Creative Kids         |
| Sparkles Babies       | Wed Coffee Morning  | Toddler Craft         |
| Stitch & Craft        | Evergreen           | Book Buddies          |
| Knit & Natter         | Parkinsons          | Age UK                |
| Bexley Carers Hub     | Kintsugi            | Dementia Voice        |
| Friday Coffee Morning | BSL Coffee Club     | Fostering             |
| Strength Course       | MIND Digital        | Late Night Games Cafe |

## ACTIVITIES

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| School Visits          | Treasure Hunt                             |
| Outside Talk           | Entertainer                               |
| Recycling Talks/Events | Face Painting                             |
| Afternoon Tea          | Craft at event                            |
| Story & Craft          | Community Events                          |
| Mug Cakes              | Santa Breakfast                           |
| Easter Craft           | Open Door & Hampers                       |
| Paint with Paula       | Shopping Evenings                         |
| Biscuit Decorating     | Messy Church                              |
| Jewellery Making       | Summer Reading Challenge Talks to Schools |
| Junk Modelling         | Volunteers/Staff & Training               |
| Kids Colouring         | Parent & Kid Date Night                   |
| Explore Learning       | Summer Reading Challenge                  |
| Author Workshop        | Archery                                   |
| Cookery for kids       | Kids Quiz                                 |
| Cross Stitch           | Breast Feeding Cafe                       |
| Lego Session           | Budgeting Advice Session                  |



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# How we have involved our community.

Our Community Hub continues to impact and touch various aspects of community life. The strides in fostering local pride and rejuvenating the high street reflect a commitment to community well-being.

The efforts to bring local traders together for support and innovation, including the upcoming launch of the Talking Business Trader Support Programme, showcase a commitment to fostering a thriving local business community. The personalised touch of visiting each trader with a gift, encouraging participation in a WhatsApp group, and hosting evening get-togethers creates a sense of community among businesses.

The enhancement of digital support with the presence of Digital Champions daily is a noteworthy step, and the gathering of champions from across the borough for idea-sharing adds a collaborative dimension to the initiative.

The development and continuation of our partnership with 47 local charities and organisations reinforces the hub's pivotal role as a central support network,

Overall, our community hub's approach is marked by adaptability, inclusivity and collaboration, and is undoubtedly making a positive impact on community well-being. The emphasis on forging connections among traders, providing digital support, and sustaining partnerships with various stakeholders exemplifies a united and holistic effort toward the betterment of the community.





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# How we have involved our community.

Our engagement with the voluntary sector, particularly through membership with BVSC, showcases a proactive approach to building partnerships and addressing gaps in community provision. The collaboration with social prescribing, and fostering a strong relationship with the social prescribing team, further reinforces the hub's role as a vital resource in the community.

The recognition of a need for additional support for young people, leading to the development of the BCL Youth project, demonstrates a responsive and research-informed approach. The piloted Strength Course for boys, focusing on their well-being and confidence, provided a valuable resource for the community. The flexibility in allowing self-referrals or referrals from schools, GPs, or parents enhancing accessibility.

The proactive step of presenting our youth project at the NHS South East London ICB Wellbeing board meeting demonstrated a commitment to transparency and collaboration with broader health initiatives, contributing to a holistic approach to community well-being.

Our contribution of 76 local volunteers, each contributing unique skills, reflects a deep understanding of and reliance on the strengths within the community. The diverse range of skills, from financial advice to chaplaincy and IT, enriches the support provided by our charity.

Overall, our hub's active involvement in the voluntary sector, emphasis on community needs and collaborative efforts with various stakeholders showcase a holistic and community-centred approach to well-being.

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**76**  
Volunteers

**11,552**  
Volunteer  
Hours



# Meet one of our members



Amy's connection with the library community hub began when Teddy was just 4 weeks old. She joined the Sparkles baby group at the hub, where she found a community of like-minded mums. Through this group, Amy formed lasting friendships and regularly meets up with the mums she connected with here. Now a familiar face, Amy and Teddy are regulars at the library, visiting frequently. For Amy, the library is a safe and joyful space where kids can play with diverse toys and make friends with people they might not have encountered otherwise. As a mum, Amy appreciates the opportunity to meet new people, having developed friendships not only with other parents but also with library staff and volunteers.

Reflecting on Amy's transformation, the Sparkles Baby Group volunteer notes that Amy has undergone significant positive changes. Initially shy and withdrawn, Amy has blossomed into a more confident individual who actively seeks to support others within the library community.



# Our Volunteers

We are very proud to have been awarded the Valuing Bexley Volunteers GOLD Award (BVSC).



## Rika

I enjoy learning new skills and gaining knowledge. I have already completed Level 3 in my Library assistant course. I like meeting new people and helping them.



## Dave

I'm 77 and I've been volunteering for over 3 years. I have gained many friends and I consider this now part of my family and my life. I enjoy volunteering here and I hope to continue for many more years to come!



## Chris

Volunteering here is as much a benefit to me as it is to the people that I help. It makes me feel useful and it's so satisfying to be able to assist members of our community who are usually very grateful.





### We surveyed 241 Adults attending groups/activities

**100%** indicated their wellbeing had improved by coming to our groups/activities. The top ways were by building friendships and feeling safe in our space.

**100%** felt less isolated as they made new friends and learnt new skills.

**100%** felt more connected to their community by being able to talk to others and feel what they say is valued. They feel more confident in themselves and what they can achieve.

### We surveyed 1039 parents attending groups/activities with their child

**100%** of parents said the groups/activities gave them a chance to interact more with their children. The most popular ways were by doing a focussed activity together and being able to talk about the activities.

Parents indicated their child's social interactions with other children and adults had improved. The most popular ways were by being able to have the opportunity to talk, listen and play with others.

# 100%

of adults surveyed indicated their wellbeing had improved



# What we have learned

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## Families

We have found there is a bigger need for families to have affordable places to take their children

## Parent Support

Families who come together to join activities and enjoyment together will improve their mental health which affects the whole family

## Young People

There is a greater need to support young people's mental health and especially boys. There is currently nothing specifically for boys

## Marketing

We wanted to increase the reach of our marketing to let people know what is available to them

## Action Step

We have adapted the children's area to include a home corner where there is always a space for imaginative play

## Action Step

We have created more events for the family to come together and events that encourage communication

## Action Step

We ran a pilot course to support boys with their wellbeing and confidence. We will build on this in 2024

## Action Step

As well as continuing our normal ways of advertising we also add every event on Eventbrite as this also advertises for us



# How we are changing

## Parents

- We continue to increase support for families, with activities that promote well-being, mental health, and strengthen family relationships and to provide a secure and free space for everyone.

## Older Generation

- Continuing to develop our partnership work to include support and signposting for health in older people. We now have 2 chaplains and we are also able to begin to offer bereavement support

## Reporting

- We continue to keep analysing our data to inform our future. We will share our report with our partner organisations and charities. We also publish on the charity website

## Young People

- We have developed our offer for young people to include a wellbeing course for girls and one for boys. We are also planning to open a drop in youth cafe and regular workshops

## Volunteers

- Our volunteers receive exceptional support, and we prioritise investing in their well-being. We are delighted to have been honoured with the Gold award for our commitment to Valuing our Volunteers.



### WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

“With three lovely ladies at the front desk, a children’s corner full of **【Pretend Play】** toys, good meeting room spaces, a local café at the front ☺ and various groups for different gathering purposes - this library has to be the cosiest library in Bexley.”

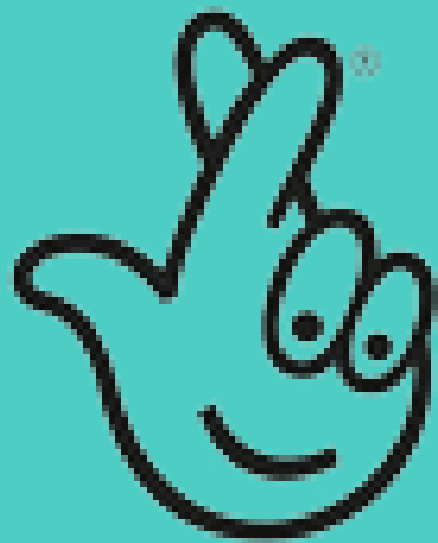
-Louis

CONSIDER LEAVING US A COMMENT ON GOOGLE



# Thank you to our funders

WILLIAM  
KENDALL'S  
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COMMUNITY  
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**Thank You**

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